



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society  
Volume XXII January 1974 Number 2

## Populations Of Calaveras County

By Richard B. Stockton

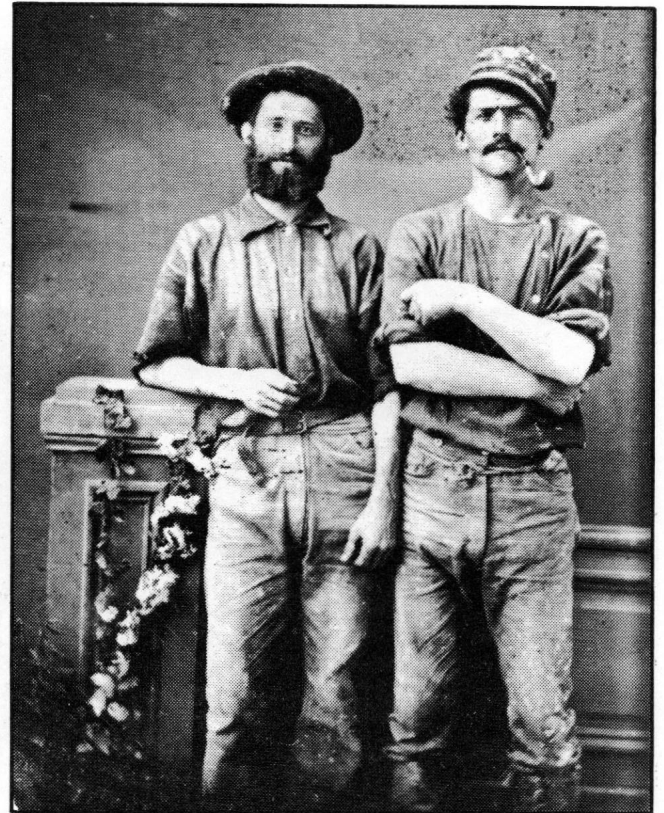
Rather than presenting the histories of people and places in Calaveras County, the article following is a study, starting from the early census figures, to try and explain some of the whys and wherefores in the development of the county. This is a departure from our usual approach to local history, and is an interpretive analysis of the background which led to the population development of Calaveras County.

In the pursuit of research into the origins and activities of the population of the county, few persons give thought to the region prior to the Gold Rush. Little is known of the time. The area was populated by a few Indians, and visited by some Mexican cattle ranchers and occasional bands of French trappers. No record has been kept, and research turns up very little.

It was known that the Indians had gold in their possession, but the source was kept a closely guarded secret. It has been said, and cannot be proven, that the French trappers were the first to find the source, but they likewise kept their secret. However this may be, the discovery at Sutter's Mill changed all that, and the resulting influx of people into our area presents an interesting study.

Richard Stockton, former instructor in History and presently vice-principal of Calaveras High School, who spoke to the Society on the subject a year ago, has provided us with a picture of the ebb and flow of humanity in Calaveras County, with some explanation of the causes and effects of population drift due to economics, spirit of adventure, or whatever. This article is not intended to be an exhaustive exposition of the subject, but more an introduction, with the hope that others will delve deeper into the matter. We are sure that many descendants of the early miners, storekeepers, doctors, woodsmen, and others, will recognize their beginnings as Mr. Stockton's study progresses. ED.

The study of populations, which we call demography, can by itself be a fascinating one, or it can be used profitably to



**MINERS OF THE GOLD RUSH**

Typical of the miners of the day who rushed by the thousands to the diggings in Calaveras County, are the two pictured above. Their names are unknown; we do not know where they came from nor where they went. They were a part of the population on the move. Few of the early day miners stayed on to become permanent residents.

Loaned by Mrs. Eva Soracco  
understand history. Population data include not only head counts, but also numerical and qualitative information about ages, sex, and such conditions of life as births, deaths, migrations, economic conditions, living standards, and the like. This article attempts to provide insights into some of the consequences of the numbers and kinds of people who have lived in Calaveras County by focusing with some basic demographic insights onto selected population data.

Generally, students of California history have treated population data much as they have other historical facts, as demonstrated by the author's own thumbnail sketch:

Large numbers of migrants, most of whom were male and American, lured by gold, descended upon sparsely populated, pastoral California. Tumultuous economic and social consequences followed. In the cities, fervent wheeling and dealing economic activity in commerce, finance, and building passed for honest work. Social vices and out-and-out criminality made the keep of many, and ironically provided



#### **GOLD MINERS HAND DRILLING**

One miner holds the drill steel while the other hits it with the hammer or double-jack. The shift boss (left) keeps an eye on the situation. This interesting underground picture was taken in the Gwin Mine during the latter part of the last century. California Division of Mines

a large part of the social activity of honest men, who organized fraternal-civic-patriotic associations such as the Vigilantes, in order to control the criminal elements.

In the early mining camps, the "buddy system" emerged as the primary economic unit. Improving placer techniques rapidly gleaned nuggets from streams, forcing the settlement of new camps. Lacking permanency to attest to other accomplishments, the early mining camps gained perhaps undue notoriety for drinking, gambling, claim-jumping, hanging and other vices.

The brief "social and economic consequences" described above are tenable, but rather terse comments on the history of the state as a whole. Certainly they blur the consequences of the number and quality of populations peculiar to Calaveras County.

### **Population Tallies and Migration**

Possibly the first attempt to ascertain the numbers of non-Indians living in the Calaveras region had to do with the August, 1849, election of delegates to the Monterey Convention. In the gold rush classic, "Eldorado," Bayard Taylor vividly describes the election of November 13th, 1849, at Lower Bar on the Mokelumne, which was held to ratify the resulting State Constitution.

Taylor says, in his preface, "The condition of California during

the latter half of the year 1849 was as transitory as it was marvelous . . ." This is a basic problem which in one degree or another plagues any kind of a census: while tallies represent more or less an effort to count accurately the population in a given area, populations are dynamically changing. Populations change only by one or a combination of three ways: by births, by deaths, and by migrations.

### **The Importance of Migration**

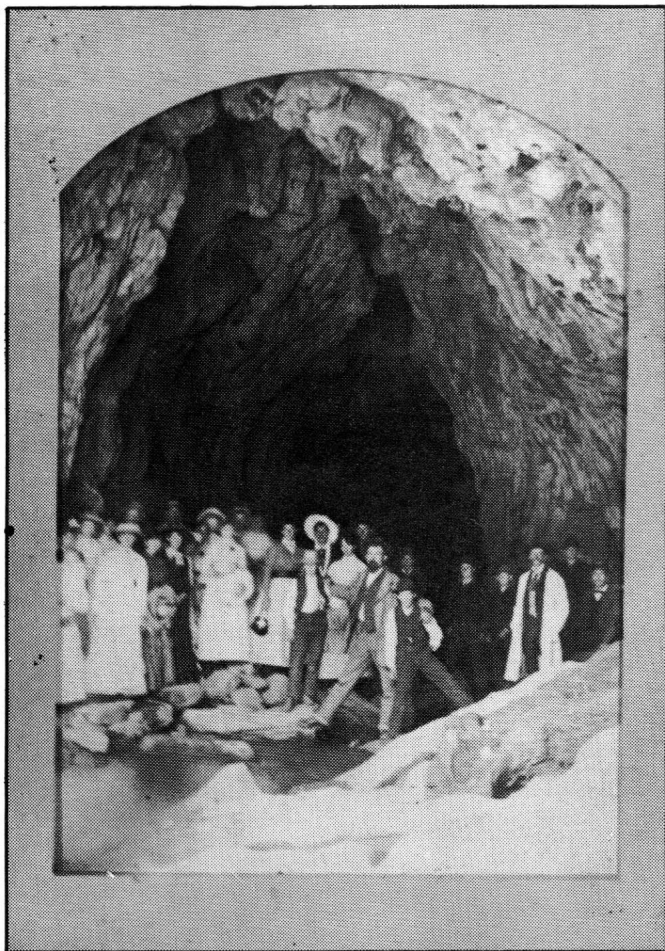
Migrations to and from Calaveras County have not been just an interesting story; migrations began white man's history in the county, and have continued to be an inseparable part of the history of the "Land of the Skulls".

We refer to influxes of people as "in-migrations," and to their moving away as "out-migrations." Of the three elements of population change, migration figures are usually the least precise. Births and deaths have been heralded and mourned, and generally have been recorded. Moreover, births and deaths are predictable and final for a given population. Migrations, on the other hand, occur at widely varying rates and for many reasons: the push-pull of economic opportunities, political and religious freedoms, and psychological reasons, including wanderlust. Transients are the least missed and last noted members of a community.

## The Federal Census

The Federal Census, in its Seventh Edition when it first recorded Calaveras County in 1850, is the first official and generally authoritative source of population data of the county.\* Table 1 has been constructed from this and succeeding decennial censuses, and from the special census of 1852.

\*The "Index to the 1850 Census of California," a copy of which is in the County Library in San Andreas, lists by name each of the residents tallied that year.



SIGHTSEERS IN A CALAVERAS CAVE

Next to the Big Trees, the county's caves were the leading tourist attraction in early days. This is probably an underground cavern at Cave City. Later, Mercer's Cavern and Moaning Cave were opened up and have continued to be popular to the present day, although now, with skiing, camping, hiking, rafting, hunting, sightseeing, bottle digging and other forms of recreation, "spelunking" is but a minor activity. In the aggregate, the recreation "industry" has become a powerful element in the county's population growth.

Gift of Judge J. A. Smith

TABLE I  
DECENNIAL AND 1852 POPULATIONS  
OF CALAVERAS COUNTY  
WITH SELECTED DATA BY SEX AND RACE

Census	Total	Male	Female	Chinese	Black	Indian
1850	16,884	16,537	265	3657	84	
1852	20,183	18,679	1504	1441	169	1982
1860	16,299	13,698	2601	1037	95	1
1870	8,895	6,246	2649	326	31	18
1880	9,094			148	56	169
1890	8,882			49	77	77
1900	11,200			23	69	100
1910	9,791	5,452	3,719	10		161
1920	6,183					65
1930	6,008	3,497	2,511		11	125
1940	8,221					
1950	9,902					
1960	10,289					
1970	13,585	7,104	6,481		139	171

In 1850, Calaveras County was reported to have 5588 "families" who lived in 5588 dwellings. The census listed 80 farms, all unimproved, comprising 14,820 acres, with no agricultural production. The county could boast, however, of 1285 "horses, asses and mules", 1981 cattle, 18 sheep, and 19 swine. School enrollment totalled 67 "scholars," including two females. Only 203 residents were illiterate, native whites. The foreign born in Calaveras County numbered 5855, and the U.S. born, 10,857. Indians were not counted.

The population of the entire state of California, for instance, according to the census of 1850, was 91,635, including 962 free blacks. Thus, about 18% lived in Calaveras County as then defined.

In 1852, when the county still included Amador, Alpine, and Mono counties, the foreign-born numbered 10,735, including 395 females. Only "domesticated" Indians were counted. The blacks included 38 mulattoes.

In 1855, Amador County was organized, and Old Townships 1, 2, and 3 transferred to the new county.

In 1860 Calaveras count included 130 Chinese and 12 black females. In 1863, Alpine (685) and Mono (430) counties were organized, and those populations segregated from Calaveras County. In 1870, the California-born in Calaveras numbered 2600; about 4000 were U.S.-born. Germans and Irish followed the Chinese in numbers. The 18 Indians lived in Townships 8 and 9. At that time, the old townships were numbered as follows: San Andreas, 5; Moke Hill-West Point, 6; El Dorado-Rail Road-Washington, 7; Angels-Altaville-Copperopolis, 8; Douglas Flat-Vallecito-Murphys, 9; Jenny Lind-Milton, 10.

The 1870 figures were taken on the renumbered townships: San Andreas, 1; Moke Hill, 2; Murphys, 3; Angels, 4; and Jenny Lind, 5. West Point was separated from Moke Hill in 1930 as No. 6

In 1970, the high figure for blacks included 120 in Fricot School.

Table 2 shows population clusters from 1870 (the first time the census was taken by new township numbers) to 1930. The racial



**TABLE II  
POPULATION BY TOWNSHIP AND RACE**

	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
<b>1 - San Andreas</b>	1800	1675	1640	1683	1120	869	1082
Indian	0						
Black	11						
Chinese	500						
<b>2 - Mokelumne Hill</b>	1600	1310	2002	1971	1713	1037	595
Indian	0						
Black	9						
Chinese	256						
<b>3 - Murphys</b>	1129	1111	1532	1563	1077	657	768
Indian	15						
Black	3						
Chinese	71						
<b>4 - Angels Camp</b>	1748	1381	1950	4258	3370	2224	1894
Indian	3						
Black	4						
Chinese	222						
<b>5 - Jenny Lind</b>	480	874	1758	1725	1891	1306	1198
Indian	0						
Black	4						
Chinese	82						
<b>6 - West Point</b>							
Camanche-Campo Seco	960	827					471
Chinese	216						
<b>El Dorado-Rail Road</b>	1178	1916					
Chinese	94						



**WALLACE SCHOOL**

Teacher Mary Mulgrew, extreme right, impatiently holds her bell, waiting for the photographer to take his picture and leave. Three of the mothers join the group, next to her. The Haddock, Grishaber, Lucas, Wiley, Fessier, Peterson, Holman, Martell,

Evans, Hatler, Tirrett, Nichols, Hannigan, Stockwell, and Emmett families are represented. Mrs. Lucas, nearest to the teacher, has six of her offspring in the picture, which was taken in 1888. Gift of Walter Haddock



breakdown for 1880 on was not summarized by townships. The West Point population was included with Mokelumne Hill until 1930. Camanche, Campo Seco, El Dorado and Rail Road Flat were segregated until 1890, when they were merged into the 5 townships.

### Factors of Calaveras Growth

The tallies of the 1850 census and the 1852 special census, taken at the request of the state, are those for "Greater Calaveras County," which included substantial numbers from Amador County (organized 1855). Amador had a population of 10,930 by 1860, according to the census for that year. Probably Amador County's population accounted for less than 40 per cent of the Calaveras tallies for 1850 and 1852, an estimate based on numbers of townships and placer streams in both areas.

If this estimate were close to the truth, the area encompassed by present-day Calaveras County would have had a population of about 9950 in 1850, and about 12,110 in 1852, with an increase in numbers of 6349 and a growth rate of 64 per cent for the decade ending in 1860. The peak gold rush population was probably reached in the mid-fifties.

That virtually all of the growth of Calaveras County can be attributed to migration should be apparent when one considers the biological necessity that women bear children. Assuming 159 women in 1852 lived in what is now Calaveras County, natural increase at the now common rate of 2 percent each year would allow for only 70 births for the decade. In rural America during the 1850's, an annual growth rate of 3.5 per cent from natural increase was not uncommon, but such a rate would still allow for only 133 births. A glance at Table 3 affirms that there were over 1800 children between the ages of birth and nine by 1860!

(Ed. Note) These children came, of course, with their families, across the plains or by way of the Isthmus of Panama to Calaveras County. A few of these, selected at random from the pages of "Las Calaveras," included the Kirk, Fisk, Gauchet,

Canepa, Sheldon, Bouldin, Wheat, March, and Hughes families, who crossed the plains with young children. The Haupt, Greve, Antonini, Reddick, Love, and Haddock families came across the Isthmus.

Populations increase geometrically like compound interest; therefore, projections for growth may be made by using similar mathematics. As a possible point of interest, the 1850 population of the area comprising present-day Calaveras County, growing at an annual rate of 3 per cent, would have in 1974 totaled approximately 13,038, a figure very close to the official 1974 count. The 1860 population - with 5 times as many women as the 1850 population, but with men still outnumbering women by 5 to 1 - when projected to 1974, with an annual growth rate of 3 per cent, would allow for a population of over 156,000! From the above, we can see that while in-migration has accounted for most of Calaveras' early growth, out-migration has been 10 times again a greater factor in keeping Calaveras' population down over subsequent years.

### The Demography of Rural Areas

Rural areas share several demographic characteristics. They have been areas of high birth rates and sources of high out-migrations. Young adults migrate more than their elders, and women migrate more than men, though for shorter distances. "How're ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm" is a line based on demographic experiences. However, the pull of gold, timber, and recreation have made Calaveras atypical among rural counties, in that periodically these factors have contributed to population surges, which have been then abated by out-migrations, especially by those in prime child-bearing ages.

### The Importance of Age

The Federal Census tallies populations by ages as well as by sex. A population which has more of its members between the

TABLE III  
AGES BY SEX FOR WHITES - 1850, 1860 & 1970  
AND BY FARM AND NON-FARM - 1930

Age	1850		1860		1930		1970	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Nonfarm	Farm	Male	Female
0 - 1	0	1	139	106	63	12	80	81
1 - 4	27	14	490	473	324	67	320	323
5 - 9	21	13	316	295	358	130	522	523
10 - 14	97	12	221	162	331	131	734	567
15 - 19	72	42	267	149	317	159	631	475
20 - 29	9286	113	3186	586	298	100	767	722
30 - 39	4386	57	3548	448	315	81	735	707
40 - 49	1547	9	1345	161	306	92	796	910
50 - 59	342	4	457	56	686	224	802	811
60 - 69	63	0	112	19	549	251	990	848
70 - 79	4	0	2	0	450	228		
80 - 89	2	0	3	2	282	172	827	616
Unknown	42	0	0	0	106	50		

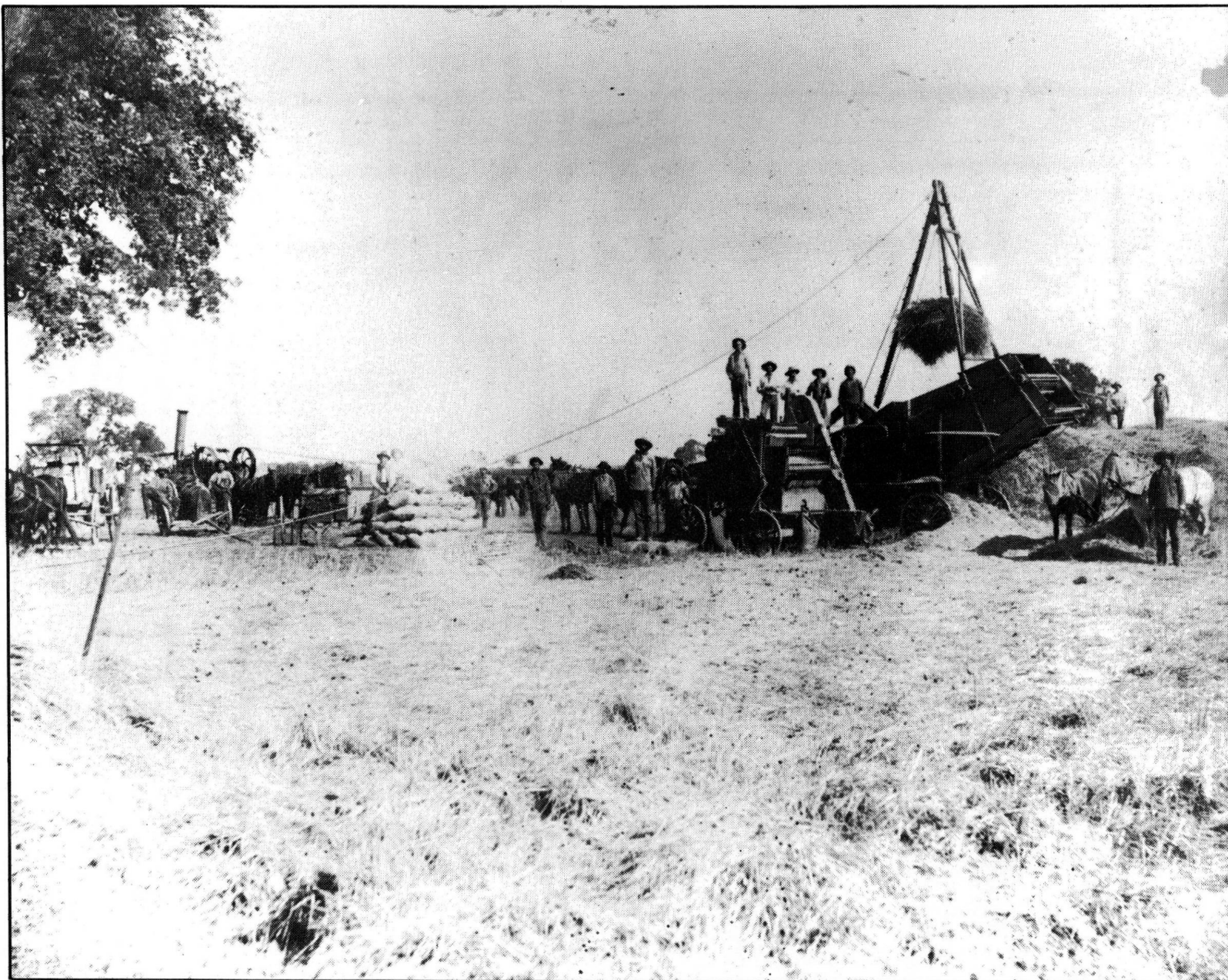


#### WOODSMEN - NEAR AVERY

Timbering has always provided many jobs in our county, and has helped smooth out the ups and downs of mining. Here, about 1885, Robert Haddock and Henry Little get set up to fall another

Ponderosa. Note the springboards they are standing on, and their tools, even to the oil bottle, all ready for use. These men were working for McKay's mill. Donated by Walter Haddock





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**THRESHING GRAIN - 1898**

Andrew Sinclair (tall man standing in center) and his brother bringing their machine from Jenny Lind to the Haddock ranch near Wallace. In those days, grain (wheat, oats and barley) and truck gardens provided much of the food needed by the county's

population. These fields and gardens have long since reverted to pastures, and the working farmers and ranchers have dwindled to small numbers. Note the straw-burning traction engine, supplying the power, with a long belt, for the separator.

Gift of Walter Haddock





MAIN STREET, ANGELS CAMP

From a view taken in the eighties. Note that only two women are to be seen. In that decade, Angels Camp reached the low point, population-wise, in its history. By 1890, the deep Angels mines had

prime working ages of 20 and 60, for example, can be more productive than another which has most of its members as young or old dependents. Similarly, a population which has many women within prime child-bearing ages will grow at a more rapid rate than one which does not. Table 3 depicts Calaveras County, and has been prepared from the Federal Census for the years indicated. The left hand column contains age-cohorts, a cohort being those persons who fall within a specified age group.

### Analysis of Selected Calaveras Populations

Several observations are suggested by the data in Table 3. Calaveras County is, and has been a rural county, but its peculiar history has made it unlike other rural counties. The 1850 population — the result of gold discovery — was well supplied with men in prime working ages. These men could and did glean gold from streams at a rate not to be equalled by a society with common male-female sex ratios and age distributions several times its size.

Socially and domestically, the over 15,000 adult men and fewer than 200 adult women presented a rather uncommon situation. The 5588 families living in those 5588 dwellings obviously lacked

attracted a lively influx, including many of European birth, and the town prospered as never before.

#### Gift of Mrs. Annetta Cosgrove Chapman

the women's presence. Historically, the women attracted by such an army of young men have been far from exclusively those intent on tending home and hearth. While the gold-seekers had few close-at-hand dependent upon them, neither had they many to tend to their wants. Of necessity, they cared for themselves and made do with as little as necessary.

Children aged 14 and under in 1850 are disproportionately represented by boys; apparently the belief was that little boys were more fit than little girls to come to the gold country. Undoubtedly the natural selection imposed by long travel and arduous work screened men willing to endure the privations of ascetic monks. More likely their intentions to reap a quick harvest and return home were manifest by out-migrations, with or without gold.

In several respects, the 1860 population of Calaveras County is similar to that of 1850. While there was a decrease in the ratio of men to women, it remained excessive. Were one not well aware of the capacity of women to interject elements of refinement into the pioneering environment, one might suspect little change. Children aged 0-9 suggest high birth rates for the women of the county; low ratio of young girls aged 10-14 and 15-19 suggests that more boys than girls were coming west, and that older girls may

already have been leaving the "diggings" for schooling or up-bringing in the cities.

Let us now jump ahead a century and more. The population reflected in the 1970 census differs markedly from that of California as a whole, and to no small extent from that of rural areas in general. For example, Calaveras County was one of only four rural California counties to gain population during the last decade. Unlike the state as a whole, the elderly are disproportionately male in the county. Populations are sometimes represented graphically by pyramids, the young being added at the bottom of the pyramid yearly, and the elderly represented at its peak. Calaveras' population thus represented would look more like a barrel! (See Figure 1)

The young are with us here in Calaveras in great numbers; young adults out-migrate for husbands, military service, education, and jobs. Those who have jobs and retirees in-migrate in their middle and later years. The effect is heightened even beyond normal mortality because persons in their 30's and early 40's were born in the low birth rate of the depression. One subsidizing effect of this is increased social costs which must be borne by the smaller middle group.

The decade which ended in 1970 saw Calaveras' population increase by over 32 per cent. In-migration and natural increase exceeded out-migration. The extent of in-migration can be appreciated by noting that the Calaveras Unified School District's first grade classes totaled 77 in 1960, and had grown to 186 as third-year high school students eleven years later!

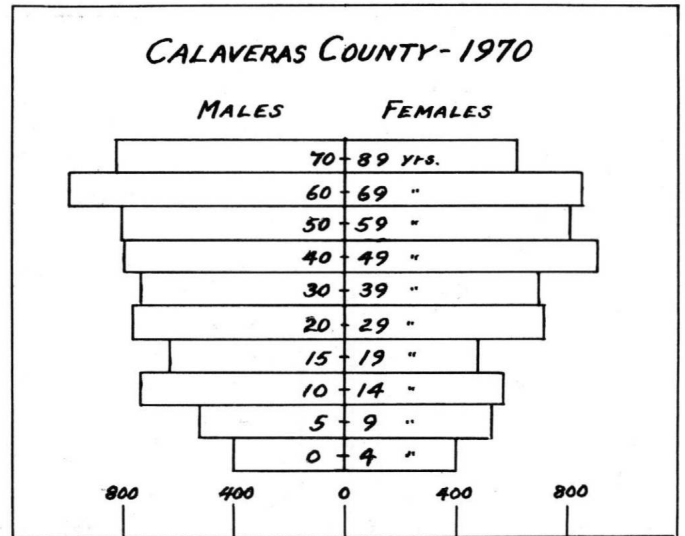


Figure 1

In Figure 2 are percentages of population increases and decreases for Calaveras County, 1850-1970, and the male-female distribution.

### Summary

In- and out-migrations have been the measure of prosperity and hard times in Calaveras County. For the most part, outside economic forces, including their technological, psychological,

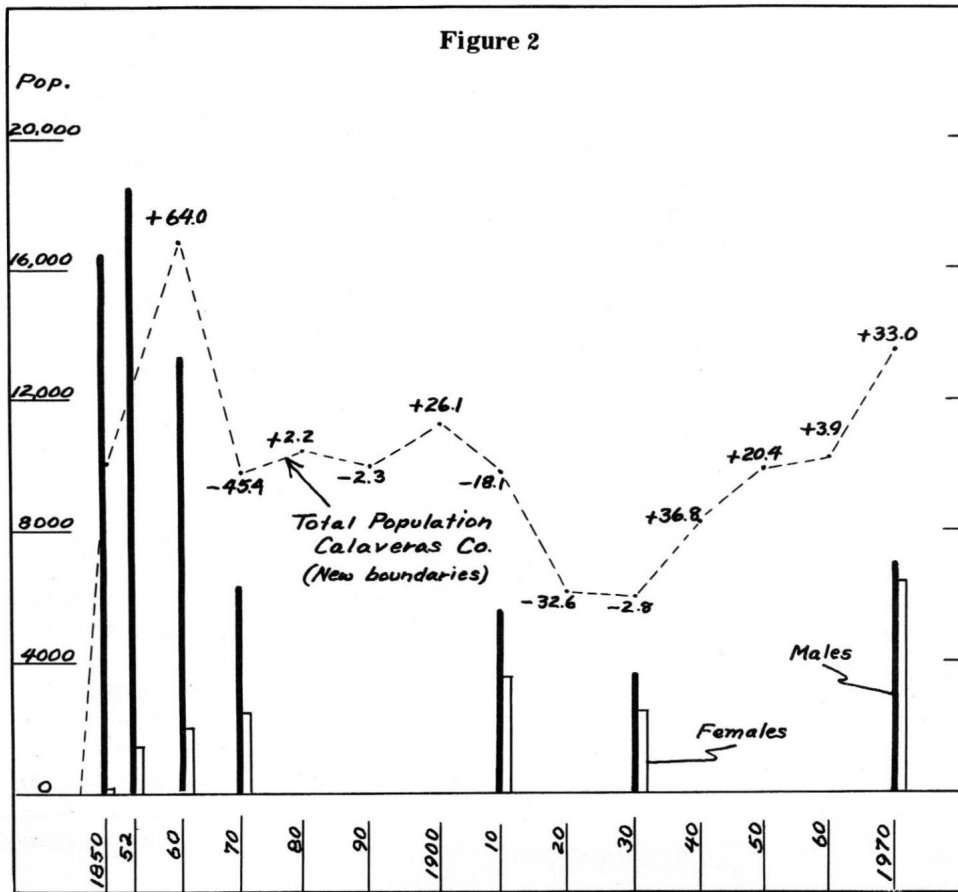


TEACHERS EXAMINATION DAY - 1893

Some ten men and thirteen women came hopefully to the county seat, to take their examinations. This was almost the only form of

employment in which ladies could compete successfully in those days with the stronger sex. Age doesn't seem to be a factor either.

From Society Files



and political aspect, have pulled the string which has “yo-yoed” local population levels, as shown in Figure 2. From our vantage point today, it is not too easy a task to explain satisfactorily all these variations and unusual features in the population figures that we have discussed above.

There were many inter-related factors, including the ups and downs of mining, financial crises and economic cycles, war periods, timbering, and finally recreation and real estate booms, that have triggered these in- and out-migrations.

Mining has been, for the greater part of our history, the most important factor. Calaveras County was remarkably productive during the first decade of the gold mining period, but by the middle 1850's most of the richest placers had been ravaged. Miners easily succumbed to the pull of new rushes to other fields. The intense copper boom of the early 60's is responsible for the energetic and populous communities of Copperopolis, Campo Seco, and Telegraph City during those years. Hard rock mining took hold slowly during the late 60's, 70's, and early 80's, and relatively small numbers of miners found employment, and those chiefly at the Gwin, Sheepranch, and Carson Hill Mines. The extension of the railroads to Milton, and later to Valley Springs, contributed to mining activity and to the local economy in general; the importance of the railroads was more a matter of job expansion

than one of travel ease in influencing positively population levels.

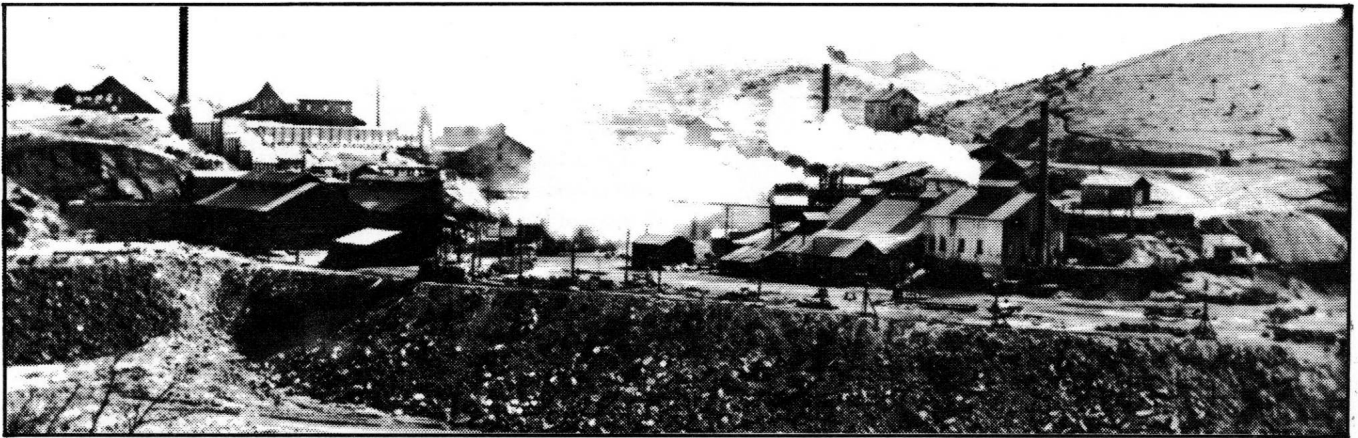
Starting in the late 80's, increasing in the 90's, and extending well into the new century, both gold and copper mines boomed. The Gwin mine reopened, the Angels Camp district prospered, the Hodson area bloomed, and the Carson Hill—Melones mines consolidated for profitable operations. Many hydraulic and drift mines exploited extensive deposits of Tertiary gravels in the county. Hydraulic mines had been operated even during the late 1850's in Calaveras County.

The demise of hydraulic mining was hastened by the Sawyer Decision, 1884, which prohibited such mining without waste storage behind costly dams. Minor hydraulic operations continued behind small dams; but some larger operations ceased, their losses in gold production masked by increased production from other sources in the county.

Gold dredging of main county streams became an important activity about the turn of the century. Copper smelters were built at Copperopolis and Campo Seco, and these communities played out nearly two decades of uncertain prosperity.

By 1905, however, the turn-of-the-century mining boom had peaked, and the county entered into a steady decline in metal production, with the almost complete absence of serious mining





**THE PENN COPPER SMELTER**

This extensive industrial enterprise supported a large payroll near Campo Seco during the first two decades of the century. Large teams hauled oil and other supplies from the railhead at Valley Springs to the smelter, and brought the smelter "matte"

back to Valley Springs. A similar and somewhat larger copper-producing complex operated at Copperopolis and was served by team from Milton.

**From Society Files**

by the late 20's. Limestone quarrying for cement manufacture, starting in 1926, began to reverse the downward mining trend.

Government monetary policies, business cycles, and financial crises have both obvious and subtle effects on regions whose economies are tied to precious metals. The "hard money—dear money" policies of Grand Old Party Republicans and Gold Democrats in the last quarter of the nineteenth century contributed to the degree of gold prosperity in Calaveras County. "The Crime of '73", an infamous monetary policy which at first seemed not to hurt silver interests, proved in less than ten years to be a boon to gold producers. The Gold Act, 1934, while ending gold coinage and gold holdings by private persons, nearly doubled the price of gold. Ironically, nearly 100 years after the Crime of '73, the free market price of silver soared before government-pegged gold prices in the United States were allowed to rise.

Nationwide financial crises have periodically dried up regular sources of mining capital. Gold mining, however, often booms in such times. Many men have been willing to eke out a living reworking placer deposits and looking for "pockets". Investors, uneasy about "cheap" paper money and securities, have been willing to risk inflation-threatened assets in gold speculations.

In Calaveras County during the depression, such conditions, coupled with the Gold Act, led to "beans and bacon" mining, as well as the reworking of such famous old properties as the Sheep-ranch and Carson Hill-Melones mines, and some of the old drift mines. With the rest of the country still in the grip of the depression, Calaveras County saw its population close out the decade with a net gain of over 36 per cent.

The war booms of the teens and early forties had the offsetting effects of drawing away skilled labor for the war plants, and at the same time pulling back others for the copper and timber industries. In World War I, the net effect appears to have been a population decrease, but in World War II, and increase.

The recreation industry, if we may call it that, has a history nearly as long as gold mining, but unlike the latter, it started small, and has only slowly swelled into one of the major economic factors in the county today. Coupled with recreation has been the spectacular land boom of the sixties and early seventies, placing unexpected burdens upon the county's organizations, with a startling effect on the population picture. An interesting aspect of this has been the increased movement of retirees to the county, with small service businesses to exploit the increase in population.

The recounting of population losses, over the decades in Calaveras County should not necessarily be construed as lamentations. Increased population usually means increased social and environmental costs, as we have seen so dramatically in recent years. Population losses, however, have been human costs. Many sons and daughters have left Calaveras to take up lives elsewhere. Whole families have out-migrated amid sorrow at leaving a home of years and generations. Thus we pay a human price in keeping the pristine and sylvan character of our countryside.

### **Forthcoming Meetings**

February 28th - Grange Hall, San Andreas, "Sheep Ranch", Lester Canevaro

March 28th - Grange Hall, San Andreas, "The Airola Family"

### **Annual Dues Raised**

With great reluctance, the Society voted to raise dues from \$4 to \$5 for single membership, and from \$6 to \$7 for families. This has been the first increase since the Society was founded in 1952. The raise became necessary to offset the constantly increasing costs of running the Society. The new rates will become effective July 1, 1974.

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Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. Individual memberships (\$4.00 a year). Family (\$6.00) and Junior memberships (\$1.00) include subscription to Las Calaveras. Non-members may obtain copies of Las Calaveras from the Secretary. The original historical material in this bulletin is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source will be appreciated.

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 Finds A Home

As we go to press, we learn that the county supervisors have assigned a small office in the old Odd Fellows Hall, 16 Main Street, to the Society for its headquarters.

## IN MEMORIAM

A. S. McSorley  
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Walter A. Haddock  
 Edythe A. Domenghini



**MOKELUMNE HILL PIONEERS**

These people came to Moke Hill in the early days and stayed on. At the turn of the century, they gather on Main Street for a picture. Standing (left to right) Charles Wells, Eugene Burce, Joel

Hamby, Unknown, Colonel Robinson, Charles Rice, Daniel Black, George Emerson, and George Fischer. Sitting are Mrs. Wells, Mrs. Zumwalt and an unknown pioneer.

From Society Files