

CARSON HILL AND ITS GOLD QUARTZ MILLS

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and Julia Costello

Gold was discovered on Carson Hill in Calaveras County in August, 1848, seven months after James Marshall's legendary find at Sutter's Mill on the American River. Gold from the rich placers of Carson Creek at the base of the hill raised the curtain on a historical panorama of mining, milling, litigation, claim consolidation, and gold-related activities that has continued to the present.

The Carson Hill district, second only to the Jackson area in Mother Lode gold production, has captured the imagination of several writers. The first gold rush discoveries and the major post-1900 period of production have been documented in several articles and books, (Carson 1950:4; Clark 1962:44-50; Jackson and Mikesell 1976:33-49; Jenkins 1948:89-90; Wagner 1970:66-80). Little, however, has been published on the early claims, mines, mills, consolidations and the role of the Stevenot family. This article provides missing information, some of which has recently become available, and specifically addresses the history of the early mills.



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The gold-quartz mills included in the study, in addition to the Carson Creek arrastras, are the first stamp mill of Gabriel Stevenot, the Morgan and Union mills, the Reserve mills, the Irvine mill, the Emile Stevenot mill on Carson Creek, the Stanislaus mill, the South Carolina mill, and the Finnegan mills.

The heart of the Carson Hill district is the hill itself. The steep south flank of the hill forms part of the north wall of the Stanislaus River canyon while the north hillside slopes away more gently shaped by the erosional development of the Carson Creek valley. Coyote Creek delineates the eastern margin of Carson Hill, and the western slope falls off to where

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Reserve and Union Mines. Downhill tram brought ore to Reserve Mill, on left.

Courtesy of Rene Baylor

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Carson Creek joins the Stanislaus. Carson Hill's steep rough hillsides were formidable obstacles to early-day mining and milling activities.

Gold at Carson Hill is primarily associated with several large veins. The prominent Bull vein, emerging on its summit curves into the north towards Chaparral Hill, forming a distinctive crescent-shaped outcrop. The less prominent Calaveras vein to the west is seen as a series of outcrops scattered over the southwestern slope of the Hill, spanning the west saddle, and continuing down into Carson Creek. The two veins, dipping steeply east, come within 300 feet of each other at the apex of the Bull vein's arc, lending a giant "K" shape to the outcrops. Subsidiary veins include the Pink, Melones, and Finnegan lodes.

The preponderance of gold ore occurred laterally within a few hundred feet of the great bend in the Bull vein and extended down the steeply structured trough to a depth of over 4000 feet. Most of the gold was found in the hanging (or footwall) of the vein, and much was closely associated with pyrite in the highly altered wallrock.

The most spectacular occurrence of gold was first found near the surface in the footwall of the Bull vein. This was where the famous so-called "nugget", and a number of smaller bunches of coarse gold was found in early mining days.

Carson Hill, Camp and Creek, located along present Highway 49, were named for James H. Carson. Carson, a second lieutenant in Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson's Regiment of New York Volunteers, mustered out in the summer of 1848. After first following the gold rush to Placerville, he traveled south with a company of 30 men, many of them Mexicans, arriving on Carson Creek in August. Within ten days each man was reported to have taken out 180 ounces of gold. The company departed that fall when lack of water curtailed their operations (Carson 1950:8). Evidently very little mining was done the next winter, but upon Carson's return in 1849 he commented upon the changes:

"When we reached the top of the mountains overlooking Carson's and Angels Creeks, we had to stand and gaze on the scene before us--the hillsides were dotted with tents, and the

Creeks filled with human beings to such a degree that it seemed as if a day's work of the mass would not leave a stone unturned in them" Carson 1950:17-18).

This early period of mining in the Carson Hill vicinity was characterized by individual miners on small placer operations, using ground sluicing on the hillsides and working the streams with long-toms and rockers.

The rich surface placers soon played out and quartz mining became the basic industry, exploiting the abundance of surface deposits on Carson Hill. Not until November 1850 was a strike in the rich quartz vein outcrops confirmed; this was the beginning of the Morgan mine, the first of the many mines on the rich lode. Allegedly discovered by John (William) Hance, the true discoverer was more likely an old Mexican miner named Pacheco, for whom the first shaft was named. J. Ross Browne, in his mining report of 1868, described the gold as "abundant beyond any parallel" and "that there were so many strings of gold in the rock that cold chisels had to be used to cut them" (Browne 1868:59).

While Americans lived in the rapidly growing town of Carson Hill, Mexicans, who constituted much of the workforce, had settled in nearby Melones. According to the diary of miner Leonard W. Noyes, who visited the area during its heyday, the town was called "Melone,...because much of the gold found in Carson Creek was in the shape of Mellon seeds." Noyes described the town as built of brush houses, separated by ten-foot wide streets, where gambling was carried on to an enormous extent. (Noyes nd:60).

Although at its height Melones was touted by the days' newspapers as "the largest mining camp in California", it apparently existed only a little over a year. Located on the site of the later Gabriel Stevenot homestead on upper Carson Creek, "Mexican" Melones should not be confused with the renaming of Robinson's Ferry to *Melones* in 1902, (Jackson and Mikesell 1979:15).

Original lode mining claims were located by prospectors who were surface mining and pocket-hunting. The first and most notable of these was the Morgan claim located on the Bull vein. Worked by Alfred Morgan and William Hance, the Morgan is said to have realized over \$3,000,000 in gold in its first

two years of operation; other claims on that and adjoining veins soon followed. The Morgan claim was the subject of repeated litigation since first staked and the bitter struggle for control of this valuable ground went on for decades and later became a point of battle between William Irving and "Slippery Jim" Fair (of Nevada Comstock fame). More money was expended on legal fees than on mining during the nineteenth century operation of this mine.

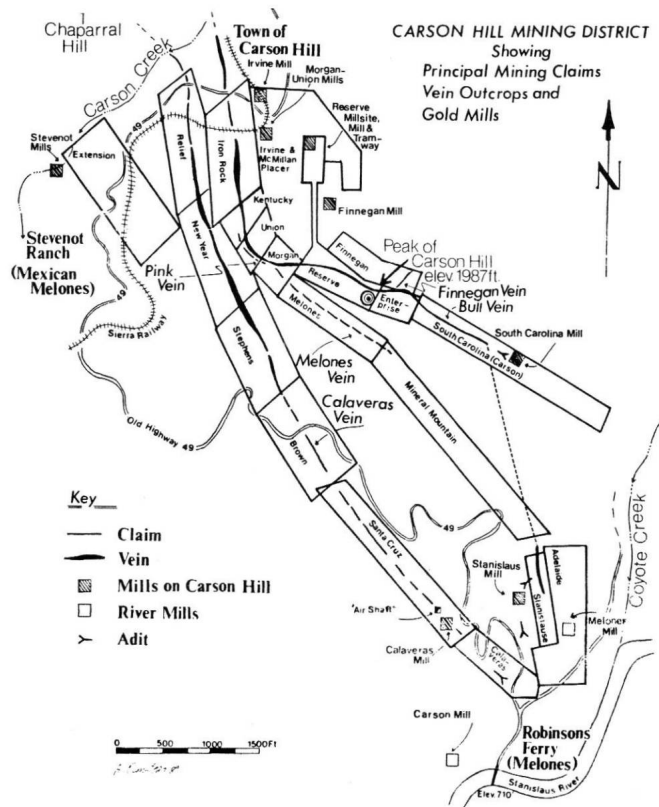
Upon the closure of the Morgan in 1853, the district became covered with "squatters" who were involved in further claim disputes, preventing the mines on the hill from being worked for long periods of time (Jackson and Mikesell 1976:37).

Persistent pocket hunters, however, continued to prospect and were rewarded in November, 1854, with the discovery of the largest "nugget" of gold ever found in California. Four American and one Swiss miner working their Comstock claim uncovered a mass fifteen inches long, nearly six inches wide, and of irregular thickness. Weighed on Adams Express Company's scales in Stockton it balanced at 214 pounds, Troy (when assayed in New Orleans its real weight was found to be 194 3/4 pounds). The "nugget", shipped to New York, sold to a man from New Orleans who exhibited it at the Paris Exposition in 1856. After the exhibition it was apparently melted down into bullion (Wood 1949:25).

In the early years many prospectors were looking for pockets of gold ore weathering out of solid quartz veins. These miners transported their ore by mule down the steep slope to Carson Creek *arrastras*. The word comes from the Spanish verb "arrastrar", to drag or haul, and refers to an ore crushing mechanism introduced into California by the Mexicans. Miners without pack animals were forced to confine their activities to recovering ore by hand mortaring or in small *arrastras* served by hillside reservoirs, (Costello 1983:17).

J. Ross Browne described *arrastra* milling at Carson Hill:

...All the rock too poor for the hand mortar was ground in arrastras, and it is said that 50 of them were running at one time...The miners were mostly Mexicans, who, as a class, were not looked upon with much favor



Carson Hill Mining District.

by American miners; but they had some experience in this kind of mine and their services were indispensable."

Arrastras along Carson Creek were the first real milling operation in the district. One of these still existant arrastras is identified as used to mill the ores of the Morgan or Pacheco shaft (Barden Stevenot, personal communication 1986), and was possibly constructed by the Mexican miners of Melones, as it was located on the creek just below that community. In relatively good condition after 130 years, this stone *arrastra* measures 19 feet in diameter and four feet in height, and was likely driven by horse or mule power. A superb example of this earliest milling technique, it appears to be one of the largest remaining *arrastras* in the southern Mother Lode.

The use of *arrastras* was a tedious process and they soon were replaced with the more elaborate stamp

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mill. Stamp milling was a processing technique imported from Europe in the early 1850's. It was extremely well adapted to typical Mother Lode ore which was normally "free-milling", the gold not being locked up in complex mineral compounds. In its simplest form, a stamp mill consists of a group of vertical iron rods mounted on a slowly-turning camshaft. As the shaft turns, the rods or "stamps" drop down, pulverizing ore as it is fed into a box or battery below.

Early stamp mills were quite small: their stamps light, and crushing capacity per stamp per day only one or two tons at best. The mills were constructed on hillsides in order to gain the advantage of gravity flow for processing the ore. Floors for these mills were made by digging little benches or "mill seats" into the slope. Stone footings and retaining walls were of the simplest construction, adequate for the small mill buildings enclosing the equipment. The actual stamp box, or battery, and other equipment were mounted on wood foundations. As a result these early mill foundations have virtually disappeared from the landscape.

Ore put through a rock crusher was trammed to a bin at the head of the mill then run into a mill bin below. The crushed ore then was fed into the battery with water where the pounding stamps liberated or "freed" the gold from the other mineal matter. After most of the free gold was amalgamated by addition of quicksilver, the remaining ground ore pulp was run onto concentrating devices. Gravity and water were primanily used to recover any remaining gold or amalgam, along with the sulfide mineral concentrate. After final recovery of the free gold and amalgam, the gold-bearing sulfides or "sulphurets", were discarded. Early mills like these didn't have the technology to recover the gold that remained in the sulphurets.

Because these first mills were not as efficient in reclaiming gold as the more sophisticated methods used today, early milling results were very discouraging unless there was abundant coarse free gold in the ore. Mining operations were often discontinued because of the low yield and mills were dismantled and moved from the site. Then, a few years later, there would be a new wave of enthusiasm

fueled by fresh strikes of rich gold ore in the abandoned mines and larger, more modern mills would be constructed, frequently on the same sites as the earlier mills. This pattern of "erect, dismantle and rebuild" is characteristic of Carson Hill history throughout most of the last half of the nineteenth century: the identities of original mills have frequently been lost in foundations of later ones.

After the initial gold rush period of frenzied mining activity on Carson Hill other individuals entered the story, most prominent was the lawyer Gabriel K. Stevenot. Stevenot and his descendants played major roles in mining ventures on Carson Hill from 1856 to the present. Stevenot was born in Alsace Lorraine in 1813 and married there in 1844. His two children also were born there but his wife and daughter never came to the United States. Arriving in California in 1849, Gabriel first engaged in merchandising in San Francisco and shortly thereafter at Marysville where he helped General Sutter build the town of "Elizaville, named for Sutter's daughter. In 1850 Stevenot came to Calaveras County and Carson Creek where he established a tent store. He bought up claims and property from Albany Flat to Robinson's Ferry, settling on the "Melones Ranch" in 1856 (Stevenot 1955:1; Schmidt 1985:15).

Gabriel Stevenot built what was probably the district's first stamp mill on Carson Creek in 1856. He placed his small one- or two-stamp mill (accounts vary) at the "Water Falls", where there was a good water supply much of the year. Family records suggest the mill was built to process ore from the Morgan mine over which he and Joseph Baciagalupi (Carson Hill miner and store owner) had acquired temporary control. Other accounts say it was built for the Reserve mine (Stevenot 1955:1).

D.C. Demarest, an Angels Camp businessman and foundry operator, described this first mill:

Mill Parts were purchased in Cornwall, England, shipped 'around the horn' to San Francisco, and hauled...to the mill site. The stamp stems of this mill were of hewn oak fitted with cast-iron heads. The cams or stamp lifters and the cam shaft were of wood construction too. The date of installation of this mill was about 1856. It made recovery only of free gold, and was not long in

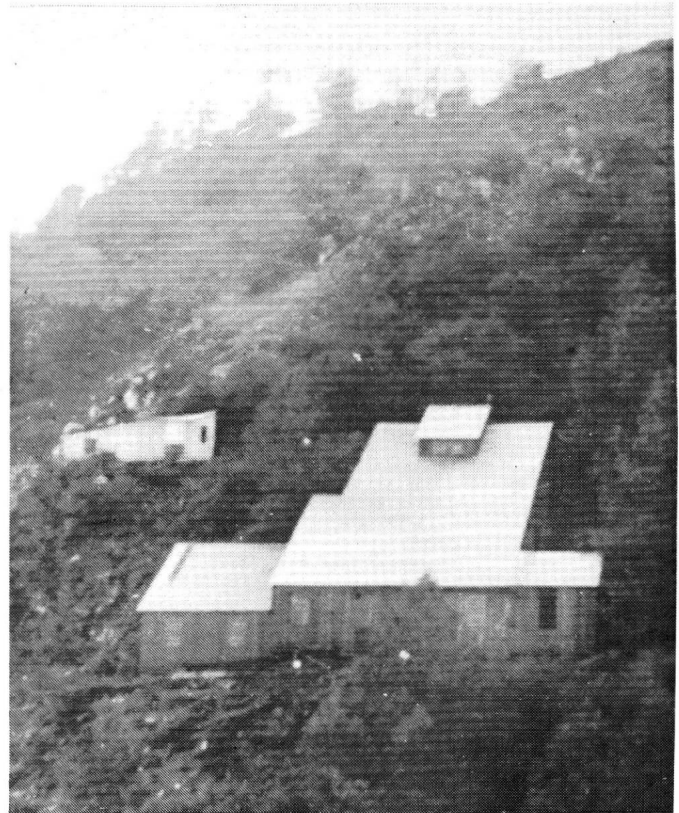
service...Subsequently this mill was swept away by the high flood waters of 1862 (Demarest 1950: Chapter 13, page 6).

From the earliest days of mining on Carson Hill, water supply was a critical problem. Water had to be carried up the steep hillsides if any mining was to be done during the dry season. In the rainy season, small sidehill reservoirs with collection ditches and dams in the neighboring ravines would catch enough water from each rainstorm to provide for a few days' work. With hundreds of prospectors working on the hill in those first few years, the immensity of the water problem can be appreciated. Stamp milling also required large amounts of water even when only free gold was being recovered.

The ditch that provided mill water and powered at least one of the early mills was known as the Carpenter and Stratton (for its developers) or Eureka ditch. It diverted water from Coyote Creek near Vallecito and continued south to Carson Hill, conveying water delivered by the Union Water Company from the Stanislaus River. Assessed to Carpenter and Stratton in 1856, the ditch was purchased by Gabriel Stevenot in 1863. Stevenot extended it to his Melones Ranch and it subsequently became known by his name. Around 1870 the Union Water Company obtained control of the ditch, extending it and constructing more branches (Costello and Cunningham 1988:6).

Made possible by the arrival of water through the Carpenter and Stratton ditch in 1857, a stamp mill was constructed by operators of the Morgan mine at the foot of Carson Hill on ground later covered by the Irvine and McMillan placer claim. The six-stamp Morgan mill was run by a 20-horsepower engine, with steam generated from a horizontal boiler. The mill, after operating only a few years, shut down because of the continued litigation over ownership of the Morgan mine, and was dismantled between 1864 and 1867. Remains of the steam plant were identified during an archaeological study (Costello and Cunningham 1985) and are preserved as a historic archaeological site by the present Carson Hill Mining Corporation.

Another early mill was that of the Finnegan mine, located on Carson Creek (San Andreas Independent on April 24, 1858). No further details are known



South Carolina Mill on Carson Hill, about 1903.
Courtesy of Rene Baylor

about this mill which may have been either an arrastra or a stamp mill.

The first concentration of ownership on the hill was achieved by Gabriel Stevenot. By the late 1850's he was operating both the Reserve mine on the north side of the hill and the telluride-rich Stanislaus mine near the river and controlled the Melones, Mineral Mountain and Extension claims. He organized the Melones & Stanislaus Gold, Silver and Copper Mining Company around 1860 to provide for development of some of his claims, with the exception of the Reserve mine. Stevenot also acquired claims along the Calaveras vein on Carson Hill and Chaparral Hill.

Gabriel Stevenot also started a tunnel at the Stanislaus claim which he hoped would produce copper. This was during the Civil War copper boom when all prospectors and miners were hoping to find copper everywhere. Gabriel was eagerly awaiting arrival of his son, Emile, who was finishing his

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Gabriel Stevenot

Courtesy of Barden Stevenot

education at the University of Strasbourg as an engineer. Emile arrived at Carson Hill in 1863, and although still in his teens, took charge of the Stanislaus mine (Mining & Scientific Press [MSP] April 8, 1865:211). There were problems with treatment of this ore from the beginning. Most of the gold values were in the sulphurets, or so it seemed, and all that resulted from amalgamation was a "blue mass". Young Stevenot abandoned amalgamation and tried dry crushing and concentration in a wooden tub in which a horizontal beam containing teeth like an enormous comb revolved at 10 to 15 revolutions per minute. The gold and sulphuret concentrates were then smelted in New York. This resulted in discovery that the Stanislaus ore was rich in rare tellurium minerals, and that this was the cause of the failure of amalgamation (MSP February 20, 1864:100).

Emile Stevenot became president of the Melones and Stanislaus Mining Company and continued with this company until 1870. He then went to San Francisco where he established one of the early borax refineries, Pacific Borax Company, which obtained

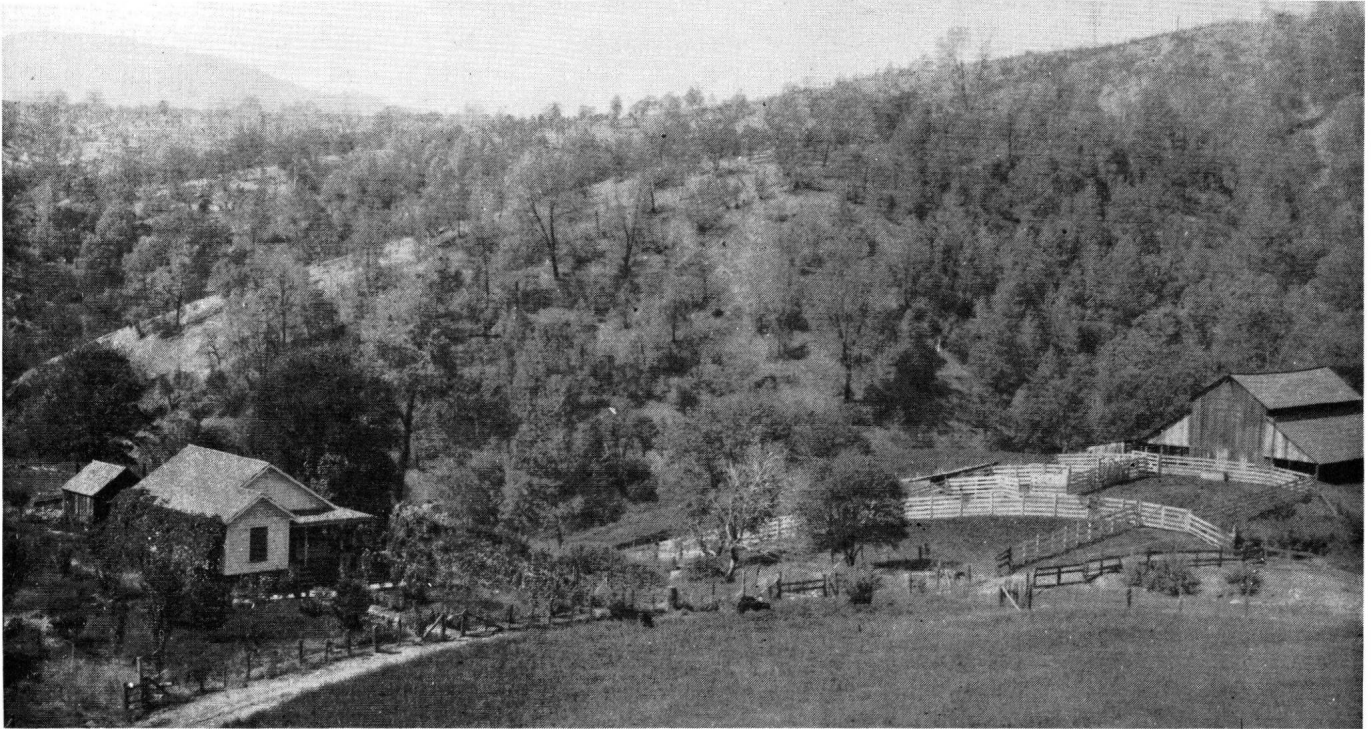
material from his deposit and sorting plant at Columbus Marsh, Nevada. Known by his family as the "Borax King", Emile was never to be as famous as one of his employees, Francis M. Smith, who discovered rich borate deposits and set up in competition. The latter's success was so great that he bought out Stevenot's entire operations and went on to become widely known as "Borax Smith" (Stevenot 1955:1; Schmidt 1985:16).

As the Civil War drew to a close, a gold-mining boom swept California. With it arrived many promoters. New operations were announced with nearly every issue of local newspapers and stamp mills were rumored to be under construction at many mines. These reports of rich ore strikes and mill erections were often grossly exaggerated. In 1866, brothers John and James Finnegan, spurred by the economic boom, constructed a new five-stamp mill driven by an eight-horsepower steam engine on their Finnegan Extension claim. Two "large" stamp mills reportedly were built in 1867 at Carson Hill: one on the Reserve mill site and the other, the Union, on the site of the earlier Morgan mill.

The first of these mills, built by Gabriel Stevenot, had ten stamps and was operated by a 30-horsepower water wheel. Water was obtained from the Carpenter and Stratton/Stevenot ditch, where it was stored in a reservoir above the mill. Another account also mentions that "Gabriel's Mill" was the "only one in motion" on the hill at that time (MSP April 18, 1868:59). The Reserve was later expanded by Stevenot to 15-stamps.

Construction of the Union mill was described in 1867 as follows: "Messrs. Booth & Co. are manufacturing for the Carson Hill Co...a 20-stamp mill, one Blake crusher, five Wheeler & Randall Excelsior pans, five 7-foot settlers and several Hendy concentrators to be accompanied with a 45-horsepower [steam] engine" (MSP April 13, 1867). Ore from the Union mine was delivered to the mill by a downhill tram, similar to that employed by the Reserve operation. By the following year, however, the "gold rush bubble" had burst and the mill closed.

Activity on the Finnegan was evidently also short-lived, although following its opening an article stated that "the rich strike in the Finnegan proves to be more than a pocket..." (MSP June 8, 1867:358). Another account said the mill operated with two men



Archie Stevenot home at Carson Hill. *Calaveras Co. Historical Society*

only a short time in 1870, producing a little over \$300 (Raymond 1870). Over the ensuing years the mine was worked sporadically by the Finnegan and Tarbat families who prospected in the Finnegan and Melones veins, operating the mill when sufficient ore had been mined (Costello and Cunningham 1985:4.13).

Mining life between 1869 and 1875 was dull at Carson Hill with only the Reserve and Finnegan mines running intermittently. In 1875, however, there was a glimmer of rejuvenation in the district when William Irvine allied with Dr. Robert McMillan against James B. Fair to obtain a somewhat tenuous control of the Morgan mine. Irvine founded the Morgan Mining Company in 1875, and the Carson Mill and Mining Company two years later. Irvine's neighbor and ally, Dr. McMillan, acquired the Union mine in 1871 and the remaining assets of the old Carson Hill Union Mining Company in 1873 and incorporated as the Union-Kentuck Mining Company. As underground development proceeded at the Morgan, results were promising enough to encourage Irvine to build his own 10-stamp mill in 1884 on the north end of the Irvine &

McMillan placer claim. However, Irvine was forced to close the mine when his old adversary, Fair, executed a legal maneuver that prevented him from operating his mill and ended in his financial failure.

In 1876, five partners, Gabriel Stevenot among them, formed the Melones Consolidated Mining Company, effectively consolidating the various divided ownerships of the Reserve and Enterprise claims with the Melones-Stanislaus group. This action marked the Stevenot family's acquisition of controlling interest in most of the significant mining claims of that day with the exception of the Morgan, Union, Kentucky, Finnegan and South Carolina mines.

Returning to Carson Hill in 1879, after selling his borax operations, Emile Stevenot became involved in development of improved gold recovery processes and in milling operations, including retreatment of mill tailings from other operations. Stevenot and his wife, Sarah Stephens, whom he married in San Francisco in 1872, built a house on the family homestead. There they raised nine children, two of whom would continue the family tradition of mining on Carson Hill.

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In 1883, however, the Stevenots began divesting most of their mining properties. In that year control of the Melones Consolidated Mining Company was sold to partners George W. Grayson and Archibald Borland, San Francisco financiers. In 1888, three years after Gabriel's death, the family's remaining interest in the Calaveras claim group was sold to English investors and was operated as the Calaveras Consolidated Mining Company. This era marked the beginning of financial control of the mines by absentee investors, a pattern that continues to the present.

In 1884, Emile built a small four-stamp mill below the falls of Carson Creek, near the site of his father Gabriel's original mill, to exploit the veins on Chaparral Hill. This new installation would best be described as a "custom or sampling" mill but much of its activity was devoted to rerunning of the tailings from George Grayson's Reserve mill, from which Emile is said to have recovered as much as \$2 a ton (Demarest 1950: Chapter 13, page 14). The stone ruins of a blacksmith shop and a "muffle" or assay furnace still remain from this facility.

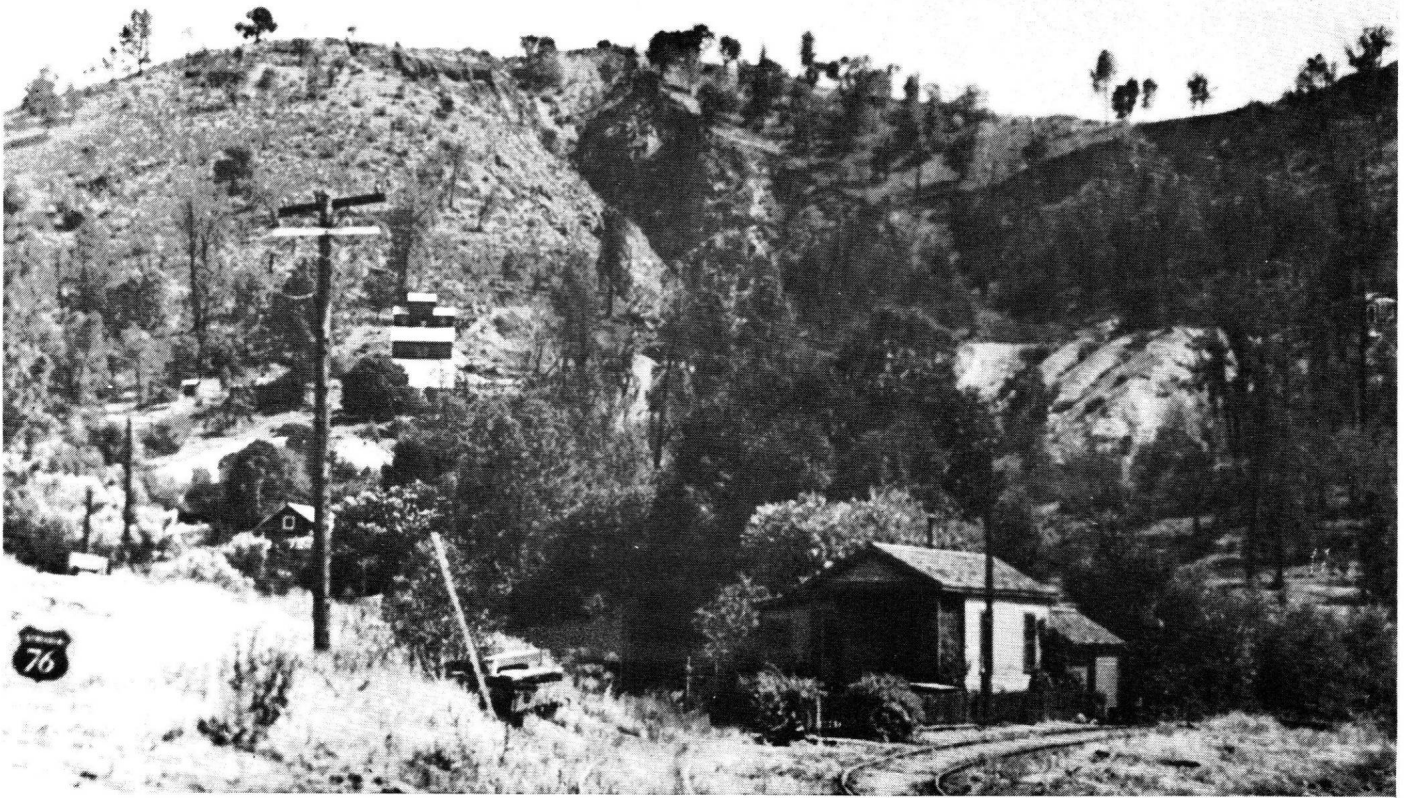
When Grayson & Borland acquired controlling interest in the Melones Consolidated Mining Company in 1883, Grayson hired P.S. Buckminster, an experienced miner and millman, to manage the operation at Carson Hill. Grayson's next move was to rebuild the old 15-stamp Reserve mill into a more modern and much larger 40-stamp operation. The Reserve mine ore was of such poor quality, however, that by 1886, Buckminster was convinced the only way to make the Reserve and all of the other newly developing mines at the nearby town of Angels Camp profitable was to install a chlorination plant to recover the gold from the sulphurets. Melones Consolidated completed the Angels Camp plant in 1887, and it was soon in successful operation. This installation fueled the mining boom in Angels Camp, but Grayson became discouraged with the low grade ore yielded by the Reserve and shut that mine down shortly after chlorination began. The 40-stamp Reserve mill sold in 1892 to Remington & Gates, who dismantled it and moved it to their Carson Creek (Jones) mine, near the Stanislaus River (Demarest 1950: Chapter 39, page 1).

When Emile Stevenot sold the Calaveras group of claims to the "English" company in 1888, the Calaveras Consolidated Mining Company was organized under the management of Lord Cameron of London. Good ore was discovered in the air shaft on the Santa Cruz claim and a 20-stamp mill was erected near the collar. The Calaveras mine was worked for several years but the ore was too low-grade to be mined profitably and it was shut down.

Another claim, located on the south side of Carson Hill, was discovered in the gold rush, but no mill was constructed until early in the twentieth century. The South Carolina claim, also known as the Carson claim, had been filed on prior to 1851 when a one-third interest was sold to Daniel Murphy by Joshua Talbot and Nathaniel Pelham (Mining Claims Book A:120). According to mining claim records, some mining occurred in 1852 when it was leased by Bonner and Vanderslice to a Manuel Rubio, the lessors hoping to build a mill from the proceeds. This venture was evidently a financial failure for in October the Old Dominion Company, owners of the South Carolina, attempted to find capitalists to continue operations. Little documentary evidence exists of the mine's early history, but by 1867 mention was made that it had yielded \$400,000 and was now closed (Raymond 1870).

County tax records throughout the 1870s and 1880s verify that the South Carolina claim was still being assessed, but for very little value. Repeatedly prospected over the years, no major mining activity occurred until 1898 when the Melones Mining Company extended the old tunnel from the South Carolina into the Melones claim. It wasn't until 1903, however, after the Melones Mining Company had dropped its lease and option, that Joe Peirano, an Angels Camp merchant, built a 20-stamp mill just below the main tunnel to process ore mined in an open-pit. The mill had a Blake crusher, four Union concentrators, and was driven by electric power supplied by the Union Water and Power Company (Tucker 1916:107). Unfortunately, once again the low-grade quality of the ore and the occurrence of the majority of the gold values in fine-grained pyrite combined to make this operation a failure.

By the mid-1890s nearly all the Carson Hill mines were idle, almost uniformly unsuccessful. Grayson had given up on the Reserve, as the English company



Finnegan Mill at Carson Hill, about 1928. In foreground, Sierra Railroad maintenance shed.

Calaveras Co. Historical Society

had previously done at the Calaveras, and the old Morgan and Union-Kentucky mines had long been inactive.

Why was the first half-century of mining at this productive Mother Lode gold deposit so unsuccessful when the first three years or so had been so spectacular? Basically, Carson Hill was a low-grade deposit with the best ore closely confined to a narrow zone which outcropped on the Morgan and portions of adjoining claims. The majority of gold was in auriferous pyrite in the hanging and footwall of the Bull vein rather than existing as free gold. Rich pockets found on the surface of the hill during the gold rush represented the intersection of a flat vein with the Bull and Pink veins. Early workings under this structure were in prevailing low-grade ore which was unfeasible to mine except with large scale mining and modern milling methods.

The revitalization of quartz mining operations along the Mother Lode during the late 1890s, however, stimulated the local mining industry through the

first three decades (1898-1926) of the twentieth century, a period that was to see yet more ambitious mining ventures on Carson Hill.

At this juncture, a new face was seen at Carson Hill. William C. Ralston, son of the well-known president of the Bank of California, was quick to see the real potential for the Carson Hill district. Ralston had recently graduated from the University of California (in 1891) and had just married the daughter of Grayson, the Carson Hill mine owner. Ralston persuaded his discouraged father-in-law to let him take over operation of the Melones Consolidated Mining Company, leading to formation of the Melones Mining company in 1897. Strongly financed by Boston capital, this new venture signified the real beginning of successful large-scale mining at Carson Hill. The history of Ralston's tenure, when operations were moved to the Stanislaus River, and the even more prosperous periods when the consolidations were completed, has been well

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documented elsewhere (Clark 1962:44-50; Jenkins 1948:89-90; Julihn 1938:104-107; Knopf 1929:72; Wagner 1970:66-80).

After the turn of the century the Stevenot family again became actively involved in mining on Carson Hill. With final consolidation of the Carson Hill mines by William Loring in 1918 and the operations all moved to Melones, Archie Stevenot, grandson of Gabriel, became Loring's mine superintendent and right-hand man. Archie had worked for Loring since 1916 when the first claims were purchased.

A co-founder of the California State Chamber of Commerce, Archie was also closely involved in promotion of Mother Lode mines and businesses. In 1919 he led in the founding of the "Mother Lode Highway Association", forerunner of the "Golden Chain Council of the Mother Lode", developed to link all the central Mother Lode mines and communities. In 1961 he was recognized by the California State Legislature as "Mr. Mother Lode". At his death in 1968, the legislature directed that the New Melones bridge be named in his honor.

The Finnegan mine, remained in the hands of its individual owners longer than any other Carson Hill operation, worked for almost 100 years, with few improvements after 1866. In 1928, however, major additions were made to the Finnegan mine. Those included a 10-stamp electric-powered quartz mill, a rockbreaker, six concentrators, two compressors, an electric hoist, blacksmith shop, compressor room, hoist rooms, a mill building, and mining tools (Calaveras County Assessment Rolls 1928). That well-equipped mill may have been built by the Carson Hill Mining Company which at that time owned one-tenth of the mine under a lease agreement with the Tarbat family, who retained the other nine-tenths.

By the early 1930s the mill was failing; the only activity during its final days involved de-watering the mine. The mill burned in 1952, the last of the gold mills on the north side of Carson Hill.

The Depression years and the revaluation of gold stimulated yet another boom at Melones. The Carson Hill Gold Mining Corporation, under management of John Burgess, reopened the big mine. Loring's 30-stamp mill, modernized and enlarged, ran continuously day and night. Shortly before enforced closure in 1942 by Executive Order L208, the large mill tragically burned to the ground ending yet another era of mining at Carson Hill (Clark 1962:63).

The mills and the mines on Carson Hill were then all closed and cows roamed the outcrops and gullies where hundreds of men once toiled for riches. And yet, the Stevenot family again saw a future for Carson Hill. In the early 1950s Archie's brother, Fred Stevenot, purchased the assets of the Carson Hill Mining Company in an auction, restoring Gabriel's original claims and adding a number of others to Stevenot control.

However, it was fully three decades before the mines were to produce again. Barden Stevenot, Fred's grandson, provided the leading effort for the reopening of the Carson Hill-Melones mine as a large open-pit operation in 1986, continuing the family's direct role in the development of the Carson Hill district. The final chapter of this ambitious venture, stimulated by increased demands and higher gold prices and financed partly by Canadian and Australian capital, has yet to be told. Today, 140 years after its original discovery, development of its vast ore bodies is still underway.

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MUSEUM DONATIONS

Calaveras County Historical Society thanks the following persons who recently have donated artifacts or other historical materials to the Calaveras County Museum:

Walter Cosgrave, Napa: Photograph of Sheriff John Cosgrave.

Ted Allured, San Andreas: Photograph of Sheriff Harry James.

Bessie McGinnis, Angels Camp: Photograph of Sheriff George Tryon.

Sandie Cuneo, San Andreas: Photograph of Altaville School.

Jane Huberty, San Andreas: Two photographs of the Royal Mine at Hodson.

Robert Baker, San Andreas: A Marchant adding machine.

FEATURE EXHIBIT

Sheriffs of Calaveras County, outlaws and the Historic County Jail will be the subjects of a feature exhibit during April and May in the office of the County Historical Society in the 134-year-old County Courthouse at 30 N. Main Street, in San Andreas.

Schools, students and teachers, yesterday and today, will be featured in the June and July exhibit.

The Society also has displays in the windows of the old Winkler Building on Historic Main Street.

THE TOWN OF CARSON HILL

The following article is excerpted from an archaeological and historical study of Carson Hill conducted and written by Julia G. Costello and Judith Cunningham, and printed with permission of Carson Hill Gold Mining Corporation.

Although mining provided the major catalyst for the development of Carson Hill, other factors also influenced its settlement. From its founding to the present, this community has consisted of a few families of long residence and sporadic services of stores, saloons, boarding houses and school.

As early as 1850-51 as the gold excitement began to peak, miners tents and cabins dotted the flat and surrounding slopes of Carson Hill. By spring of 1852, Leonard Noyes, mining on Carson Hill, noted the camp's amenities included a boarding house with female proprietor. He wrote:

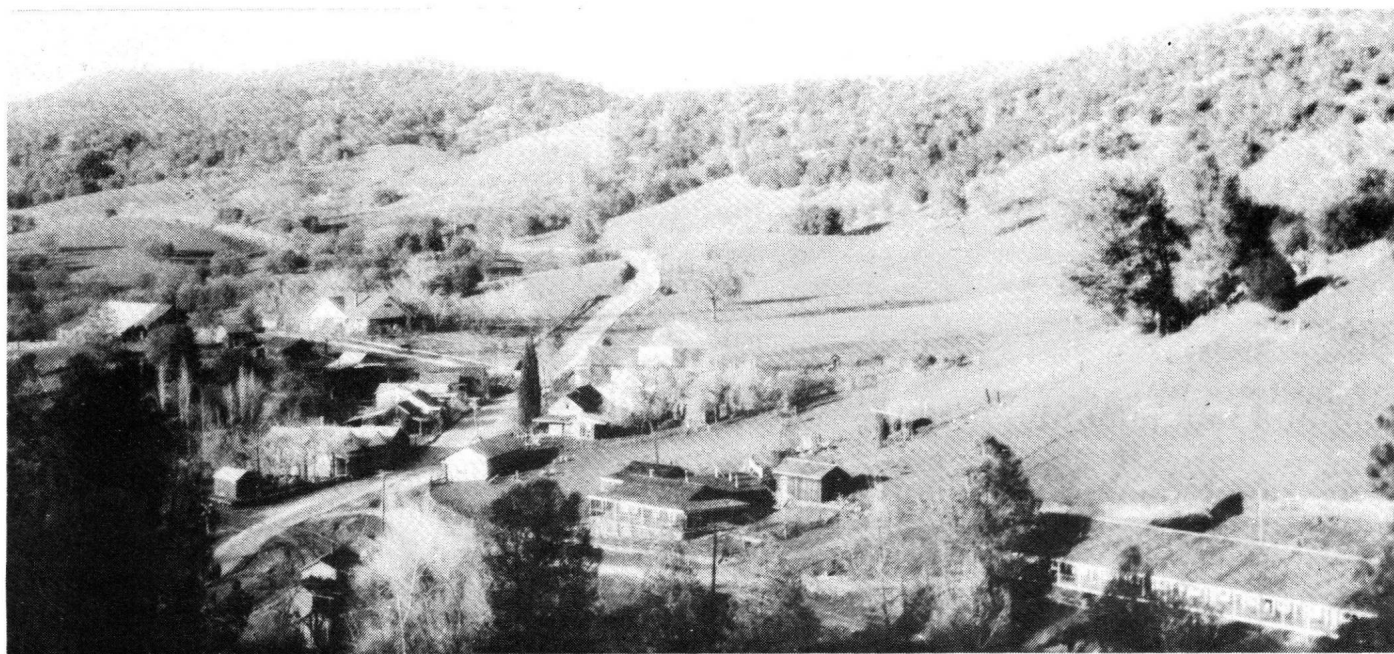
"At Carsons lived an old Missouri woman who kept a boarding house where a good square meal could be had for \$1.00. We use to go there Sundays for a meal. The first corn

bannock I ever saw in California was at her table. Everyone went there for corn bread."

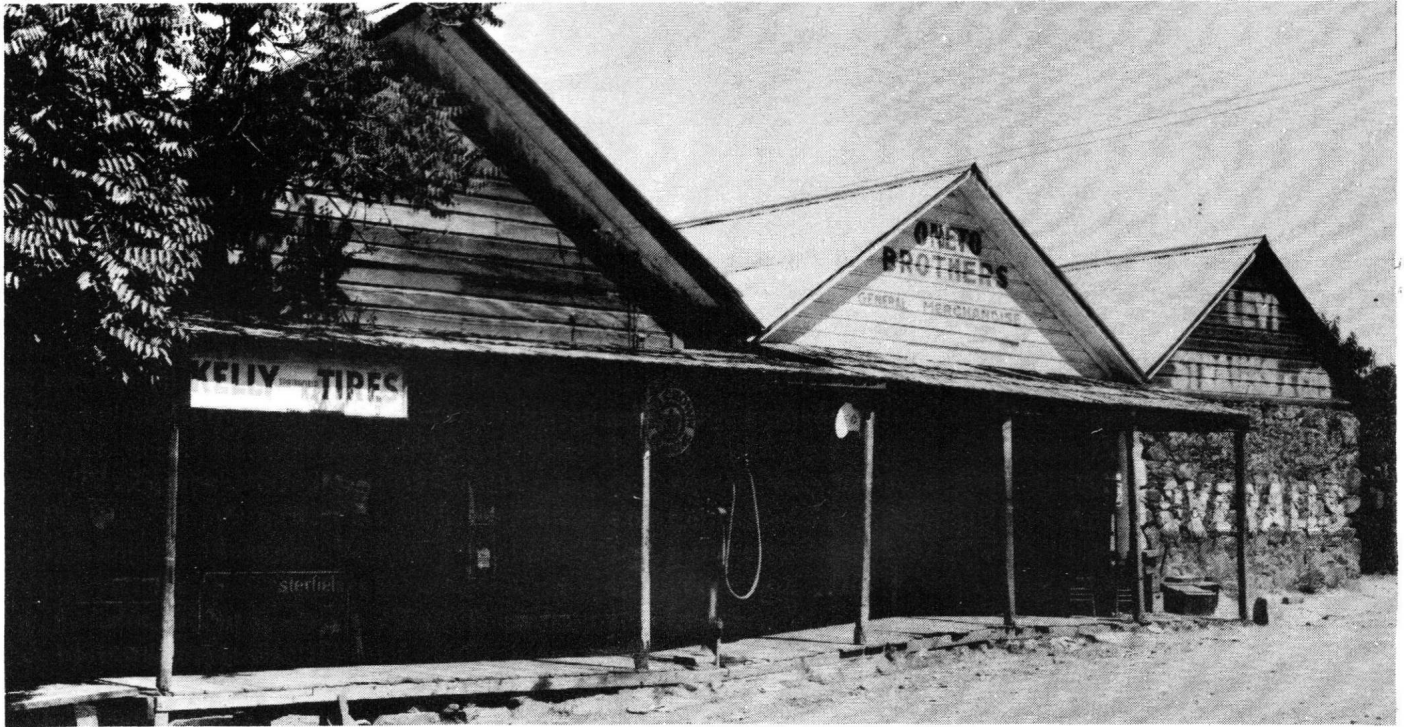
In 1854, the first year for which property assessments are extant for Calaveras County, six properties were assessed in Carson Hill. These were Alex Fulton's hotel, Peter Moore's ranch and four other properties. By 1856 Gabriel Stevenot had settled on his "St. Louis Ranch" (later Melones Ranch) and Charles Baciagalupi was operating a store. That same year Jerome Lagamarsino added his store and garden. The 1856 Miners and Businessmen's Directory for Carson Hill listed a blacksmith shop, a hotel and 18 miners.

Ten years later the Great Register of Voters, 1866, showed Carson Hill with 22 miners, a millwright, clerk, a farmer and two saloon keepers. Businessmen included mine owner John Finnegan, hotel and ranch owner Thomas Rooney, saloonkeeper George Cordes, store owners Joseph Baciagalupi and Jerome Lagamarsino and ranchers Peter Moore and Gabriel Stevenot.

In addition to his ranching activities, Stevenot, a lawyer, was interested in mining. It was he who brought the first stamp mill to Carson Hill. During the 1860's Stevenot was assisted at his mine by his



Town of Carson Hill during the 1940's. Calaveras Co. Historical Society



Lagamarsino-Canepa-Oneto Store at Carson Hill (circa 1920). *Calaveras County Archives*

son, Emile, but Emile left in 1870 to spend most of that decade in the borax industry in San Francisco. He returned in 1879 with his wife, Sarah, to take up permanent residence on the family ranch.

After providing a school for the community, Emile returned to mining and served as superintendent of several Carson Hill mines. His sons, Fred and Archie, also became involved in Carson Hill's mining industry. Archie Stevenot became a leader in the preservation of Mother Lode history. The Highway 49 bridge across New Melones Reservoir is named for him.

Thomas and Alice Rooney came to Carson Hill in 1858, purchased Fulton's Boarding House which they operated as "Carson Cottage" and farmed 160 acres. Their daughter, Theresa, in 1861 married James G. Fair, later to gain wealth and fame on the Comstock Lode and become a state senator. The Fairs' daughter, Virginia, married into the Vanderbilt family of New York and Newport.

Storekeepers Jerome Lagamarsino and Joseph Baciagalupi raised large families in Carson Hill, eventually moving to Angels Camp in the 1860's when the mines began closing and business declined. Jerome Lagamarsino turned his store over to his son, John, but by 1880 he was living in Altaville

leasing the store.

John Finnegan, among the first discoverers in 1850 of rich ore on Carson Hill, did not live there after the early 1860's when he moved to Angels Camp. He continued, however, to operate his mine. Saloon owner George Cordes, in the 1870's turned to mining and with his son, Herman, in 1891 patented the North Star claim on Carson Hill. He and his wife, Matilda, moved into the old company bunkhouse where they lived until the 1930's.

Missouri native Peter Moore established his 160-acre ranch in 1854 at the forks of Vallecito/McLean's Ferry Road (Red Hill Road). He sold in the 1860's to Eli Williams who in 1869 sold to Francisco Dondero. In 1878 Dondero deeded the property to John Peirano who farmed it until 1919, then sold to Andrew and Theresa Oneto whose descendants live there today.

Just east of the Moore Ranch was the ranch of Miller and Leman who acquired it in 1854. It sold in the 1870's to William and Carolina Riedel and in 1918 was purchased by Tone Airola, grandson of Carolina Riedel, who ran cattle on it throughout his lifetime.

The John C. Tarbat and William Irvine families, who were to assert major influences on the community, arrived in Carson Hill in the 1870's.

Please see **TOWN**, pg. 38

