

COPPER COUNTRY

The first Calaveras County Fair — an event devoted largely to horse racing — was held on the Nathan Flower Ranch on Sawmill Creek, west of Copperopolis, in the spring of 1894.

Flower, a California pioneer who a few years earlier had moved his family from Rancheria del Rio Estanislao Grant to the Copper area, laid out a half-mile track complete with judges stands, for the fair.

Entire families as well as individuals came from throughout the county to camp for several days under the trees along the creek and around the Flower home.

Among those whose horses were top competitors were Ransom and Jackson Dean McCarty, Frank Tower, I.N. Neely, Fred Burnham and at least one young woman, Julia Bower, of Salt Springs Valley.

Julia distinguished herself by riding Frank Tower's mare, "Daisy A," to an easy victory over several male riders. Ransom McCarty's "Susie Hooker" also was a consistent winner, as was I.N. Neely's "Buckhorn." Other riders who ran their horses during that first fair included John and Doc Shoemake and John and Andrew Davis, all of Copperopolis, and Jack Morley, of Murphys.

The racetrack on the Flower Ranch was used regularly for many years.

A unique feature of the Flower home on the ridgetop overlooking Sawmill Creek was that rain which fell on the east side of its roof ran off into Sawmill Creek and eventually flowed into the Stanislaus River, while the rain that

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Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society
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TELEGRAPH CITY, MEMORIES AND STONE WALLS

Long before Hiram Hughes, in the spring of 1860 sank his pick into a mineralized ledge and touched off California's first and most flamboyant copper boom, Mexican vaqueros already were familiar with the land.

The foothills of what later was to become southwest Calaveras County had long been recognized by Mexican herdsmen as prime winter and early spring cattle country.

As early as 1843 two Mexican citizens, Francisco Rico and Jose Antonio Castro recognized the agricultural value of this land. Through a grant signed by California's Mexican Governor Manuel Micheltorena they obtained title to eleven square leagues — 48,886 acres known as Rancheria del Rio Estanislao. It included a portion of what is now southwestern Calaveras County and a vast area of north-eastern Stanislaus County.

By the early 1850s American settlers, among them

Please see **Memories**, pg. 14



Milton was still a busy railhead town when this photo (looking from the west) was taken in 1907.

(Calaveras County Museum)

Memories, cont. from pg. 13

Thomas McCarty and Jacob Tower, whose families still are prominent in the area, had taken up land in the southwest corner. McCarty settled on Cabin Creek south of the present Highway 4, and Tower took up his homestead in Salt Springs Valley, where the family still owns ranch land.

Hiram Hughes, a native of Kentucky, had captained the wagon train in which he and his family traveled west in 1850.

The Hughes home ranch was near Cave City, but he too, was familiar with the Gopher Range, east of the Rio Estanislao Grant. In fact, it was in May, 1860, while hunting strays from the herd he had wintered in the Gopher Ridge area, that Hughes found a ledge that produced gold. Hughes was no stranger to mining, having only recently returned from Virginia City's Comstock Lode.

On Gopher Ridge he staked a claim which he named the "Quail Hill No. 1," and with J.F. Treat, of San Andreas, organized a small mining company. However, whenever time would permit, he continued to prospect the area.

Some months after the Quail Hill strike, Hughes, with his 10-year-old son, William Napoleon Bonaparte Hughes, was prospecting Hog Hill when the boy wandered away. Not far from where his father was digging, young Hughes noticed an outcropping of what appeared to be ledge matter and drove his pick into it. Within minutes he and his father were unearthing pieces of heavily mineralized ore.

Unable to identify the mineral, Hughes sent samples to San Francisco where it was determined that the material was high-grade copper ore. The discovery became the famous Napoleon Copper Mine.

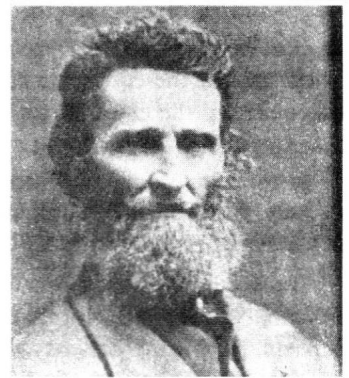
Meanwhile, ore at the Quail Hill Mine which had produced mostly gold near the surface, turned to copper as it

acquired depth. At one point, one wall of the ledge produced gold and the other wall produced copper.

The copper strike triggered a stampede that brought gold miners from diggings throughout Calaveras County as well as from Amador and Tuolumne Counties to what was becoming known as the "West Belt."

Then, adding to the excitement, William K. Reed and Thomas McCarty made a copper discovery on what they called the Union Lode, and around it almost overnight, sprang up the boom town of Copperopolis.

Further to the west on the Stockton-Sonora Road between the Napoleon and the Quail Hill Mines, another town with the somewhat disparaging name of Grasshopper City, was taking root. On that road north of the Napoleon Mine, Ed Laughlin early in 1861 constructed the first building, a general store.



Hiram Hughes discovered copper in Southwest Corner.
(Calaveras County Museum)

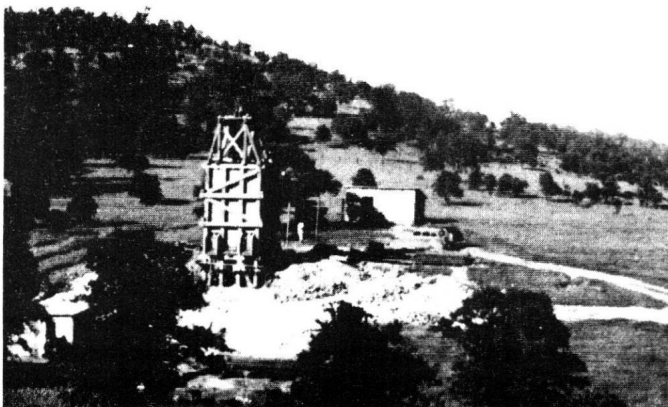
Laughlin quickly added a hotel. A blacksmith shop, restaurant and Sam Roberts' livery stable were soon followed by a Post Office, stage and express station. A second hotel was built there by Isreal Smith, as was a shoe shop and numerous saloons and billiard halls which probably preceded most other businesses.

Along this road which connected Stockton to Sonora, via the O'Byrnes Ferry, a telegraph line was built. And, as the town grew — a Bancroft questionnaire in 1863 gave it a population of 500 — its name, at the suggestion of Eaf Gatewood, was changed to Telegraph City.

Also, in 1863, T.C. Meader of Stockton, who later became a founder and director of the Stockton-Copperopolis Railroad, acquired the Union Mine in Copperopolis from Reed and McCarty. This transaction proved a boon to Telegraph City, for the former Union Mine owners then undertook construction of a road between Copperopolis and Telegraph City, known as Reed's Turnpike.

Each day huge wagon loads of copper ore rolled from the Calaveras mines, bound for river barges at Stockton, and eventually for smelters on the east coast. For, with the Civil War reaching its bloody climax, copper badly needed for munitions and other war materials, was bringing 50 cents per pound.

The migration to the southwest corner which had begun as a trickle in 1860, had by 1863 swelled to a torrent. The



The Collier Mine produced copper until World War II.
(Calaveras County Museum)

Memories, cont. from pg. 14

handful of original settlers, the McCarty, Tower, Bisbee, Pope, Gardner, Beardslee, Oxendine and other families which had come to the area to wrest a living from the land, found themselves deluged with newcomers. Hundreds of hopeful miners and prospectors joined the developers of the original mines. And, following the miners came more merchants, businessmen, gamblers, land speculators and hangers-on.

The area around Telegraph City was designated the Gopher Mining District with Ed Laughlin serving as district recorder. A mile beyond Telegraph City Adam Shafer opened another store which did a thriving business.

Around Telegraph City the Napoleon, Quail Hill No. 1 and the Quail Hill No. 2, sometimes called the Eagle Mine, were running full blast, as were the Star & Excelsior and the Collier, located a mile southwest of the Napoleon. (The Collier Mine operated sporadically for years, its last activity occurring during World War II.) Other mines operated around Telegraph City during the boom years of the Civil War included the Camp and McNulty, Texas Consolidated, Tecumseh, Pioneer and Gopher Hill. But the major producer in the Telegraph City area was the Napoleon, which during its years of operation is estimated to have produced more than \$1 million worth of copper.

During the Civil War years much of the copper ore produced in and around Telegraph City and Copperopolis was smelted on the Atlantic Coast because satisfactory, large-scale copper refining and recovery methods had not yet been developed here. The ore was hauled by wagon to Stockton, then barged to San Francisco and transferred to ocean-going vessels for the long trip "round-the-horn."

Great Britain also was anxious to obtain this high grade Calaveras County copper ore, but the U.S. Government, during the war, frowned on and attempted to discourage

the British trade. It was the fear of the Federal Government that England, after processing the ore in its smelters at Swansea, in Wales, might sell the copper to the metal hungry Confederacy with which we were at war.

Upon close of the Civil War much of the copper ore from the Calaveras mines did go to England.

Wade Hampton, whose recollections of happenings in early Calaveras make up some of the most entertaining and graphic reading in past files of the Las Calaveras, was among those who took part in the West Belt copper rush. Hampton said that it was a fatal accident at the Camp & McNulty Mine, near Telegraph City, that led to discovery here of the leaching method of copper recovery.

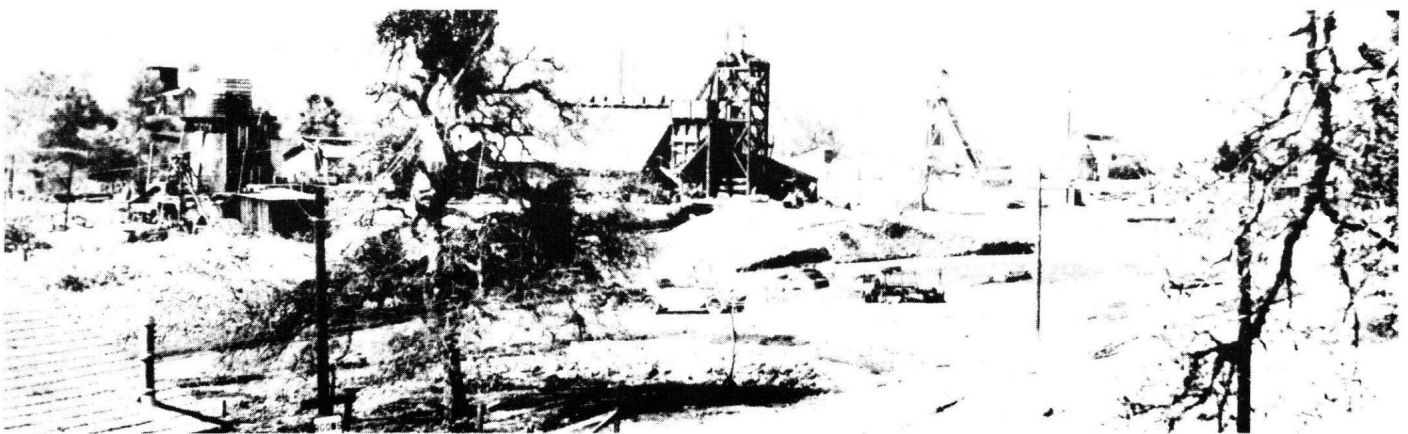
According to Hampton, mine owner William Camp and a miner named Charles Fisher were involved in an explosion in the bottom of the mine shaft. Fisher died as a result of the accident, and, the mine which was not paying well, was closed. Tools in the bottom of the shaft at the time of the accidental blast, were not even removed.

The mine remained idle for several years and its shaft filled with water. Then, a San Francisco based company, according to Hampton, took over the mine and pumped it out. In the bottom of the shaft when the water was removed, workmen found the tools — drills, hammer, picks, shovels, tamping bar and even the iron bail of the hoist bucket, had turned to almost pure copper. Through years of leaching in the copper water, copper had eaten away and replaced the iron.

This discovery of the leaching process was adopted at several mines, including the Napoleon Mine, said Hampton, and as a result, several of them once again became profitable operations.

As early as 1862, soon after outbreak of the Civil War, a group of far-sighted businessmen and investors, including

Please see **Memories**, pg. 16



Headframes of the Union and New Discovery Copper Mines flanked the Copperopolis main street in 1918.

(Calaveras County Museum)

Memories, cont. from pg. 15

C.T. Meader and Thomas Hardy, soon to become owners of the Union Mine in Copperopolis, saw need of a railroad to transport copper ore to Stockton and to serve the mining area. They, with 78 subscribers who pledged \$1,500,000, undertook financing of what was to become the Stockton-Copperopolis Railroad. But, financing for so large a project did not come easily. It was not until the late 1860s when the Federal Government agreed to participate financially, that actual construction got underway.

By that time, however, the price of copper was falling and when the railroad reached Milton, in the summer of 1871, the copper industry in southeastern Calaveras County had collapsed. The rail company directors decided, much to the dismay of Telegraph City and Copperopolis residents, to terminate the railroad at what was to become the town of Milton.

In latter years when the copper mines reopened, the railroad did haul copper ore to Stockton, but teams, steam powered tractors and later, gasoline powered trucks, hauled the ore from the mines to the railhead at Milton.

Slowing of the copper market brought change to Telegraph City and its surrounding area but Telegraph City continued to be an important stopping place for travelers to and from Jamestown, Sonora and Copperopolis as well as a trade center for local ranchers.

Edward and Mary Parks took over Ed Laughlin's hotel and the C.S.S. Hill store. Parks, a veteran of the Mexican War, had managed a toll station of Rock Creek Road prior to moving to Telegraph City. He acquired about 2,000 acres of grazing land and in addition to his town business, ranched the land until his death in 1885.

Parks' son, Robert, took over the ranch and in 1894, married Agnes McCarty. That was the same year that the Telegraph City Post Office, which the Parks family had run for many years, finally was closed. From that time on, Telegraph City area people received their mail at Milton.

Robert and Agnes Parks built a large, landmark home on the Telegraph City Ranch and remained there until they sold it in 1919 to Walter and Chester Murphy. Unfortunately, the home burned two years later.

The Murphys also had acquired the Adam Shafer ranch which flanked the road to Telegraph City. Walter and his wife, Sophie, lived at Telegraph City until 1928 when they moved with their children, Roy and Doris, to Milton.

During their years in Telegraph City the Murphys used the old Parks Ranch as their headquarters. Walter ran some 10,000 sheep and Chester, who married Ella Pope, was a cattleman. Chester and Ella remained at Telegraph City until around the start of World War II then, with their children, Chester and Lucille, moved to Farmington.



Train time at the Milton Depot. Covered rig in the foreground is thought to be the Copperopolis stage.

(Calaveras Historical Society)

The beautifully constructed stone foundations and walls of the huge barn which was built by Jimmy Sykes, and was used by both the Parks and Murphy families, still stand beside the old road at Telegraph City.

Other early day ranchers of the area included Stephen Decatur Suits and his partner, Hadley. Their ranch was located on what became known as Telegraph Creek and this property was later to become headquarters of the Beardslee-Gardner Ranch.

Along Gopher Gulch were the ranches of John Williams, Henry Boucher, James Jorseman and McFarlin.

South of Telegraph City was the Herman Donner Ranch and that of H.H. White. White is said to have at one time operated the Church or Lane Mineral Springs at the north end of Salt Springs Valley.

Bill Pope's ranch was on Shirley Creek. That creek was named for early settler I.H. Shirley.

But long before Robert Parks took over his father's interests at Telegraph City or the Murphy brothers took up ranching there, commercial mining in the Gopher District had become a thing of the past. The end of mining also spelled the end of Telegraph City, until, at the turn of the century, it had become only another foothill ghost town.

As the new century arrived it was ranching, not mining, that sustained the Southwest Corner's meager economy. And gradually, even the ranches began decreasing in number. The smaller spreads on which their owners had managed to eke out hard-won livings, were being consolidated into larger, more financially rewarding operations.

Today, a rerouted State Highway 4 bypasses the site of Telegraph City. The old townsite now is marked only by a few remaining foundations and miles of carefully constructed rock walls along the quiet country road over which stage coaches once rolled and thousands of tons of copper ore was hauled to help the Union cause.

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fell on the west side ran off into Littlejohns Creek and drained into the San Joaquin River.

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On the south side of Highway 4, just east of Littlejohns Creek, is an excavation known as "The Slate Quarry" which dates back to the early days of the Copperopolis and Telegraph City area.

Slate rock from this outcropping supplied foundation and building stone for many of the old structures in Southwestern Calaveras and in Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties.

From this quarry came the slate shingles that roofed the tower of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Stockton and for the roofs of most of the original buildings at the state hospital in Stockton.

A second, not so well known quarry which provided the slate rock for construction of the Lane Dam at the confluence of Clover and Littlejohns Creeks, was located on this same rock formation a few miles to the north of Highway 4. The Lane dam washed out in the winter of 1908 and was not rebuilt.

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The original mining town of Hodson was a company town, built by the British-owned Royal Consolidated Mining Company that developed the mine there.

The company owned the homes, store, butcher shop and school and paid its miners in script that was good only

when used in the company-owned businesses.

The practice of issuing script was extremely unpopular and finally ended only after the miners launched a bitter and protracted strike.

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Many years after the Hodson mines had closed and the English mining company was long gone, Frank Tower and a group of mining associates made a rich gold strike at Hodson.

This particular diggings was known as the "Butcher Shop," because Tower and his group had sunk their shaft on the exact spot where the original company town's butcher shop had stood.

Across the road from the "Butcher Shop" was Cyril McCarty's Sky Rocket Mine. The wooden headframe of the Sky Rocket Mine remained standing until well into the 1980s.

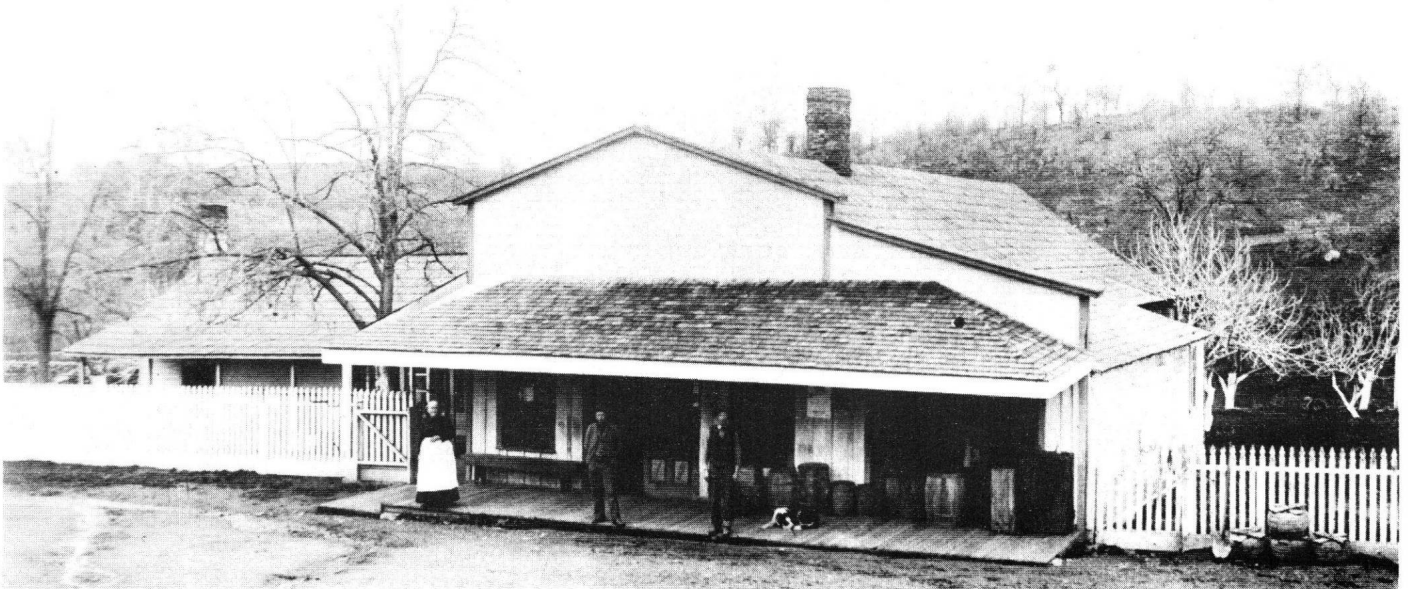
The sites of the Butcher Shop and the Sky Rocket Mines are part of the huge open pit mining operation now under development at Hodson by Meridian Gold.

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During the early days of Calaveras County an Indian trail which originated at the edge of the San Joaquin Valley crossed Salt Springs Valley and the Bear Mountain Range through a low pass known as Bear Trap Gap.

The trail continued eastward, past the mining town of Calaveritas and along what is now Fricot Ridge until it

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When this photograph was taken, the Telegraph City Store which flanked Reed's Turnpike, was operated by Edward and Mary Parks. Identities of the persons in the photo are unknown. (Calaveras County Museum)

Copper, cont. from pg. 17

entered the higher mountains, eventually reaching the summit to drop down to the eastern slope of the Sierra.

This was a major trade route for the Miwok and Paiute Indians.

Ranchers in the Salt Springs area and residents around Calaveritas, including Mrs. Alice Burnham Reddick who later married George Bouldin, recalled watching the bands of Indians traveling to and from the mountains. Mrs. Bouldin was born in Calaveritas in 1859 and died in Copperopolis at age 105.

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Church Springs, at the northeast corner of Salt Springs Valley, in reality should be called Lane Springs, say many of the old-time residents of Copperopolis and Salt Springs Valley. They say it was Major Thomas Lane, father of Charles D. Lane, who really developed the mineral spring.

Charles D. Lane in 1884 became an owner of the famous Utica Gold Mine in Angels Camp and also owned the Knight's Ferry Power House.

But, regardless of who it should be named for, the springs became a popular health spa and vacation spot with hotel and bathing facilities which drew patrons from as far away as the bay area. Visitors to the springs traveled by train to Milton and then by stage along Rock Creek Road on the final leg of their journey.

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Quail Hill derives its name not from the rich copper vein



Elections were exciting times in Milton in the 1890s.
(Calaveras County Museum)



Old Tower Ranch (The White House) at Felix.
(Calaveras County Museum)

discovered there in 1860 but from the vast flocks of valley quail that inhabited the area in those days.

So thick were the quail in the entire Copperopolis, Telegraph City and Salt Springs Valley areas that market hunting quickly sprang up as a local industry.

Around the turn of the century Frank Tower and his uncle, Bill Burnham, were among the principal market hunters of the area. They set their personal quotas at 144 quail each, per day.

Twelve dozen quail each — at \$3 per dozen — dressed and delivered to restaurants in Stockton and San Francisco meant \$36.

Tower and Burnham employed a young man with a light wagon to follow them and carry their quail and load shotgun shells with a reloading outfit he carried in the wagon.

Those oldtimers didn't miss many birds.

When he was over 70 years of age and market hunting had long been a thing of the past, Bill Burnham still could hit 10 quail straight, without a miss. "But," he admitted, "Nowadays I only shoot at the ones I know I can hit."

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The town of Milton was named for the Stockton-Copperopolis Railroad Company civil engineer who laid out and surveyed the townsite.

Completion of the railroad to Milton was observed on July 4, 1871, with a gala celebration that saw trains filled with passengers arriving from Stockton every hour throughout the day and which finally closed late that night with a huge fireworks display.

Because there was no town of Milton at that time, the picnic and celebration was held in what was known as the Rock Creek Grove a mile south of the present townsite.

Since the rail line never advanced beyond Milton even though most of its commerce generated from the Copperopolis area, movement of passengers, supplies and equipment from Milton to Copperopolis depended on stage coach and freight wagon.

Also, much of the travel to Yosemite and the Calaveras Big Trees was routed over the Stockton-Copperopolis Rail Line to Milton.

Later when some of the mines reopened, ore from the Union, Quail Hill, Napoleon and other mines was hauled by wagon to Milton, loaded into gondolas and taken to Stockton where, picked up by river barges, it went to San Francisco and aboard ocean going steamers bound for smelters on the east coast and in Swansea, Wales.

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Planned by the Stockton-Copperopolis Railroad Company, Milton in May 1871, was surveyed as a 100-block townsite.

Each block was 300x400 feet square, with the blocks located around a central plaza. Another survey conducted in 1888 by Calaveras County Surveyor H.H. Saunders, added more area to the original townsite.

In all, Milton had 39 streets. Their names included Mars, Minerva, Venus, Hercules, Neptune, Apollo, etc., while other streets bore the names of trees, such as Cedar, Fir, Ash, Hickory, Walnut, Gum and others. Some of the street signs bearing these names still are standing.

Milton has the dubious distinction of being the only Calaveras County town to be extensively damaged by a tornado.

In December, 1873, a full fledged tornado swooped down on the then new community and cut a swath reportedly nearly one-fourth of a mile wide, which destroyed and seriously damaged numerous buildings.

Among the commercial buildings destroyed was a blacksmith shop, a wagon shop and a large storage building owned by John Grider. Several dwellings in which Chinese were living, also were leveled, and the whirlwind also tore the roof off the Calaveras Hotel and the railroad depot.

The Hotel Fox was blown off its foundation, and the virtually new Milton Schoolhouse was moved several feet.

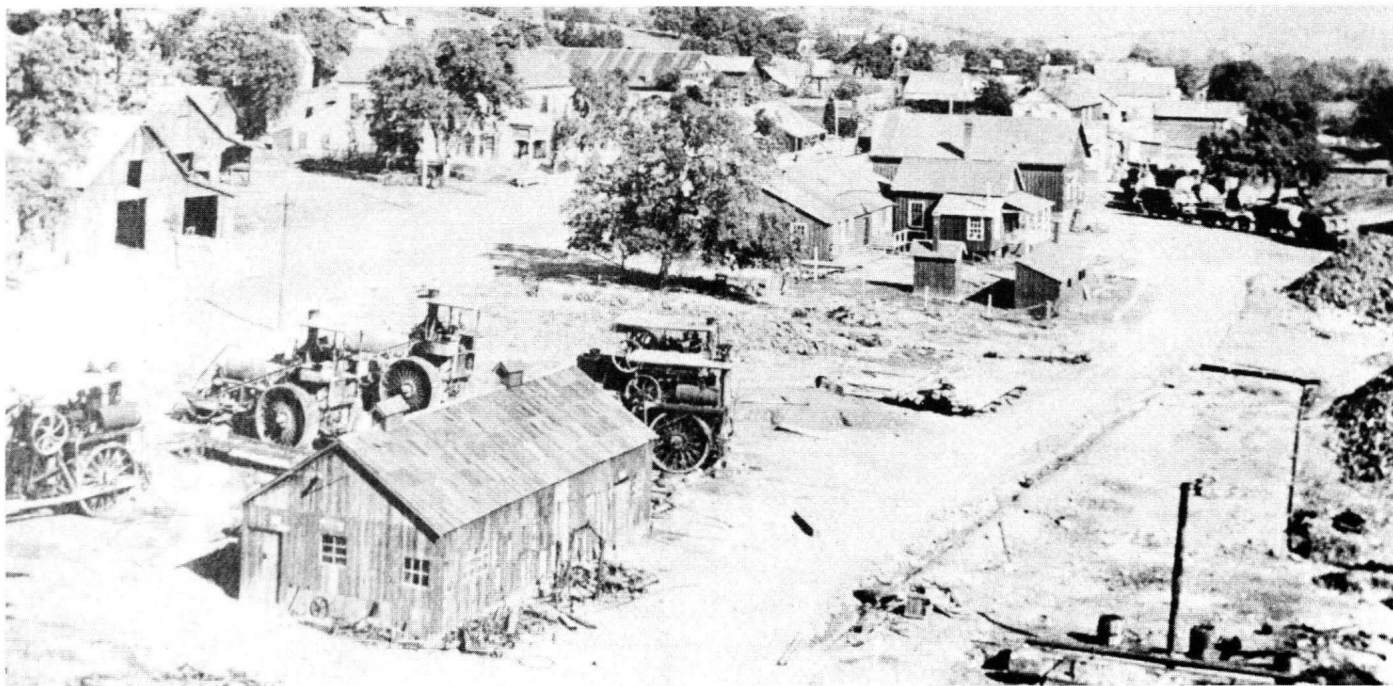
One family of 10 was left homeless but uninjured, although several persons suffered serious injury from the flying debris.

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The miles of meticulously crafted stone fence that flank many of the roads and stretch across the rolling foothills west of Copperopolis and around Telegraph City, are a tribute to the skill and patience of early-day workmen.

Among the most prominent of those early-day fence builders, according to the late Southwestern Calaveras historian Elsie Flower, was stone mason Jimmy Sykes.

Sykes, who plied his trade during the 1870s and 80s, and Please see **Copper**, pg. 20



Iron wheeled steam tractors that hauled freight to and from the railroad at Milton, stand in Mountain Traction Company Corporation yard on Main Street in Copperopolis. *(Charles Stone Collection)*

Copper, cont. from pg. 19

possibly earlier, reportedly built the rock fence that encompassed the 7,000-acre Gardner and Beardsley Ranch and the 3,000-acre Shoemake property on Hog Hill.

Among his most prominent monuments are the beautifully crafted stone walls of the old Murphy barn at Telegraph City.

Other stone wall builders were the Wirth brothers, Jacob and George, who often worked with Sykes.

Pioneer rancher Bill Pope also built the stone walls around his own property west of Telegraph City.

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Stephen Box, born in Tennessee in 1830, arrived in Hangtown in 1849, and married Melissa Abbott in Calaveras County in 1863.

During his early years in Calaveras, Stephen worked as a deputy sheriff under Henry Schrobol, collecting the alien miners taxes from Chinese and other foreign miners.

Stephen and Melissa Box raised 10 children at a ranch on Rock Creek at the edge of the Rancho del Rio Estanislao Grant, then in 1882 moved to a ranch in the Four Springs Mining District, west of Copperopolis. Box purchased the 340-acre ranch from J.M. Baker.

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Thomas McCarty who homesteaded on Log Cabin Creek in 1852 and operated a trading post and store there, was a partner of William K. Reed in development of the Union Mine in Copperopolis, after their discovery of copper ore there in 1860.

Reed and McCarty sold the mine in 1862 and then undertook construction of a road from Copperopolis to Telegraph City which became known as the Reed Turnpike. This road, which tied into the road to Farmington and Stockton, became the forerunner of the present State Highway 4.

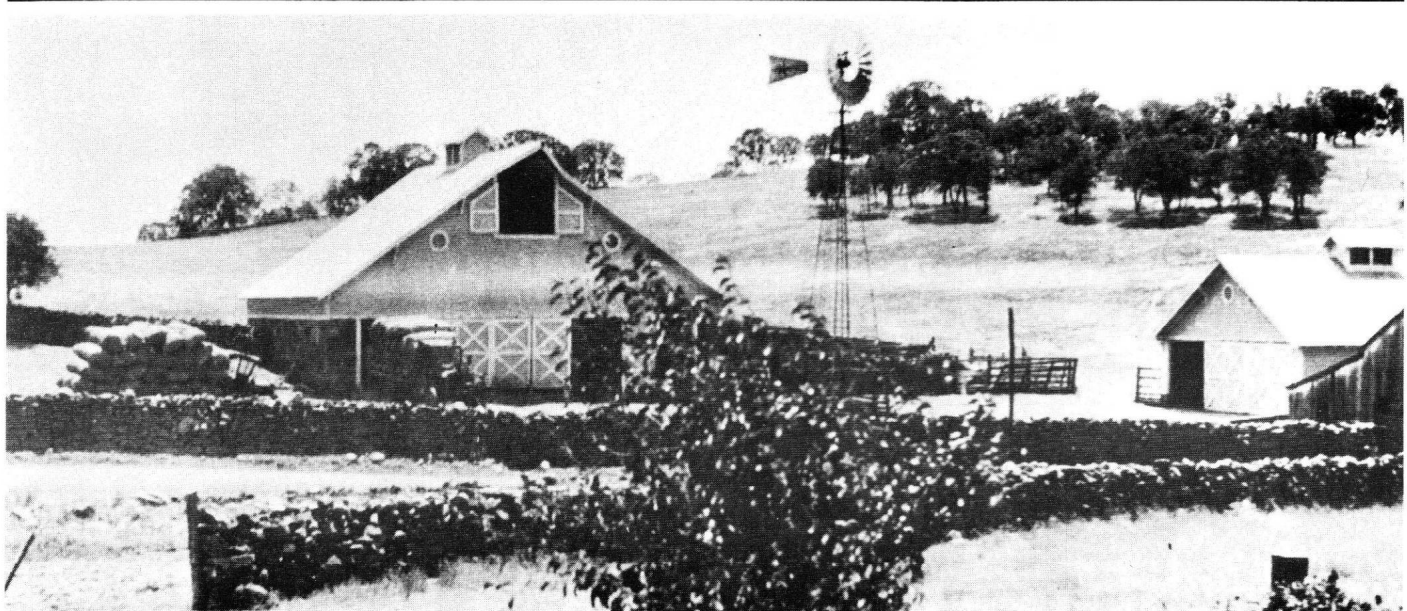
Two of McCarty's sons, Ransom Thomas McCarty and Jackson Dean McCarty were among the first Calaveras County livestock men to begin driving sheep to the mountains for summer pasture. They summered large bands of sheep in the area around Bear Valley and later, also drove sheep to the mountains in Tuolumne County.

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For several years, beginning in 1905, much of the heavy freight and mining equipment destined for Copperopolis was hauled from the railroad at Milton by huge steam powered, iron wheeled traction engines.

These massive wood burning machines were operated by the Mountain Traction Company which had a corporation yard in Copperopolis.

The company maintained its own road which more or less paralleled but kept a safe distance from the Rock Creek Stage Road. The reason for the separate road was that not only did the big tractors tear up the public roads, but their snorting, smoke belching engines frightened the daylight out of any teams of horses they encountered. The traction engines which operated until about 1909, also were unpopular because in summer, sparks from their engines often started grass fires.



The Murphy barn and blacksmith shop at Telegraph City as it appeared about 1925.

(Calaveras County Museum)

Salt Springs Reservoir, built by the Calaveras County Water Company which was organized in 1856, originally was a natural lake of about 50 acres called Tule or Tular Lake.

The purpose of the reservoir was to provide water for mining south of the Calaveras River in the vicinity of Jenny Lind through what was known as the South Ditch.

Later, however, the reservoir which over the years was raised three times, provided water via a south ditch to the Quail Hill Mine.

The organizers of the Calaveras Water Company, J.W. Griswold, M.R. McLean, Garland Pollard, Jerome Sawyer and T.S. Abbey, sold the reservoir and ditches in 1863 and in 1867 they were acquired by the Quail Hill Water and Mining Company.

The Quail Hill Company in 1876 sold the reservoir and ditches to John B. Reynolds, serving as agent for the Boston Hydraulic Mining Company, for \$85,000. The company used the water for hydraulicing on South Gulch, Whiskey Hill, Bunker Hill, North Gulch and other properties.

When the Royal Mine at Hodson was working, the water it used was pumped from Salt Springs Reservoir.

In latter years, Salt Springs Reservoir in addition to providing agricultural water, supplied much of the water used by dredges along the lower Calaveras River.

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The Rock Creek Road which still is used today between Milton and Salt Springs Valley was engineered by a retired military man named Archer. It has been changed little from its original alignment.

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Around the turn of the century the Johnson family operated the road house on Rock Creek Road on the west side of Salt Springs Valley near the Salt Springs Dam.

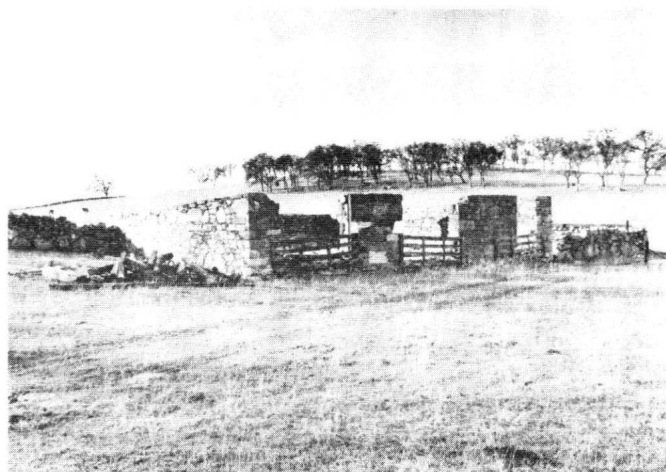
The Johnson youngsters crossed the Salt Springs Reservoir each day by boat in order to attend school. The old school house still stands beside the road at the Tower Ranch in the Felix Mining District.

One of the children, Glen Johnson, became vice-president of the Chrysler Motor Car Corporation.

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Carmen City, which is shown on the Calaveras County Map of 1864 as being located on the eastern side of Salt Springs Valley at about the point where Hunt Road starts up over the Bear Mountain Range, is the city that wasn't.

John Carmen, an early Salt Springs Valley settler, apparently decided shortly after copper was discovered at nearby Copperopolis and Quail Hill, to cash in on the mining boom by establishing a city on his property. He laid out a townsite and sat back to await the rush of settlers.



Carefully crafted stone walls of the huge barn where Parks and Murphys families quartered livestock still stand behind the stone fences at Telegraph City.

His only problem was that nobody came. Carmen City died aborning without even the remains of a building foundation to mark its location.

However, the family name has been preserved for posterity in that a towering peak in the Bear Mountain Range east of the site of the phantom city still carries the name of Carmen Peak and one of the steeper pitches in Hunt Road is known as Carmen Grade.

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Brewery Hill derived its name from the fact the road from Copperopolis toward San Andreas and Angels Camp followed a route up the hill behind the brewery, a mile north of town.

The hill was one of the steepest stretches of road in the area and during the early years of this century as automobiles came into vogue, Brewery Hill became a sort of proving grounds for local automobile owners.

Motorists would drive all the way from Stockton to test their gasoline buggies on the hill and those that made it to the top of the grade without stalling were considered adequately powered.

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The original one-room Salt Springs Valley school was built in the late 1860s by Tower and Bisbee, more or less in the center of the valley on the east side of Salt Springs Reservoir where it would be centrally located for all the families in the valley.

Four years after the original school was built it was replaced by a larger one, and the old school was moved to the Tower Ranch at Felix, where for many years it served as the Felix Post Office. The old school still stands beside the road in front of the Tower home.

THE SAGA OF BARBWIRE JIM

By Leon Rovetta

This article, authored by the late Leon Rovetta, of Stockton, was printed during the 1960s in the Pacific Telephone Company Magazine. Mr. Rovetta wrote this piece after lengthy research and interviews with members of the Tower family.

“Can you hear me, Jake?”

From his mother’s house 16-year-old Jim Tower was shouting into a voice powered telephone mouthpiece to his brother, Jacob, in the slaughter house, a mile away. The top strand of a barbwire cattle-fence was being used to transmit this first telephone conversation in southern Calaveras County. The year was 1896. Salt Spring Valley quickly nicknamed James A. Tower, “Barbwire Jim.” The following week he was talking over the same kind of “cable” to Jackson D. McCarty, cattle rancher, some three miles away.

Jim Tower’s primitive method of voice transmission was the start of the Calaveras Telephone Company, which today, under Howard Tower — his only child — is a forward-looking, modern, independent company with a bright future in the offing.

The same fence line still divides the McCarty-Tower cattle domains. But the posts are pitted with age, the wires rust-encrusted by 73 years of exposure to the elements. Here and there several of the original tiny procelain insulators remain.

Jim Tower, the soft-spoken, cow-country innovator, who tinkered and toiled with his barbwire telephone hobby, died in 1936.

Jim’s first telephone exchange was a hand-crank box on the dining room wall. It ran on dry-cell batteries. The boys built a telephone office out by the fig tree.

Before the turn of the century, Jim had ridden every fence line in his bailiwick that led to a potential phone customer. The old timers will tell you that he was “slow,” and “took an hour to tell a story.” But the dramatic record left by this hill-country slowpoke might lead one to think he was a one-man cyclone. Nor was the telephonic development impaired in 1909 when he married his first switchboard operator, Laura Hazelquist of Altaville, a Floradora lady.

Mrs. Frances Tower Henry, cousin, vividly recalled Laura. “From 7 AM to 9 PM Laura kept the books, ran the switchboard, and often rode the “telephone wagon” with Jim, helping install poles, straighten tilted ones, and repair broken lines.”



Howard Tower, son of “Barbwire Jim” Tower.

(Tower family album)

In 1900 Jim was franchised by Alexander Graham Bell to do business with the Bell System and entered an equipment contract with Western Electric Company. That same year, he ran lines into the fabulous Royal Gold Mine at Hodson when it buzzed with 500 people. In 1902 Herbert Hoover, as a mining consultant, visited Hodson and the Tower Ranch. Two years later, the Calaveras Board of Supervisors granted a 50-year franchise to the Calaveras Telephone Company.

Cattle fences, trees and poles, windmills and chicken sheds swiftly provided telephone service for Copperopolis,

Milton, Jenny Lind, Telegraph City, Poker Flat, Table Mountain on the Stanislaus River, and the Fitzgerald and Orvis ranches in Stanislaus County. For 49 years the company maintained a toll service to Angels Camp.

Howard Tower explains the swift spread of early telephones: "Mining companies and stock ranches needed contacts with the outside world. We began by connecting them to the telegraph company in Copperopolis, then, in 1906, we made our first long-distance call to Stockton."

Mrs. Frances Tower Henry adds nostalgically: "Sure, Jim had problems keeping the phones going. But it was so wonderful to phone the outside world and to visit with friends and neighbors that it never did occur to me to complain about the service."

When Jim died in 1936, Howard was 12 years old. "You might say I knew my father only 12 years," Howard said. "After he died, Laura ran the outfit. Ernest Segal and Philip Pedrole helped, I filled in where I was needed." Howard got married in 1958 to Ellen Strahorn of Jenny Lind and they have three children: Mary, Jim, and John.

Since 1950, Howard has modernized all departments. Party lines were eliminated. During latter years of the party line a 3-minute buzzer sounded for those who hung onto a line. A minute later — except for long-distance calls — the conversation was cut off. Subscribers got a book explaining the rules of the game, but in general there were no hard and fast rules.

"In 1951 we installed dial phones, and by 1966 practically all our cable was underground," said Howard. "Our recent construction costs are great. In one day, you might say, we went from all open wire to all underground. At the same time, we swapped our old central office for two new ones. We did it with the help of a private contractor and \$328,000 from the Rural Electrification Administration. So we owe a lot to Uncle Sam in more ways than one.

"We are also fortunate to have our own construction equipment and we frequently do work for other small independent companies."

One of the most recent outside jobs was for the Forest-hill Telephone Company, whose president, Ralph Hoeper, came to negotiate for 25,000 feet of cable ploughing.

Howard Tower subscribes to the philosophy of the Bell System's legendary Theodore N. Vail: "Service depends on the right thing being done at the right time, by the right person, in the right way."

Over the years, movie and TV industries have been customers of the Calaveras Telephone Company. In 1932 it was Will Rogers in *Country Chairman* at the McCarty Ranch; in 1950 Walter Huston in the *Alamo* on the Tower Ranch. During the 1960s Dale Robertson made a series of *Wells Fargo* TV productions at Poker Flat; and MGM



The cedar post to which it once was spiked, is gone, but the small porcelain insulator that allowed telephone conversations to be transmitted along this strand of barbed wire, still remains.

(Tower family album)

filmed *Moonshine War* with Richard Widmark, at Jenny Lind. Howard Tower recalls one scene that was shot for the Richard Dix movie *Man of Conquest* that has been run again and again in movies and TV westerns.

The attraction for the film makers was, of course, the old west quality of the countryside, hardly changed in the more than 100 years since Copperopolis was a copper mine boom town with 10,000 population, 12 hotels, two breweries, two racetracks, and a score of freight and stage lines. But all the excitement wasn't on film. The luck of the notorious outlaw Black Bart ran out and he was captured when he held up a stage coach at Funk Hill, east of Copperopolis.

But the times are changing — fast. There is a fresh stampede to the hills. Colossal land promoters of national stature have staked claims to more than 30,000 subdivisonal acres of southern Calaveras, from Rancho Calaveras at Jenny Lind and Circle XX on Bear Mountain, to Copper Cove at Tulloch Lake on the O'Byrnes Ferry Road. The Calaveras Telephone Company must meet the challenge.

Although Calaveras Telephone Company lists only several hundred subscribers, it is increasingly probable the company will, in the not distant future, be serving thousands of new customers. Somewhere in this growing, romantic region Howard Tower will be repeating "Barb-wire Jim's" favorite expression, "Let's try it and see if it works."

Calaveras County Historical Society

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The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas — except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

The Society's office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 to 5:00. The telephone number is (209) 754-1058. Visitors are welcome.

COMING EVENTS

January 26 . . . Hosted by Mokelumne Hill History Society, Calaveras County Historical Society will hold its January meeting on this date in Mokelumne Hill Town Hall.

The meeting, which opens with a business session at 7:30 p.m., will feature a review of the History of Mokelumne Hill by students of Mokelumne Hill School's Third, Fourth and Fifth Grades.

This year the Mokelumne Hill school is adding local history to its California Studies Program and will be seeking an education grant to adapt it to the school curriculum.

February 23 . . . Bring your appetite with you, for this is the Calaveras County Historical Society's annual Pie Social. Sampling of the products of our ladies' culinary arts will follow a regular 7:30 p.m. business meeting in the Mountain Ranch Community Hall.

An added feature will be a presentation of old-time

NEW MEMBERS

Calaveras County Historical Society welcomes the following new members of our organization:

Al & June D'Andrea, San Andreas.
Lori Carley Fraguero, San Andreas.
Joseph Sanderson, Linden.
John & Jane Martin, San Andreas.
Mrs. Catherine Koehler, Fresno.
Elaine Graham, Lodi.
Robert Ross Family, Stockton.
Jack & Dennette Bettencourt, Angels Camp.
Charnette Boylan, San Andreas.
Walter & Jeanette Brown, Murphys.
Ed & Chris Connerley, Copperopolis.
D. Rake, Murphys.
Paul Reed, Elkhart, Ind.
Linda & Jim DuHamel, Mokelumne Hill.
Nancy L. Wendt, Hercules.
Mrs. R.N. Barbour, Stockton.
Jack Bertolotto, Valley Springs.
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Bradley, Vallecito.
Vern & Louella Cuneo, San Andreas.
Bonnie Jansson, San Andreas.
Mrs. Ben Miller, Stockton.
Marge Mobley, Mountain Ranch.
Irene Munson, Mokelumne Hill.
Joe Senn, Murphys.
Jalynne Tobias, San Andreas.
Ralph Shock, Jamestown.
Ted & Sharon Linow, Valley Springs.
Mr. & Mrs. P.H. Jackson, San Andreas.

IN MEMORIAM

C.D. (Moxie) Folendorf, Angels Camp, Sept. 30, 1988
Florence Peek, Mokelumne Hill, Oct. 10, 1988
James Cheseborough, Avery, Oct. 27, 1988
Douglas J. Armstrong, San Andreas, Dec. 23, 1988

dancing by Ozzie and Roberta Kenyon, who recently returned from dancing in Russia.

March 23 . . . "Joaquin Murieta — The Myth and the Man" will be the subject of California author and historian William Secrest at 7:30 p.m. in the music room at Bret Harte High School. Secrest, an authority on California Gold Rush history, belongs to Fresno County Historical Society.