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## WADE JOHNSTON TALKS TO HIS DAUGHTER

By EFFIE ENFIELD JOHNSTON

### SECOND INSTALLMENT

We began Wade Hampton Johnston's memoirs in our April issue in which he told about coming to California and to Yaqui Camp. In this installment, Johnston tells us the stories he heard about Joaquin Murietta. He never saw Joaquin, for he arrived in California after his capture. But he was well acquainted with a number of those pioneers who had been here during the short career of the celebrated bandit.

Johnston then continues his reminiscences with much comment about early days around San Andreas and Lower Calaveritas. Perhaps a lot of it seems trivial, but actually this is one of the very few first-hand accounts of those times and people in existence. For this reason, Johnston's remarks are of great value to the local historian, and do much to show us what life here was like a century or more ago and to give us at least a thumbnail sketch of some of the people.

Let us see now what he has to say about Joaquin:

### Joaquin Murietta

My old mining partner, Cap Ferguson, knew Joaquin before he turned desperado. They mined together on San Andreas Gulch below town when Joaquin was a beardless boy—a good boy and a good-looking boy.

I never heard that white men had "abused his sister," but Cap said that they had run Joaquin out of the mines, and it was the mean treatment by white men that caused him to turn desperado.

The Javier Salcido family in San Andreas said Joaquin was from a good family. They knew his people in Mexico. Old Jim Waters and many others living around here at the time had never seen Joaquin. I don't think he murdered anyone around San Andreas. It was said that he waylaid and killed some men up around Murphys. They say that he got nearly every one of his enemies. I think he committed almost all of his depredations in this county inside of two years.

Joaquin killed a man here in Yaqui Camp for mistreating his wife. He came to their house and found the woman crying. She told Joaquin how her husband had abused her, showing Joaquin the marks on her body. He drew his six-shooter and killed the man right then and there.



EFFIE ENFIELD JOHNSTON

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Effie was born at Paradise Gulch, near Yaqui Camp in 1868 and spent many years of her long life in the Willow Creek area. She was an honorary member of the Society. Courtesy of Mrs. John Lemue.

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Joaquin ran a man out of this gulch (where I live now, EEJ), above the garden that Cap Ferguson and I used for a dump in 1865. Joaquin threw his saber or stiletto at him as he ran across Willow Creek. The man dropped his buckskin purse containing \$800 in gold dust and never found it. Joaquin must have got it. I found one piece of coin when I worked the gulch. Joaquin also ran a man out of that gulch at Hedricks. As the man ran up the steep bank on this side Joaquin threw his saber at him, across the gulch, just missing him.

The desperado killed two men on O'Neil's Creek, near the John Otis place. These two miners went down to San Andreas and reported that Joaquin had been seen in San Antone Camp. Joaquin or some of his men must have been in or around San Andreas and got the news right away. They waylaid and killed the two men that night, but they didn't get their money. About 1880, a China company, working on the John Otis place, found over



**JOAQUIN MURIETTA**

**Said to be the only photograph in existence of Joaquin, this was reputed to have been given to Constable Ben Marshall in 1850, by Murietta after the Constable befriended him at Murphys. — Courtesy of Old Timers Museum.**

\$4000 in buried money. It was supposed to have belonged to these two men. A gopher hole in their ditch caused it to break and wash out the buried money. These Chinamen then went back to China.

One of Joaquin's men was hung on the limb of an oak tree on the west side of my old gravel mine. This oak tree, which has been cut down, stood south of and near that long flume. He was buried right under the limb that he was hung on. (My father often showed it to me, when I was a child, where this tree stood. The stump was still there. EEJ)

This man was dug up two times, the surface was that rich. When the surface was mined off there they dug him up, reburied him a little farther south, and erected a cross. The last time about fifteen Mexicans dug him up and buried him down on the little knoll where there were five other graves. They put up slabs of slate at the head and foot of the grave. The other graves also had slabs

of slate as markers. This ground has never been disturbed, but the slate markers are gone. Old Ah Joy\* buried our dog Fido in the little ravine nearby.

There used to be a tall pine tree on Bear Mountain called "Joaquin's Signal Tree." They claimed that he gave his men signals from this tree and that he could tell what was going on, on the Angels Road, from there. It looked like it was trimmed almost to the top. It blew down about ten years ago. Long John Scieffert, of the old race track at San Andreas, must know how long it has been down. He could see it all the time from his door.

Cap Ellis, Henry Schroebel, Ike Betts, Jeff Gatewood and others had a running fight with Joaquin and his men here in Paradise Gulch in January, 1853. All were on horseback and headed towards Calaveritas, Joaquin and his men on the east side and Cap Ellis' posse on the west side of the gulch. They were exchanging shots on the run. Joaquin and his band escaped in the brushy hills towards Calaveritas. Some men were killed on both sides. He was finally captured in July, 1853, at Arroyo Cantua (Checkers Pass).

There was a big reward offered for his head. His sister was living at Mokelumne Hill at the time. She said: "If it is Joaquin's head, there is a scar on the forehead, just in the edge of the hair, that has been there since he was a boy." His head was brought to Mokelumne Hill in a sack. When it was shown to her she cried out, "It's Joaquin's!" and then fainted. Ben Thorn, who had known Joaquin, said, "I have no doubt of it's being Joaquin's head." Some people believed Joaquin had escaped into Mexico and that this head was not his.

## Jess Miller's Gang

Jess Miller belonged to a band of eight desperados, active in '55 and '56. And they were some of the worst men that ever went through the County. Jess Miller seemed to be the king of the eight. They all met with the same fate except one.

I didn't know these men very well. They were fine looking fellows. And most of them wore a Mexican sash. They were gamblers. I used to see them on the streets in San Andreas. They used to get up fights among themselves just to draw outsiders into it. I saw them do this in Faville's saloon in San Andreas. Strangers, who knew nothing about them, were very apt to get into the fracas.

One of these fellows, Chambers, stopped at our cabin twice. Billie Ellington gambled. He was visiting him. But we didn't give him any encouragement.

A Mexican boy that was tending bar at El Dorado killed two of these fellows at one lick. John Chambers, ..... Brown, and Marsh Nelson, who was a fandango fiddler, got up a row with this barkeeper. He was behind the bar. Nelson and Brown were snapping pistols in his face. He drew his knife and with almost one lick, an up and down stroke, he killed them both right there. Chambers was a coward. He retreated, not offering any more fight.

This Mexican boy was related to the Sevanta family that lived at what was later the home of old Antone Genochio and family. We used to buy watermelons and vegetables of Mrs. Servanta. I would see this boy there. He did a good deed and it was well that he got away.

William Paulbright killed Jess Miller at Upper Calaveritas, in 1856. Jess Miller had kicked and cuffed Paul-

\*See Las Calaveras, April, 1963, page 3.



**THE PHENIX LIVERY STABLE**

Located in San Andreas on the same corner of St. Charles and new Church Hill Road that is occupied by Stewart's used car lot today, the Phenix had a large fleet of buggies for hire for those that had the price.

Loaned by Eva Soracco.

bright's small brother Harry around and drove him out of Upper Calaveritas. When Harry came down here crying and told his brother about it, Paulbright just put on his six-shooter and went right down after Jess Miller.

They met in the Fandango House. Both were ready. Both pulled at the same time. Paulbright got a bullet in his neck. Miller died right there, shot through the body.

Harry Paulbright was kind of a drinker but William was a nice fellow. As soon as he got well he went back home. He knew if he stayed around here, Miller's band would get him.

Another one of this eight went by the name of "Kentuck," but his right name was Alf Richardson. Old Mike Riordon, on the river, had his record. He said that Kentuck was one of the worst kind of men! Right on the cut and shoot.

There were two Browns in the gang. The other Brown went to the state prison. He claimed that a Frank Ness of Calaveritas swore falsely against him. When he came back here from prison, he went into the fandango house at Calaveritas and cowhided Ness. He was afterwards killed crossing the mountains. He had stolen a horse and the owner followed and shot him on the horse. When the man shot him he called out, "You've got me, you - - - - -!" And he fell to the ground dying.

The last I heard of Chambers he had gone to Arizona. He was the only one left of the eight. Old Jube Foster knew them all. He was tending bar in Calaveritas at the

time.

These desperados got scattered after three of them got killed. They went single-handed after this. There was another tough around Calaveritas called "Arkansas Bill Sands." But he didn't belong to Jess Miller's band.

### Gentlemen Gamblers

In 1856, I met six gentlemen gamblers right here in this lower garden at old Sam I. Scott's cabin. At that time there were three or four cabins in this garden. It was called Scottville, and there were many cabins along Willow Creek and on nearly all of these gulches (parts of the old rock chimneys are still left in many places).

Scott's cabin was about in the center of the garden. They had just bought half a wagon load of watermelons which were laying on the ground in front of Scott's cabin. I was on my way down to Maurice Murphy's store, when old Scott beckoned me to come over.

Scott and Fred Yizer were the only two that I was acquainted with. They were not gamblers, but old Scott used to take a hand in the game once in a while. Scott introduced me to the others, Joe Stewart, who made and lost several fortunes, Bryce McKinna, Ruff Hardy, Dutch Dave and Dan Yizer, Fred's brother. They were called "gentlemen gamblers."

I don't know what became of Dan Yizer. I don't think he did anything but gamble. Old Fred Yizer used to say,

"I don't like the idea of my brother being a gambler. But, by G--, sir, he's a mighty fine gentlemen."

Fred Yizer went to the State Legislature from San Joaquin one term. They wanted to run him for Lieutenant Governor at one time, but Fred declined the honor, saying: "Oh, by G--, sir! If I can't be Governor I won't be anything."

The Yizers were from New Orleans, and well educated. Fred was a bright young lawyer. He came to California in May, 1850, at the age of 24. Fred used to dress! When I first knew him he always looked like he just jumped out of a band box.

Fred afterwards went crazy and was in the asylum for a while. When he came back here, Cap Ferguson went to the store and paid \$15.00 for an ordinary gray suit of clothes for old Fred. But Fred said to Cap, "Oh, by G--, sir! I wouldn't wear such a common suit of clothes." That let Cap Ferguson out, trying to do anything for old Fred.

Later the people around Mokelumne Hill raised \$32.00 and gave it to Fred Yizer to buy himself a suit of clothes. Fred took the \$32.00 and spent it all for a coat and then asked them to raise more money to finish out the suit.

Fred Yizer wanted to run for office again but he said, "If I was to come out for an office, some damn Republican would get up and say, 'That fellow was in the asylum.'"

He later used to work in the printing office on the CALAVERAS CITIZEN for Bob Beal. Every week he walked clear up San Antone Ridge gathering items for the paper (eight miles, more or less). He spent a night with us on his way up and again on his way back. He always shook hands with everybody as he came and went. He would spend a night or two with old Deacon Benson and others on the Ridge.

With what he saved in the printing office and the \$300.00 that old Jim McCreight left him he had enough money to go back home about 1889. Fred's cousin, James Madison Wells, ex-governor of Louisiana, was blind at the time. Old Fred didn't stay with his people very long. He returned to Calaveras and spent his last few years in the County Hospital. He died in July, 1892. He was not married.

Sam I. Scott was from Texas (and not married so far as I know). This hill, where "Little John" Bennett mined so many years, was called Scott's Hill. Scott was mining there when I came to Calaveras County, and that gulch east of the mine was not called Scratch Gulch as it is now. Some people who went over there later and got some bugs on them, named it Scratch Gulch.

There used to be three or four cabins on Scott's Gulch. "Little John" Bennett and his partner, Si Kee, a nice old Chinaman, lived in these cabins afterwards. At this time "Little John" Bennett was mining up northeast of Upper Calaveritas.

Old Sam Scott built that grade on the hill across Willow Creek. We called it Scott's Grade. It was a nice grade from the top of the hill at Eders place clear down to the bridge at the head of the canyon.\* It was the old stage road after the Alabama House stage road was discontinued.

Scott was a good carpenter too and so particular that lots of mechanics didn't like to work with him. He was one of the carpenters that helped build the Catholic



GEORGE EDER

The Eders lived at the top of Scott's Grade about where the Jehovah's Witnesses' church is now located. This picture was loaned by Eder's grand-daughter, Mrs. Violet Morales.

Church in San Andreas in 1857.

The last carpenter work old Scott did here was to build a dwelling house for Cloyd and Norman, here on the old Cloyd ranch, in 1857. It was this way from the Genochio house,\*\* and it burned down.

My friend, John Robertson, of Churchville, N. Y., mined on Scott's Hill too, where he ran some tunnels in the 50's. Here he was a partner with Otis Shepardson.

Old Scott went to Frazier River when I did in 1858 and he never got back. I used to get letters from him. John Robertson who was here then, wrote me later, "The last I see of old Sam Scott was at Victoria, B. C. He was dead broke. We helped him a little." Scott died up in the state of Washington.

We elected Sam the Mining Recorder of this Lower Calaveritas Mining District in 1857, and as John Robertson writes, "We had a lot of fun over it." Cap Chapman

\*\*Now the Airola Ranch.

\*This route is still closely followed by Highway 49 today.

wanted it, but old Jim Dean opposed him. They had some hot and angry words, but finally compromised it and Scott got elected. They held their election in Maurice Murphy's store, Lower Calaveritas.

Ruff Hardy was not related to either Tom Hardy or Judge Hardy. I don't know where he was from or what became of him. He was a roving gambler and a fine looking young man. All I know about Dutch Dave and Bryce McKinna is that they were gentlemen gamblers and not to be classed with the rougher breed of gamblers.

Joe Stewart was a successful gambler. He had good credit wherever he went. He was a well-educated Tennessee'n. It was said he always paid his debts when he made a winning.

At one time he owned the finest saloon in Virginia City, Nevada, and was worth \$60,000. He lost all his money on one horse race. He died in San Francisco, on charity. Some one said to me afterwards, "I met old Joe Stewart in San Francisco. He is on charity. I gave him \$5. Did you know him?"

I replied, "Yes, I knew him when he could go to any merchant in San Andreas and get \$1000.00 whenever he wanted it." Joe Stewart was a very quiet man.

There used to be a good-sized log cabin, on this side of the gulch from old Ars Gwin's (Chinaman) hut, where eight or ten of these fellows used to get together and play poker in the 50's. It was near the spring of water that used to run across the trail. I guess it is on the Chapman Mine now.

My old partner, Billie Ellington, took to gambling because the doctor told him that he had to get out of the mines on account of his rheumatism. When he came home after gambling all night, if he had been lucky, he'd go to bed and have his sleep. If not, he would go to work, saying, "I want to punish myself."

Billie Ellington never made any money mining. He and his partners just missed making a little fortune near Central Hill. They had put down a shaft, but in order to save a placer mine elsewhere, they pulled out of this shaft temporarily, even taking their windlass. Four other men came into possession of this shaft and made \$10,000 a piece. Ellington's partners felt so discouraged over it, just as soon as they got money enough they went back home. (Father knew all of these men that jumped Billie's mine but did not care to give names. He said that the new company even offered to take them in or share with them or something to that effect. EEJ.)

In 1867, Billie Ellington died at Visalia, California, where he and Ab Ellis were in the saloon business. They said he had a \$1000 and Cap Ferguson's gold watch when he died. Ab Ellis' sister, Mrs. Joe Bryan, wanted me to go down there and get the gold watch for what he owed me. I didn't go. Billie Ellington was good to me. He had furnished a mule and other necessities when we crossed the plains. So I forgot what he owed me. I considered it square. Lewis Fine came up to Visalia to attend Billie Ellington's funeral. But I'm sure he didn't have to bury him. Lewis was living down near Fresno or Bakersfield.

Speaking of gamblers, I have a clipping of the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT of May 11, 1857, which reads as follows: "Good Time Coming—Over fifty gamblers left for New Orleans on the steamer of the twentieth on account of California's new gambling law. May they never return to the state again."

1856 was a great year for cabins to be robbed. The

cabins all around here were robbed. Some of these robbers would come into a miner's cabin and just change clothes with him.

It was a great year for gamblers to locate mines just to sell out to Chinamen. It was the gamblers that gave the Chinamen such a hold on the mines. They would go around where the miners were working, sit on the bank and talk to them. If the miners were making good money, the gamblers would jump in and locate the extension and then sell out to Chinamen. These gamblers never worked.

## Water Ditches

The original Cap Pope Ditch (later known as the Silver Ditch) was cut in 1852. It was on the west side of Willow Creek and it ran clear to Gold Hill. The upper ditch on this, the east side of Willow Creek, was cut in 1856. It was called the Scott Ditch. \$30,000 was spent in litigation over this water right, which interfered with Cap Pope's.

Cap Pope got judgment against Scott's Company for \$7,500. Fred Yizer was Cap Pope's lawyer. Fred told me, "Cap Pope could have collected it all from two men, but he wouldn't do it, because he couldn't make all six men in Scott's company pay alike. He was a damn fool. He got nothing and I got nothing." After Cap Pope won the suit he made use of the Scott Ditch on this side of Willow Creek.

We used to pay fifty cents an inch for water to mine with. Cap Pope told me he sold one sluice stream six times on Yaqui Gulch. The first company paid \$6.00 a day. The second paid \$5.00 a day and so on down to the last, a company of Chinamen, who paid \$1.00 a day for the same water as thick as syrup.

The Table Mountain Ditch, called Old Gulch Ditch (and Cold Spring Ditch), was cut in 1856-57. They tried to buy Sam Scott's flume here across the Upper Calaveritas Road. Scott wanted \$750 for it. They thought this was too much. So they put up a flume a little higher than the Scott Flume.

Both the Scott flume and the Old Gulch flume remained here until along in the 80's or 90's, when two pipe lines were put in. I had the Cap Pope Ditch at this time and Bartol Pierano, John Rattio & Co. had the Old Gulch Ditch. Pierano's company bought out "Little John" Bennett whose gravel mine originally belonged to old Sam Scott and others in the early 50's. "Little John" and old Si Kee\*, a Chinaman, were partners in this mine many years. Si Kee did the cooking. But Bennett objected when Si Kee filled his mouth with water to sprinkle the biscuits. He used to write to "Little John" after he went back to China to his family.

The old ditch we used to call the Green Mountain Ditch, just across this gulch, was cut in 1852 by Dick Bartlett to work here. That is why we named it the "Dick Bartlett" Gulch. I took the water out of Willow Creek at Yaqui Camp. The old cart road on this side of the gulch (now our wagon road) was made to cart dirt down to Willow Creek to wash it, before there was a ditch in here. This gulch was very rich. Many \$20 nuggets were picked up on the riffles before it was mined.

The head of Old Box Ditch used to take its water from O'Neil's Creek at Upper Calaveritas. It comes down here around Scott's Hill and around my old gravel hill (now

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\*See Las Calaveras, April, 1963, page 3.

owned by Fricot. EEJ). Perhaps the old pioneer, T. A. Box, that died in the County Hospital thirty years ago, more or less, was the projector of this ditch. The old fellow talked of "getting married" to the amusement of many. He was past 90 when he died.

The Dan Pillsbury Ditch took water from O'Neil's Creek at the foot of Dean's Hill (now Byers)\* and followed the east side of the creek to where it was carried across the canyon in a flume. Then it followed the west side to beyond Kentucky House. The rock walls are still standing where this flume crossed the canyon, now on the Ralph Smith property (1927).

The Georgia Ditch took water from the San Antone Creek at the old Charles Cuneo place. It comes around on what is now the Albert Guttinger property and Ralph Smith place (I think about 100 yards above the Pillsbury Ditch) on the east side of O'Neil's Creek.

It became a dry ditch after the San Antone Ditch was cut, which takes its water from the San Antone Creek, above Sheep Ranch. D. Fricot bought the San Antone Ditch of Rod Terwilliger for \$7,500 (about twenty years ago). Rod's company had bought the ditch for \$1400 after they had already paid the owner \$5000 for water.

That ditch that Joses jumped was called the Yaqui Ditch. It was cut in 1852, the same year as the Cap Pope Ditch. It took the water from Willow Creek above the old Coogan place. It was used by miners to work the surface about Yaqui Camp.

My company bought the right to this ditch in 1856 for \$750 of the owners, Maurice Murphy, Samuel S. Bacon and William Paulbright (who killed the desperado Jess Miller). Paulbright was lying here sick, with a bullet in his neck when we bought his interest in the ditch.

In 1856 Ira Taylor took the contract to cut a ditch, to

\*Lettie Thorowgood has a small chicken ranch here now.

get water from the Table Mountain Ditch. It is the highest ditch there, running around the hill above the Squarehead Mine, to the head of Chapman Gulch. Cap Pope had a ditch in there, but it was too low, and would carry only one sluice stream of water. So poor old Ira Taylor agreed to cut this ditch for seventy-five cents a rod and take his pay out in water.

My company swapped work with Ira Taylor's company. We worked for them and they then worked for us. At that time there were four in Taylor's company. They were Len Wilcox (Ira's nephew), Scotch John, Ira Taylor, and Tom Taylor, his son. There were three in my company, Ellington, Lewis Fine and myself. So the seven of us cut that ditch.

Going through the limestone, a man could wear out two picks, and only make a rod a day. Scotch John, working in that hard limestone, broke off the new point of his pick. He kept right on working with the blunt point. Old Ira Taylor coming along, noticed him and said, "What's the matter, John? Why don't you use the other point?" John replied, "By G--, I'm afraid I'll break it!" A favorite expression of Scotch John's was "either one or the both."

In 1856, there was somebody mining in all of the gulches under this ditch. In 1857, I and the Fines mined in that ravine that comes down by the Squarehead Mine. We made \$3.00 a day.

Ira Taylor had been tending the Table Mountain Ditch, for A. B. Laforge. And Laforge had refused to pay him. Ira went to Laforge's house. Laforge was in. Taylor walked in and turned the key in the door. He took out his knife and said, "Now, Mr. Laforge, you can settle with me, G--d- you." "Oh, yes," said Laforge and Taylor got his money.

The winter of '55-'56 was a real cold one. We ground



#### THE SQUAREHEAD MINE

This gravel mine was located in Yaqui Gulch, just west of the Calaveritas Road. From a photograph taken at the turn of the century and belonging to Mrs. Violet Morales.

sluiced nights. Some miners could work only a half day at a time. It's a wonder it didn't kill us.

In January, 1856, I was working in that gulch this side of town. Mexicans had the habit of wearing white pants, open up the outside to the knee. Two of them came along. There were two boards across the gulch to walk on. One of them stepped on a board and zip it went out from under him! Down he sat in the mud as thick as syrup! When he got up he'd scare a wild animal, but he went on up town that way.

## Pioneer Tunnels of Yaqui

It was the Allen Miller, Nickerson Co. that ran that tunnel in what is now the Hedrick Mine in 1853. It was 600 feet long and in some places fifteen feet high. It ran from rim to rim of the gravel channel (they struck a spring of running water in the tunnel).

The Guss Bowman Tunnel, now called the Metropolitan Tunnel, on Yaqui Gulch, was run in 1859. It was over 600 feet long. The first 100 feet were run by the light or reflection of a mirror, placed at the mouth of the tunnel where the sun struck it, throwing a good light in the tunnel to strike by. A nice running spring of water was struck in this tunnel, too. The mouth of the tunnel got dammed up and at one time there was nice trout in the tunnel, getting in there from the creek. Also plenty of watercress. Of late years old Tom Villa and Rattios made use of the water for a garden.

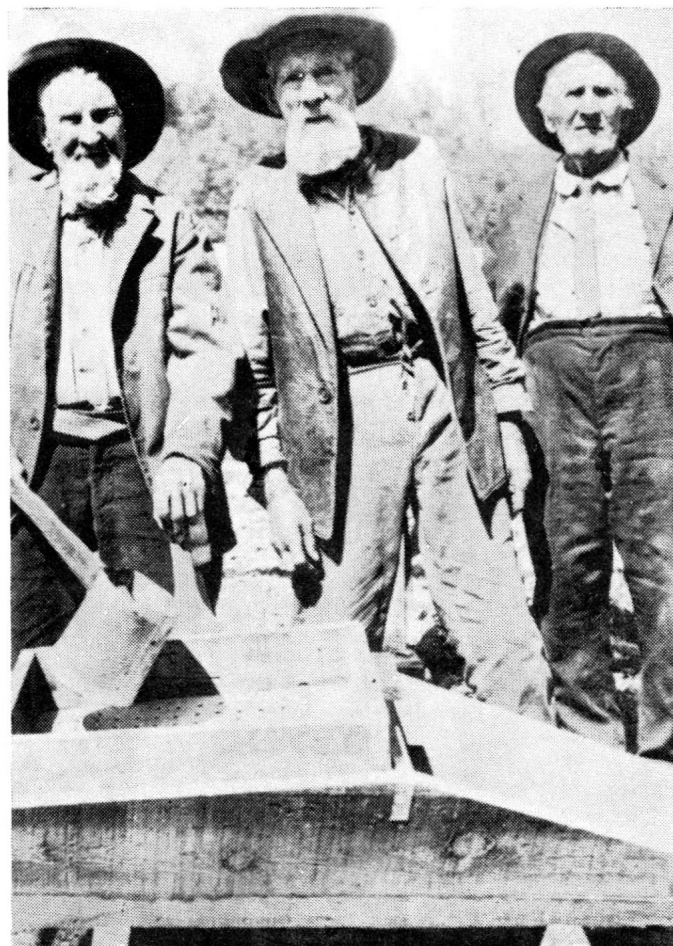
Guss Bowman's partner, John Mead, taught me how to sharpen a pick. Guss and Billie Bowman were great miners. It was Guss Bowman that built the bedrock flume in Lemon Syrup Gulch. It was afterwards torn up by old John Rathgeb to build that stone wall fence along the gulch. One of the Bowmans opened up what is now the Guss Huberty ranch near Fourth Crossing. The Walkers sold it to Guss Huberty in the 80's. Another Bowman ran a cut in there and washed off some surface in 1859, when he was postmaster. All three of the Bowman brothers were here in 1855 when I came here.

John Bowman ran a tin shop in San Andreas. Herman Bode bought this shop in 1868. It was John Bowman that made the tin fiddle in March, 1857, mentioned in the old files of the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT. Guss Bowman got me in there to play on it. In a little while a crowd had gathered outside. They didn't know what it was. It was very loud. He had intended to take it to Frazier River with him but he didn't. Somehow we didn't go to Frazier River together.

Guss and Will Bowman were full of life. Guss thought nothing of spending a dollar a day just to amuse the children around town. Whenever old Al Dudley came to town he and Guss were as good as a circus. One time they had Horace Cottle racing up and down the streets in San Andreas on horseback while they were shooting him with squirt guns. He went home as wet as a drowned rat, but he didn't get mad.

I'll never forget the time I was on the jury with Guss Bowman, old McFall and Fred Schwoerer. Guss Bowman was afterwards elected mayor of Santa Cruz. The Bowman Mine is now known as the Chapman Mine. Guss put a shaft down on it 200 feet deep.

The Charles Bannon Tunnel is on Yaqui Gulch east of the Bowman Tunnel. Bannon ran this tunnel in about 200 feet in 1859. Of late years, Mat Hertzog, Jr., ran this



**PIONEER PROSPECTORS**

The last three of the argonauts at San Andreas pose in front of a rocker. Wade Johnston is on the left, Jim Waters in the middle, and Louie Weisbaugh on the right. — San Andreas Museum.

tunnel on through the gravel channel, a distance of 500 feet in all. Charles Bannon would have struck good pay if he had gone on with it. Old Chris Anderson owned the Bowman gravel mine at the time of his death. It is now known as the Squarehead Mine. Bill Nuner, George Stewart and Charley Walters worked of late years there taking out about \$9,000. There is a 100-foot shaft on the property.

Old Mike O'Connell, Bob Billis and others ran those tunnels in Cap Chapman Gulch.

## San Andreas and Yaqui Camp in '56-57'

I was acquainted with the fellow that took out that five-pound piece of gold on what is now known as Five Pound Gulch. It was on that flat place between the old McFall home (Ford Mine) and the new county hospital.\* It was neither a very smooth nor a very rough nugget. It was what you'd call a "quarter wash." It was the only

\*Which stood about where the Administration Building at the new Government Center is located.

nugget found there.

The fellow's name was Miller. He was a German. I talked with him after he came back here in 1870. He said that it was an accident he found it. They had been leaving the pillars of earth under the joints of the boxes, but this setting had paid extra well. So they started shoveling the pillars into the sluice boxes. The one Miller was working on had two high stones in it, like grave stones. When he split these stones down he found this five-pound piece of gold, wedged right between the two stones.

Miller found this nugget in 1856. Lewis Fine worked for Miller's company two weeks, but he was not working there when the nugget was found. I don't know what became of Miller.

Charley Clark was Sheriff in 1855 when I came to the County and Cap Ellis was undersheriff. Ben Marshall was sheriff before Clark.

I first met Ben Thorn in 1856. I was alone at our cabin in Yaqui Camp when Ben Thorn brought in a big Yaqui Indian that weighed 200 pounds. The Indian's head was bleeding and a white handkerchief was tied around it.

Ben Thorn said to me, "Here's a man that owes me two licenses. I asked him for it and he asked me if I wanted to fight. So he showed fight, and I hit him over the head two or three times with the six-shooter."

Thorn then pulled a goose quill from his pocket and said, "Here's the gold he has collected in this quill." I took the quill and weighed the gold dust for him. There was \$5.75.

"Now," Thorn said, "I'll take this gold and give him credit for one license, and when he pays the rest I'll give credit for the other license." I never saw the big Yaqui Indian again. Ben Thorn was Collector of Foreign License at that time, and lived up at San Antone Camp.

Foreign license was \$4.00 a quarter. But in 1856 the Democrats raised it to \$6.00 to get rid of the Chinamen. Everybody paid poll tax except foreigners. It was \$1.00 a year. And then we had to pay road tax, which was \$3.00 a year or one day's work on the road. I worked out my first road tax right here on the old Scott's Grade.

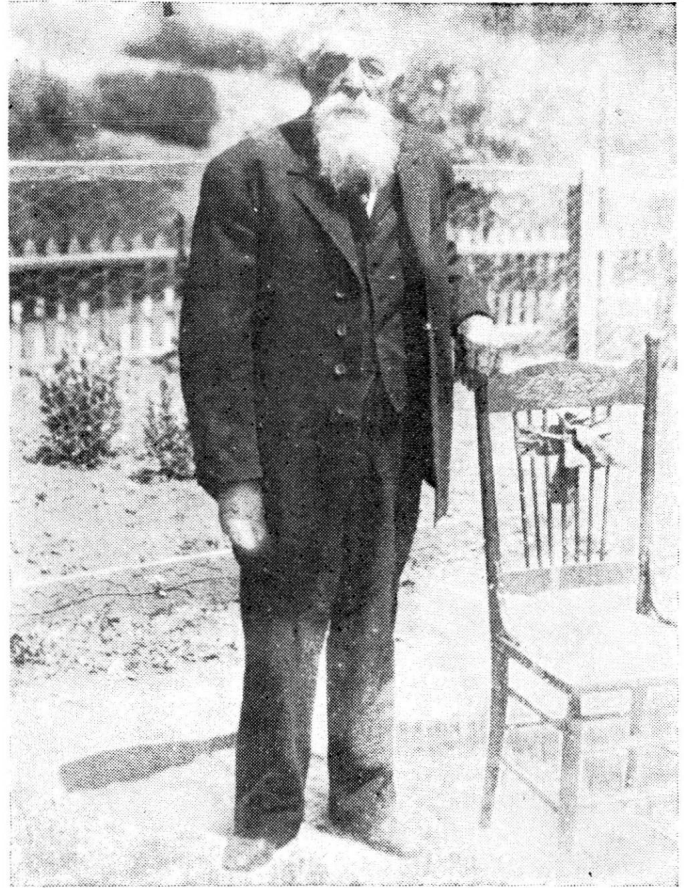
The last year that Ben Thorn was Collector in this County, he paid in over \$9,000 to the State. The law was repealed. It was said that some collectors got away with a lot of money, and I guess they did.

When I was up in Placer County in 1854, they told me that Yankee Jim, an Indian up there, used to collect foreign license off of the Chinamen. There never was anything right about the way they taxed the miners here in early days.

Ben Thorn married a Meeks. I think the Meeks family came to California about 1850. So far as I know the Meeks family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Meeks, a son, Charley, and two daughters. When their train reached Utah, old Meeks joined the Mormons and tried to get his family to join. He said, "There are too many pretty girls here for me to leave." But his family refused to join the Mormons. The two daughters were beautiful girls. Deacon Benson brought Mrs. Meeks and the three children on through to California.

Deacon Benson, who was an elderly man, later married the oldest daughter. They had a nice little home on the San Antone Ridge. They used to give parties and I guess this is where Ben Thorn met the second daughter whom he married.

Charley Meeks lived with Deacon Benson, too. I think



**MICHAEL SCHANEN**

**A longtime resident of the Willow Creek area, Mike Schanen ran a stage and teamsters' stop on Scott's Grade in Cap Chapman Gulch, on the Oro Dale Ranch, on a site still occupied by his descendants. — Loaned by Mrs. Violet Morales.**

Mrs. Meeks died up in Placer County, before they came down here.

Deacon Benson and his wife later separated and she married Walter Knight. Benson had a brother that came up here and expected to make a fortune out of this wild coffee berry, cascara. The Bensons ran the hotel at Upper Calaveritas for awhile.

There was a similar case to that of the Meeks up in Placer County. A man deserted his wife at Salt Lake to join the Mormons, and another man brought her on to California, married her and raised a family. Lots of Irish joined the Mormons. The most of the Americans that joined them were from Boston, Massachusetts.

That little gulch between the old Sevanta place and the Cloyd and Norman ranch was one of the richest gulches around here. It was named for an old French mining boss, Schabernell. There was a lot of surface sluicing around there. I think that the first hydraulic in the county was in operation there around 1855-56. It threw a small stream of water about ten feet against a low bank. Lots of men and women came out there from San Andreas to see it. It was a curiosity to many of them. What was known as the Tennessee Crevice was found in



this gulch. It was very rich and worked by an old pioneer called Tennessee. He made \$700 or \$800 a week in this crevice.

I don't see how old Sam Seabough ever saved any money. He used to come down to Calaveritas and dance in the fandango house from Saturday night until Monday morning. The boys used to say, "Let's all go up to Calaveritas and watch Sam Seabough dance."

Sam used to edit the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT and he was one of the best writers in the state. I liked the paper and took it from the time it started in August '56 until it moved to Stockton (August, 1861). Sam Seabough wrote some of his best pieces when he was "half full." He was a Pennsylvania Dutchman.

I saw Sam Seabaugh and another well-educated fellow do a very foolish trick while they were drinking, one time in San Andreas. First one would stand up against the wall and stretch out his neck, while the other would see how close he could throw a bowie knife to his jugular vein without severing it. Then the other would take his turn.

Old Sam Seabaugh staggered up town one time. He was mad. He was swinging his fists and saying: "I silenced the SACRAMENTO UNION! I silenced the ----; I silenced the ---- ----. Then I tackled a little skunk in Copperopolis and got wet all over.

I ate my first duff dinner in '56, in a cabin on the Oro Dale Ranch on Chapman's Gulch (later Mr. and Mrs. Michael Schanen's ranch).\* Old Ira Taylor made the duff, and a nice stew of Bob Billis' rambling hen. Bob lived on the Point, above Hedricks, had chickens and sold eggs. Bob's chickens used to wander away from his cabin and come around Taylor's cabin. Lewis Fine, having his gun with him, knocked over a nice fat hen and they told Bob Billis it was "a big fat chicken hawk."

Bob Billis was enjoying the dinner and saying, "It's just as good as chicken. By G--, I'd just as soon have hawk as chicken."

The boys were all enjoying it so much, that they got to laughing. Then Billis got suspicious. Finally he got mad. He said, "I knew all the time it was chicken! It was my best damn hen." Billis got up and left the party.

I remember these boys being present at this duff dinner: Billie Ellington, Scotch John, Tom Taylor, Ira Taylor, Lewis Fine, Len Wilcox and Bob Billis.

Once before this, I had killed a nice fat young chicken hawk and stewed it with a chicken, and you couldn't tell the difference. It was so nice and fat. It was old Ira Taylor that taught me how to make an English plum duff. He was an English sailor and a railroad engineer. He was a nice kind-hearted old man.

When I came to Calaveras County in 1855, Eaf Gatewood and Cap Chapman were living on the Oro Dale Ranch. It was Eaf Gatewood that gave it this name. Later, Dick Jarvis (or Gervais), a Frenchman, lived there. That gulch was named for Cap Chapman (or Chatman). He mined there in the early '50's. Many twenty-dollar nuggets were found along the gulch. It was rich. Cap Chapman got to be Listing Sergeant during the Civil War. Eaf Gatewood was a cousin to Jeff Gatewood.

The first San Andreas Band was started in 1856, but had no leader at first that I know of. Members of this

\*The Sid Morales and William Mohrmann families now live there.

band included Mike McGar (?), Frank Flanagin (?), Fred Brown, ---- Birkhardt, Wm. Thompson (a Pole and a relative of Ed Thompson that used to visit J. K. Raynors), Harry Marquering (who was running a saloon in San Andreas on Main Street at that time), Philip Swartz and Billie Bowman. They went back to take part in the Civil War as musicians in the Union Army. Old Dick Russell belonged to the band at one time, too.

John R. Parsons was the first educated band leader they had. After Parsons took charge of the band and trained them, they went to Stockton and took the premium. They became one of the finest bands on the coast. At one time they wanted to get up a string band. Parsons asked me if I would join them. But it was not convenient for me, living out of town. So I didn't do it.

The first public dance that I played for in California was at Chili Gulch, in 1856. There were some Boston folks at the ball. They criticized my playing. So the next time they gave a ball they employed a violinist named King. Mr. King played nice music to listen to, but he couldn't move them on the floor. He couldn't play dance music at all. King said to me, "You must have had a good trainer." I said, "No, I just picked it up." An Irishman came to me saying, "You ought to be ashamed to deny your country! Nobody but an Irishman could play them jigs like you."

Old J. F. Cronk had four daughters. So he always had enough to make up a set when he taught dancing school. They were nice girls, and they sometimes went to their rooms crying, after having to put up with rough treatment at the hands of some of Cronk's customers.

In 1857, when Cronk ran a dancing school at the Kentucky House, he came into San Andreas, on horseback, one day. He wanted to get up a horse race. He was talking to Rod Terwilliger and Charles Brown about it. So Brown got Cronk into a saloon, while Rod tied a bunch of firecrackers to the tail of Conk's horse and touched a match to them. The horse lit out up Church Street and never stopped 'til he got to the Kentucky House! Some fellow out there caught him and brought him back to San Andreas to old Cronk. Cronk gave the fellow twenty-five cents. Then the fellow turned around and treated Cronk, which cost twenty-five cents.

Cronk was running a dancing school up at Cave City in April, '58, when the Cave City Hotel, where he lived, burned down. When Cronk was leaving Cave City, after the fire, he looked back when he got to the top of the hill and said, "I panned that damn hole out!"

In those days, Cronk and Richmond furnished the music for the most of the grand balls given around here at that time, by Mark McNickels at South Fork, by Tom Hunter, Alabama House, and at John Kennedy's at Lower Calaveritas.

I think the last dance given by the Kennedys here at Lower Calaveritas was in 1857. Old Cronk played. I was there. The "Walk Around" that I play was one of Old Cronk's pieces. The last time I met the old fellow was at Valley Springs during the Civil War, in 1864.

J. K. Doak had a ranch\* up on Murray Creek. It was Doak that raised that big hog on Murray Creek. It weighed 900 pounds. It was the largest ever raised in the county.

We had the "Doak and the Lion" story different from the way the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT recorded it.

\*The La Riveres lived on the Doak Ranch.

J. K.'s hired man was ploughing in the field. A mountain lion came out of the brush and followed him around the field twice. It walked in the furrow, keeping at a certain distance behind him all the time. He went to the house, got his gun, and came back and killed it.

Doak ran for Sheriff that year. And the first time I met him was right down here at Frank and Bill Wallis' cabin, not far from the mouth of Willow Creek. He was a roaring Democrat. The Democrats were in power and he thought sure he would be elected. He said, "This is just like an old-fashioned fox hunt. We're just closing in on them now." But he didn't get elected, and he was so mad over it, he left the Democratic Party. It was the Bob Paul crowd that beat him. Later (1873) he was elected mayor of Stockton.

The first time Doak came up here, after going to Stockton, he introduced me to a Dr. Stockton of Stockton. W. W. Stockton, who batched here in the Mormon cabin about 1897, and whose wife was a Tevis, told me he was related to Dr. Stockton.

## More Early Day Memories

In July of '56 I picked up a buckskin purse on the bank of the ditch in front of our cabin door. It contained \$60.00 in gold and \$5.00 in silver. I brought it into the cabin and held it up saying, "Who does this belong to?" "Me," said a strange fellow that had come to our cabin a few days before, saying, "I am broke." He couldn't describe the money. But I passed it over to him. After seeing the money, he could not describe it before a Justice of Peace. There was no paper in San Andreas at that time to advertise it. This stranger left soon afterwards and we were satisfied the money did not belong to him, as he had told us he was broke when he came to our cabin. The old Mexican Trail went right past our door. We thought some Mexican dropped it, as he jumped the ditch.

About December of that year a stranger came to our cabin begging. He had lost one leg, and claimed to be a Mexican War Veteran. At that time the miners would do most anything for a Mexican War Veteran. So we gave this strange man his dinner, and we collected all the change we had—eight dollars—and gave it to him.

This was on Friday. On Saturdays we generally went to town. So we went to town on Saturday as usual. We went into Joe Marshall's saloon, the "Diving Belle," which was under the Odd Fellows Hall. There we saw this fellow playing poker and drunk. We were so disgusted we didn't want to look at him. He was pretty decently dressed.

I guess there weren't very many cabins on Bear Mountain in 1856. Old man Steel told me that his was the first location. He located that ranch in '52. I don't know whether he went out there to live at the time or not.

He was a shoemaker by trade and he ran his shop in San Andreas up to the time he died. He once said to me, "I have a very expensive family. Besides all they raise on the ranch it costs me \$1,700 a year to keep them."

One day in '56, Bob Billis, who had just been down to Corcorans' store at Lower Calaveritas, came to Yaqui Camp slightly tipsy. He brought a bottle of schnapps with him. It was pretty strong liquor. There were just eight of us Americans in camp. Lewis Fine, Joseph Nickerson, Allen Miller, Billie Smith, Frank Piper, Billie Ellington and Bob Billis all happened to be at my cabin.

We were all "Know Nothings." The bottle of schnapps

was passed around until we all felt pretty good. Bob Billis said, "The Irishmen in Lower Calaveritas say, 'they are a'going to clean us out the next time we go down there.'" The schnapps was passed around again. We talked it over. Then one of the boys, I think it was Lewis Fine, made the proposition, "Let's go down there and give them a chance." So the eight of us struck out for Lower Calaveritas.

Allen Miller, who happened to be behind, fell into a hole of water and laid there until he cooled off. We didn't miss him. He had plenty of company in the way of bullfrogs. The rest of us went on down to Corcorans' store. The clerk, Bill Holt, a young fellow, was running the store and bar. There were only three or four Irishmen in the store. Lewis Fine opened the ball. He pulled off his hat and commenced hammering them over the head. Pretty soon the store was cleared of all of them except old Bogus Smith. We pressed him into service and made him sing all night. And we all joined in the chorus.

Old Jim Dean was hid away up behind a lot of sacks. He didn't come down. Lewis Fine broke one of Holt's glasses, trying to raise a racket. I put a stop to it, and paid Holt for the glass.

Along towards morning all of them felt pretty groggy. I was the first one to fall. They proposed to move me across Lemon Syrup Gulch to Joe Gray's cabin. It was 200 yards from the store. It took four of them to carry me across Guss Bowman's bedrock flume.

They all managed to get home, but no two at a time. I was the last one to reach home, after having my sleep out at old Gray's. The next day was a day of rest. We were all on the stool of repentance.

The Allen Miller, Nickerson and Company's cabin was at the junction of Yaqui Gulch and Willow Creek. Their mine was what is now known as the Hedrick Gravel Mine. It was first located in 1852. Bob Billis, who mined on Cap Chapman Gulch, later went back to New York. Joe Nickerson later sold out his interest in the mine and returned to his family in Ohio. All the rest of us remained in California. Allen Miller went to Fairfield, Solano County, where he had relatives. Henry Wesson was telling me of meeting him there recently (1924). Allen wished to be remembered to his old acquaintances of Calaveras County. He died in March, 1925.

When I cast my first vote, I knew nothing about voting. I handed in my ticket open. One of the members of the election board commenced reading it. G--! Didn't old Jenks make a speech over it. He was a "Know Nothing" the same as myself. I voted for Millard Fillmore, the last of the Whigs, run as a "Know Nothing" against James Buchanan who was elected. Old Jenks set out 300 fruit trees where the County Hospital now stands. Then he turned the cattle in, and let them destroy the orchard.

In 1857, I served on the jury of a special miners' meeting. It was held in a good-sized cabin on the Calaveritas Road, about where Rattios live now. There were four or five miners cabins around there then. Hal Richardson, Billie Smith and Charles Park were living in one cabin and mining above the road where so much is mined out. I worked for them there two or three weeks for \$3.50 a day. Park was Billie Smith's uncle. Hal Richardson acted as foreman of the jury, being a man well posted in mining rules and a '49er. He addressed the jury with a few remarks, stating why one partner couldn't jump his partner's claim. As we were all posted on that rule it didn't

take long to decide it.

Mr. Smith, the jumper, stepped forward and thanked the jury, saying, "I can see now where in it was wrong for me to jump my partner's claim."

So Mr. Smith compromised with his partner a Dutchman, and bought him out. I forget the Dutchman's name. He had been gone all summer. Smith had stayed there and kept up the claim and then thought of jumping it. The Dutchman went off and Smith worked on the mine right away. I have forgot Mr. Smith's given name. He was a fine man.

I don't remember for sure just who was on this jury, but I think the twelve jurymen were about as follows: Henry Richardson, Charles Park, Billie Smith, Lewis Fine, Billie Ellington, John Q. Adams, Sam I. Scott, Len Wilcox, Joe Nickerson, James Fabin, Lovett Staring, and Wade Johnston. This was a special case. The usual way of deciding miners' cases, was for each side to choose a man. If these two men couldn't decide it, a third man was chosen.

Lovett Staring looked enough like old Frank Treat to be a brother. They were great friends. I went into San Andreas one day and there they were, measuring the calves of their legs. Staring afterwards returned to Rochester, New York, and went into the chicken business.

Three mining partners, Steve Cox, Wal Umphra (?), and Charles Ehler, couldn't agree. So each one elected a place to run a tunnel on his own hook. All three of them ran tunnels in the hill. It didn't pay and that ended it. I worked a short time for Ehlers. He said, "I paid you \$3.50 a day and only cleaned up \$2.50 a day." This took place west of the old Villa home, now Rattio's (1926), just across the gulch where those cuts and tunnels are. These fellows were mining there in 1857, at the time we held the special miners meeting. Charles Ehler came out here with Stevenson's Regiment.

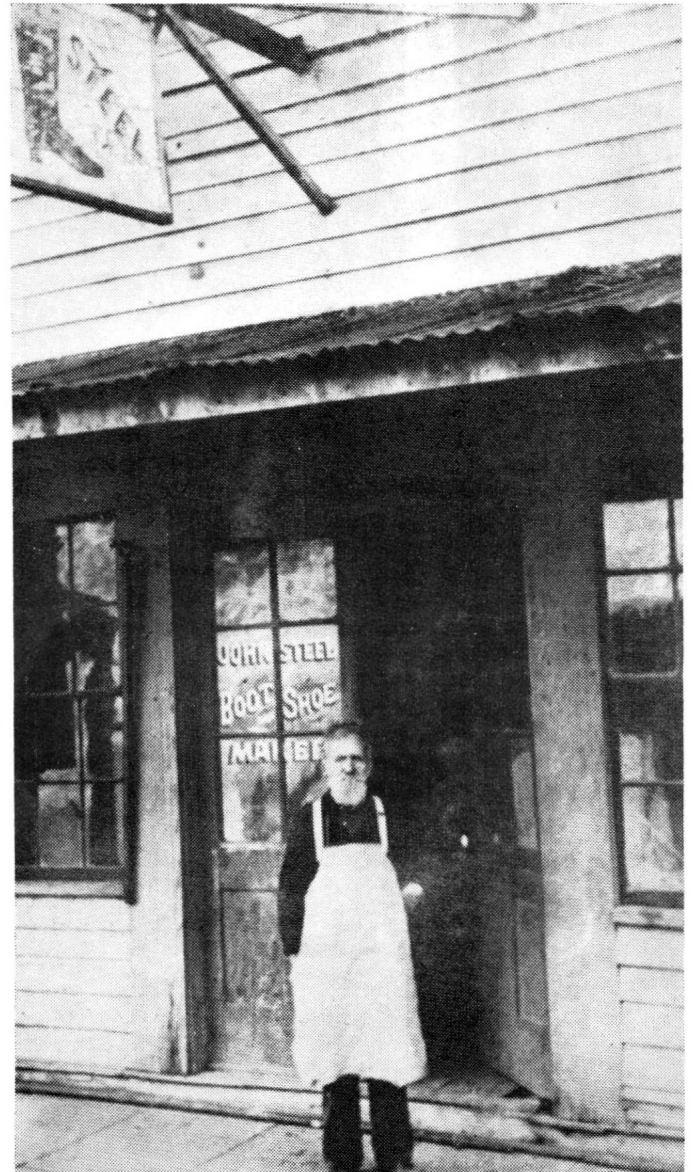
Angels was not much of a place before 1857. The big gold-quartz mining excitement started there in '56. In January 1857, this Lower Calaveritas Mining District was formed, for everything between here and Angels was located.

At that time Bill Walker was getting his filibusters together to go to Nicaragua. He got thirty or forty men in Calaveras County. A lot of them were from Moke Hill and Upper Calaveritas. I knew most all of the men around here that joined Bill Walker's Filibusters. They were never allowed to come back here.

Hal Richardson & Co.'s sluices near Yaqui Camp were robbed on March 21, 1857. The fellow that robbed them was working for them. He was a nice looking young man, but a fandango sharp. They discharged him and hired me in his place, at \$3.50 a day. Their boxes were not robbed anymore. I worked for them two or three weeks. They were mining north of the Tom Villa place where so much is mined out there above the Calaveritas Road. They were mining here at the time of the Special Miners meeting in '57.

In the February 26th issue of the INDEPENDENT, 1857, it states that at French Gulch, Hatfield & Co. washed out 25 ounces of gold in four days. French Gulch is this side of Washington Ranch, at Drury's.

From the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT of February 27th, 1857, "Much excitement over the stage robbery between Murphys and San Andreas of the treasure-boxes of Wells Fargo & Co. and the Pacific Express Co. supposed



**JOHN STEEL**

**Taken about 1912, this photograph shows cobbler Steel in front of his shop on Main Street, San Andreas. He worked at his bench here for 56 years. — From the Society's files.**

loss about \$35,000. Joseph Knight, of Wells Fargo & Co., and Charles Faville, of the Pacific Express, summoned a posse to pursue the robbers. Deputy Sheriff Schroebel also on the alert."

Joseph Knight and Charles Faville—there's two old landmarks of early days. That big, old tea kettle out there under the porch was brought around Cape Horn in 1849 by old Joe Knight. Knight's family came out here in 1857.

The INDEPENDENT reported on February 20, 1857, "Mr. and Mrs. Sharp, of Sharp's Hotel, at Upper Calaveritas, announce that they will give an Inauguration ball, Wednesday, March 4. Managers: Abram Hooper, Upper Calaveritas; Charles Dodge, French Gulch; Dan Chase, San Antone."

I knew only one of those floor managers, Dan Chase.

# OFFICERS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

San Andreas, California

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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.

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## Wade Johnston Talks Cont'd

In those days they most always had Ben Thorn and Gordon Sloss for floor managers at every ball. Louis Costa bought out Sharp about 1860 or '61, and Sharp moved to San Andreas and took over the Metropolitan Hotel. Louis Costa ran a store at Calaveritas for many years. He was one of the best roadmasters we ever had. He always put in an honest day's work on the road for the County.

Wade Johnston comments on the Editorial from the SAN ANDREAS INDEPENDENT of March 24, 1857:

"A Humbug Minstrel Show was given in San Andreas that aroused the countryside. The largest audience ever gathered at Knickerbocker Hall assembled to enjoy the minstrels, and so short was the program that the manager had to come out twice and announce that the performance had ended."

I was there. They had a big house. When the audience saw they were humbugged they began to show it. The performers, fearing rotten eggs or a lynching bee, most all ran off, some to the Bay State Ranch, to Mokelumne Hill and other places. Old John Kelly stayed in San Andreas, as he was at home most anywhere, most always playing for some fandango house.

They had all got on a drunk in Angels and split up—only half of them showed up at San Andreas. I met one of these fellows afterwards in 1863. He said that no grass grew under his feet when he heard their talk about lynching. He walked all the way, seven miles, that night to the Buckhorn ranch.

They were all right, though. They reformed again in Amador County and gave a good performance there, getting off some good jokes on San Andreas.

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Have you paid your dues for 1969-70?

## Forthcoming Meetings

November 20th—Early Stage Stops and Inns of Calaveras.

December 18th—Christmas Program.

January 22nd—Dinner meeting, place to be announced.  
There will be an illustrated program by Leonard Covello.

## New Members

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Heighway, Altaville  
Mrs. Katherine Gomes, San Andreas  
Mr. Wilford Gomes, Altaville  
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Farr, San Andreas  
Mr. Kenneth S. Peek, Castro Valley (Jnr.)  
Mr. E. I. Edwards, Yucca Valley

## Recent Meetings and Activities

At our annual meeting in July we launched the Architectural Recognition program with 12 awards as follows:

U. S. Post Offices at Angels, Mokelumne Hill and Vallecito

Veterans Memorial Building, Angels Camp

Angels Camp Fire House

Hope Lodge, I.O.O.F. Hall, Angels Camp

Mother Lode Bank, Altaville

Murphys Hotel and Motel, Murphys

Angels Camp Hotel

Lode Hotel, Angels Camp

Frank Crespi Building, Angels Camp

Residence of Emmett Joy, Mokelumne Hill

Each year additional awards will be given out to owners of buildings qualifying as outstanding examples of Mother Lode architecture, whether this is achieved by restoration and rehabilitation of an original building or construction of a new one. The meeting was concluded with an interesting talk on railroads by Mr. James Phillips, illustrated with film slides.

with film slides.

The officers and directors met on August 20th, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Al Gross. At this meeting, as is the custom, the historical essays were stapled. Copies of these have been mailed out to members. However, in the interests of economy, only one copy has been sent to each family membership.

The dedication of the Beaver Creek Road to South Grove was held at the bridge on the Stanislaus on August 9th. The following day the Regional Potluck Picnic was held at Big Trees. Both events were well attended.

On September 25th, a particularly interesting program was presented on schools to a large audience. A magnificent display of group photographs was prepared by Bessie McGinnis. Ed Leonard described the formation and development of the school system, illustrated with numerous anecdotes. Charles Schwoerer then described many of the well-known teachers and superintendents of our schools.

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**We will continue the Wade Johnston "Talks in a forthcoming issue. He will tell us about his joining the Frazier River rush in '58 and the Calaveras copper boom during the Civil War, as well as adding many anecdotes about Calaveras residents of those far-a-way times.**

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Invite a friend to join the Society