



CALAVERAS COUNTY BRIDGES--FERRIES

PARROTT'S FERRY AND BRIDGES

By J. A. SMITH

The site of the Parrott's ferry and bridge was on the Stanislaus River between the towns of Columbia in Tuolumne County and Vallecito in Calaveras County. The site was originally called Walker's Bar. In November, 1863, J. D. Garland operated the ferry as Garland's Ferry and at that date sold a fourth interest in the property to one Henry Cousins for the sum of \$1500. The deed recites that it was formerly Bradbury's Ferry on the Stanislaus River two miles below Abbey's Ferry. Cousins sold to Harvey Wood and later Wood and S. W. Newlon sold the property to Lorenzo Pendola. At this time, February 26, 1867, it was called Colton and Pendola's Ferry.

Pendola greatly improved the property. Colton surveyed the road and it was improved and on June 21, 1869, Pendola sold the property to N. Anderson. Mr. Anderson conducted the ferry but a short time until his death. Anderson's estate was probated in Calaveras County with W. F. Colton named as administrator and the property was sold out of the estate to Thomas H. Parrott in 1871. The Parrott family lived on the property on the Calaveras side of the river and operated the property until Mr. Parrott's death. Thereafter, it went to his daughter Cecelia and from 1895 to 1897 was operated on a percentage basis by one J. J. Groeper.

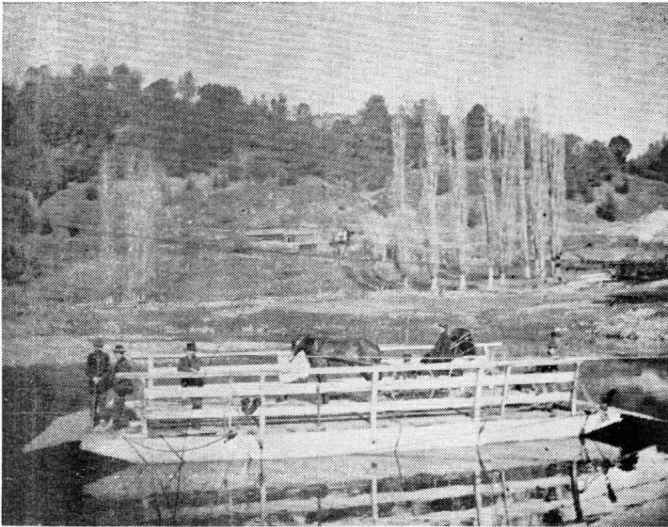
Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties erected a bridge on the site in 1903. Cotton Bros. of Oakland, California, were the contractors. The south end of the bridge was five feet lower than the northern end and during the high water of December 11, 1937, the bridge was washed away. The following year, a new concrete bridge was built by the joint counties of Calaveras and Tuolumne a short distance up stream from the location of the old bridge.

Nelson & Wallace of Escalon, California, were the contractors and the cost was \$26,662, exclusive of the approaches.

Note. It is apparent that a ferry was being conducted at the site prior to 1862, and that the high water of 1862 washed away the ferry boat, and that the ferry boat that had been used at Abbey's Ferry farther upstream was floated down the river and placed in service at Walker's Bar and the ferry at Abbey's discontinued. (See article on Abbey's Ferry.)



The old ferry boat's last trip across the Stanislaus River at Parrott's Ferry. This boat gave way to the new bridge.



Picture of Wood's Ferry crossing the Stanislaus River at Robinson Ferry (Later Melones). Percy Wood is operating this boat. His sister, Allie Wood Eagen, is in the buggy crossing from the Calaveras County side to Tuolumne County side.

ROBINSON'S FERRY

By J. A. SMITH

John W. Robinson and Stephen Mead established Robinson's Ferry across the Stanislaus River on the road between Angels Camp and Sonora. These two men had come to the Stanislaus River in 1848 and built the first ferryboat ever operated on the river. They first had a small boat capable of taking foot passengers only, but as demand for service increased, they built the larger ferryboat. The rush to the mines was so great in 1849 that in a period of six weeks \$10,000 was collected for ferry service.

Harvey Wood arrived on the Stanislaus River in August, 1849, but he crossed the river at McLean's Ferry, a short distance up the river. He had sailed from New York in February, 1849, on the good ship William B. Travis. He and his mining partners, Jacob M. Fouse and Abraham Huyler, set to work and built a cabin for winter use and started mining near Robinson's Ferry. Besides running the ferry, Robinson and Mead also had a trading post and Harvey Wood tells about some of the prices charged. He says that one night after a lucky day at mining, he and his partners decided to have a splurge and after buying some sardines and jam and a few other items, they discovered that their meal cost them \$16 each.

In 1856, Harvey Wood secured the Robinson interest in the property at the ferry. The Mead interest had been sold to George Graham in 1853 for \$10,000. He sold it to a man named French and Wood secured it from the latter. Wood continued to operate the ferry until it was purchased by Calaveras and Tuolumne counties for the site of a concrete bridge. The bridge was constructed by Jorgensen Bros. and collapsed in 1952. A new concrete bridge was built by the State of California a few feet downstream and opened for traffic in July, 1953.

At the August, 1850, term of the Court of Sessions, a license was issued to John W. Robinson and Stephen Mead to maintain a ferry on the Stanislaus River at a point known as Robinson's Ferry. For this right they were required to furnish a bond in the sum of \$10,000.

PARROTT'S FERRY

By ELIZABETH KALER

Miss Parrott lived in Altaville for several years after the ferry was replaced by the bridge. (Whether she was there the day of the dedication, I don't know, but I hardly think so.) It seemed she was much opposed to giving up her father's ferry and it affected her mind slightly. She talked about it and it always appeared to upset her.

She was fond of children and often visited the Altaville school. Where she lived in Altaville was in the midst of families with children and quite frequently she had the children attend to her errands, and though they liked her and did many things for her, still they often teased her, but she didn't seem to mind.

The day of the dedication of the new bridge was a great day. Congratulations were poured forth upon Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, and there was a great deal of speechmaking, cheering and handclapping.

When the tumult and the shouting were over, a quiet little man in the crowd who had run the ferry said: "That is all very well, but what about me? You have taken my living away from me," and he turned and walked away from the crowd.

McLEAN'S FERRY

By JUDGE J. A. SMITH

This probably was the first ferry established on the Stanislaus River. It was about a mile and a half upstream from Robinson's Ferry.

In his personal recollections, Harvey Wood, an early resident of Robinson's Ferry, stated that he crossed the Stanislaus River in August, 1849, on McLean's Ferry.

At the meeting of the Court of Sessions for Calaveras County, held at Double Springs on December 13, 1850, Bonner and Cowles filed a petition with the court asking permission to be licensed to conduct a ferry across the Stanislaus River at the site of McLean's Ferry. Opposition to the petition of Bonner & Cowles was filed and at a hearing, the Court of Sessions granted a license to Bonner & Cowles for the ferry and fixed the rates of toll to be charged.

Those who had opposed the granting of the franchise appealed the case to the District Court for the Fifth Judicial District, which court reversed the action of the Court of Sessions and ordered Bonner & Cowles to pay all costs.

Nothing further appears in the records.

"This is to certify that the undersigned have claimed and been in possession for upwards of two years for the purpose of a ferry about 500 yards of land on the banks of the Stanislaus River, County of Calaveras, beginning at a large oak tree opposite Jackass Gulch and running up the river to the first fall.

"McLean, Jeffry and Company, Stanislaus, June 14th, 1851. Filed at 11 o'clock a.m., June 14, 1851. Recorded on page 52 of the Miscellaneous Records of Calaveras County."

ABBEY'S FERRY

By J. A. SMITH

This ferry, sometimes called Abbott's Ferry, was located on the Stanislaus River between Calaveras and Tuolumne counties and at a point about two miles above the present Parrott Ferry bridge.

The road to the ferry led from Columbia, in Tuolumne County across the river, and up the north slope to a place known as Columbia Reservoir. At this point it branched and one branch led into Vallecito and the other, crossing Dry Creek, led to Douglas Flat and Murphys.

George W. Abbey, the original owner of the ferry, on March 26th, 1852, sold a half interest in the ferry to George Bowles, George McLean, and William Jeffery and on the following March conveyed his other half interest to Abner Reed and John M. Loring for the sum of \$7000. The deed recites that there is a dwelling house, saloon, and stable connected with the ferry, which improvements were on the Calaveras side of the river. The roads in Calaveras County leading to the ferry were in August, 1853, declared to be county roads.

Jeffery and McLean sold their interests in the ferry in 1857 to Daniel M. French and Joshua French for the sum of \$7000. Four years later Isaac N. Harding purchased the French interests.

In 1858, the Reed and Loring interests were sold to Joseph M. French for \$7500. In 1860, M. W. Parsons purchased the French interest in the ferry for \$6000.

During the high water of 1862 the ferry conducted by Colton and Pendola at Walker's Bar (Parrott's Ferry) was torn from its mooring and lost down the river. The Abbey Ferry boat was purchased and floated down to the site of Colton and Pendola's ferry and put into commission there.

In 1852 the license fee charged by the county to operate the ferry at Abbey's Ferry was \$250 per annum.

The records of the ferry abruptly end in the early '60's. This is probably due to a better road further downstream.

At one time a man, with his wife and child, were crossing the ferry on their way to Murphys to consult Dr. Jones. The ferryman wanted to tie the horse, but the man insisted that he could handle him. The horse was left untied and became frightened and backed the rig off the boat, drowning the family.

Oldtimers claim that the dwelling house at the ferry was torn down and rebuilt in Vallecito.

The last keeper of the ferry was a man named Morehouse.

The official map of Calaveras County calls the site Abbott's Ferry.

ABBEY'S FERRY DEED

G. W. Abbey to Abner Reed and John Loring. Dated March 24, 1853.

Consideration, \$7000.

Conveys: All the right, title and interest which said party of the first part has in and to the right, and franchise (the same being one undivided half of Abbey's Ferry, so-called and known), situated on the Stanislaus River between the town of Murphys and Vallecita in Calaveras County and the town of Columbia in the County of

Tuolumne, together with all the right, title and interest which the said party of the first part has in and to (being the undivided one-half) the one story and half dwelling house and stable situated at said Ferry on the north side of the Stanislaus River the County of Calaveras and all the pre-emption or possessory rights which the said party of the first part has in and to said ferry building and the land on which the same is situate and adjoining the same.

Recorded in Book A of Deeds, page 148, Calaveras County Records.

O'BYRNES FERRY BRIDGE

By J. A. SMITH

Patrick O. Byrnes erected the first bridge across the Stanislaus River at what is now called O'Byrnes Ferry. Apparently the name Patrick O. Byrnes became O'Byrnes. The first bridge was a wire suspension bridge, begun during the latter part of 1852 and completed in 1853. It was eight feet above high-water mark and constructed of chain cable.

This early bridge fell during the month of November, 1853. One of the supporting chains parted at one end. At the time the bridge collapsed there was a six-oxteam with two drivers crossing the bridge. The men managed to escape but the ox-team was lost in the rushing waters. It was estimated that the bridge could be repaired for the sum of \$3000. The bridge was repaired and continued in use until washed away by the high water of 1862. The bridge was a toll bridge with plank flooring.

The old bridge was replaced by a covered cantilever bridge and was ten feet higher than the wire suspension bridge that had been washed away.

This bridge was built by the Union Bridge Company, a stock company, and was later sold to Joe Paradise. Thereafter, Peter Camou, a nephew of Joe Paradise, became the owner of the bridge and operated it as a toll bridge until it was purchased by the counties of Calaveras and Tuolumne and opened to the public. One of the supporting arches within the structure is badly buckled and this condition has existed for many years. The cause of this buckling of one of the supporting arches is said to result from a workman tightening the bolts in the arch rather than loosening them for the rainy season.

On March 29, 1884, the following advertisement appeared in the Calaveras Citizen: "To the traveling public. The shortest and most direct route to Yosemite Valley. The undersigned respectfully announces that the Union Bridge crossing the Stanislaus River at O'Byrnes Ferry has been thoroughly repaired and is now ready for the traveling public. This is the only bridge crossing the Stanislaus River between Calaveras and Tuolumne counties. Joe Paradise, Proprietor."

It is claimed that in 1849 there was a large mining settlement at the site of the ferry, and that the camp was the locale for Bret Harte's story "The Outcasts of Poker Flat." A man named Joe Paradise conducted a store at the site for many years.

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Editor of Bulletin, Coke WoodMurphys

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Our first special publication, The Diary of T. J. Matteson, is now available to all members of the Calaveras Historical Society and their friends for 75 cents. It has been selling at a merry rate, so get your copy before they are all gone. Send one to a friend who is interested in the Mother Lode.

Our efficient secretary, Sadie Hunt, asked me to remind all charter members that the annual dues were payable on July 1st. Don't neglect to send in your dues. The cash in the treasury is low.

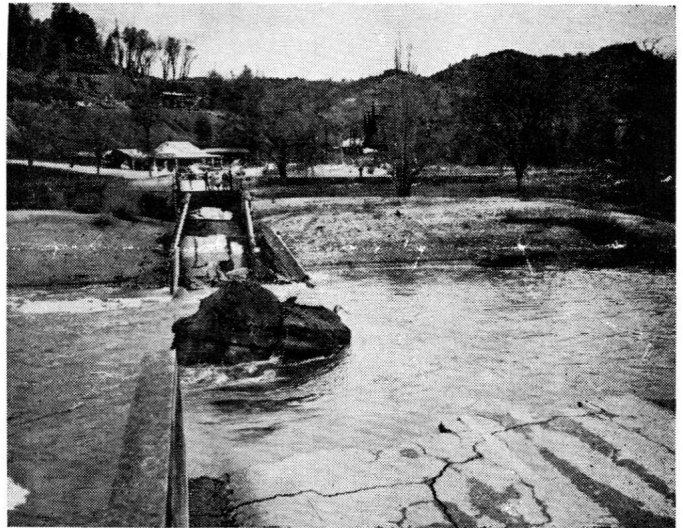
Your editor took part in the organization meeting of the Lodi Historical Society on June 23rd. There were about thirty interested people in attendance and, judging from the enthusiasm shown, they will soon have a lively organization. Mrs. Thomas Carey, columnist for the Lodi Sentinel, seems to be furnishing most of the energy necessary to get organized. She was chosen as chairman of the committee to plan for the July meeting. The Calaveras Historical Society sends best wishes for a lively and worthwhile organization.

Those of you who missed Eddie Webb's story of his experience driving stage coach from Chinese Camp into Yosemite Valley by way of the Big Oak Flat Road in the May meeting of the Society, really missed an enjoyable time. Eddie was a little shy at first, but once he began to relive his experiences, he forgot all about his shyness. We appreciate Archie Stevenot's kindness in getting him as a speaker and in bringing him to the meeting.

A recent statement by one of our old-time residents, as quoted in the Calaveras Californian, was that the Society in its publication Las Calaveras printed errors that should not be permitted to go uncorrected. This charge is one about which we are greatly concerned. Every effort is made by the editor to publish only material which is accurate as far as we are able to determine. Manuscripts are always checked with Judge Smith, and if there is a doubtful statement, it is left out. Articles signed by writers and dealing with their personal memories are not edited. We are in no position to tell them they are in error.

The suggestion was made that a publications committee be created to pass on all articles published in Las Calaveras.

We think that is a good idea. We also urge anyone finding an error in the historical material to notify us so that we may make a correction in the next issue of the bulletin. This publication goes into the archives of a large number of libraries and will be used as source material by future writers. We are anxious to make the material as accurate as possible.



Bridge over the Stanislaus River at Melones, collapsed at 1:40 p.m. January 25, 1952, on Mother Lode Highway 49.

JENNY LIND

The recent statement in the Calaveras Californian by D. C. Demorest, one of the oldtimers of Angels Camp and a member of our society, that he was told by his father that Jenny Lind sang in Angels Camp in Stickle's Hall and received more gold from the miners than any other performer, stimulated us to do some research on the subject.

The "Life of P. T. Barnum" states that the famous promoter brought the Swedish Nightingale to America on a tour between 1850 and 1852. It lists many of the performances of the singer and gives the amounts collected on performances but there is no mention of any concert on the Pacific Coast. New Orleans, New York, Boston and many other cities were visited, but none of them west of the Mississippi River. McMin's "History of the Theatre in California" was next consulted and no mention was made of Jenny Lind ever appearing in any concert in California.

Covert Martin, our enthusiastic member and booster from Stockton, gives me this story about the naming of the mining camp of Jenny Lind. He says the name was given to the camp because of the braying at night of the large number of pack mules which were in the corrals in the camp. Jenny Lind was on one of the main roads to the mines from Stockton, and it was a good place to stop for the night. Because of the chorus of braying set up by the mules during the night, the miners in derision called them Jenny Linds and the name was then attached to the camp.

Can anyone give any additional information on Jenny Lind?