



---

Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society

Volume XXV

April, 1977

Number 3

---

## Chronicles Of Calaveras

BY

CORNELIUS BLAUVELT DEMAREST

Third Installment

Our second installment of the "Chronicles" described Cornelius' trip out to California and Calaveras in 1856. The author then proceeded to tell about some aspects of the Copperopolis boom in the 1860's, with comments on certain of the leading personalities. He next moved on to the subject of Doctor Hill, one of the early lode miners in the Altaville-Angels area. In this installment, he concludes his remarks about Doctor Hill and goes on to other subjects.

Doctor Hill was about fifty years of age, having many of the traits of the oldtime Southern gentleman. Quiet, suave, and gentle in speech when in a normal condition, but a tongue that could cut like a buzz saw when in angry discussion. When necessary, he had a most remarkable vocabulary of cuss words. Sarcasm and

profanity were poured out in equal proportions as occasion required. On one such occasion, he sat in Scribner's Store among a lot of boon companions when a town bully, who had drunk well but not wisely, walked among them boasting of his prowess and continually striking his breast, asserting that he was a man among men. "Doc" listened to the man's boasting until patience ceased to be a virtue. He finally broke out in a tone and manner of the most biting sarcasm, saying, "You may be a man among sheep, but by God, you are a sheep among men!" Needless to say, he was left master of the field.

The writer had an experience one time with the doctor in his alleged profession. After enduring the agonies of a decayed molar for a week, with no dentist within fifteen miles, he finally concluded to try Doctor Hill. He found him at home eating supper in his cabin, as the miners' houses are called in this region. He waited outside until the doctor had finished and came out to attend to his needs. He assured him that although he had no dentist's instruments, he would do the best he could.

The best he could do apparently was to place the patient on a bench with his head against the house in a very firm position. Then with a jackknife, he cut around the tooth and with a pair of machinist's pliers, attempted to extract the old tooth. Of course, the first pinch crushed all of it that was in sight. Then another digging with the jackknife until he could get another hold on it. It went the same way, and the third time, also. Finally, he remembered that an Italian storekeeper about half a mile up the road had a lot of dentist's tools that he had taken from some stragglers for a debt. So, with face and hands all covered with blood, we went up, the sight of all beholders, to the store, where he obtained a pair of forceps. With some more cutting and digging about the roots, he finally had the thing extracted, with the victim more dead than alive.

### CORNELIUS AND ANNIE DEMAREST

Betrothed to Cornelius before he left New Jersey for the west, Annie Reid Young bravely made the trip to San Francisco six years later. They were married in June, 1862, and set up housekeeping in Altaville, where Cornelius was managing the Iron Works. They returned to the east in 1864. This is from a photographic portrait made shortly after the turn of the century.



## ALTAVILLE AND VICINITY

Altaville was originally called Hangtown\* from the number of trees they at one time adorned with human fruit that had been expelled from San Francisco by the Vigilance Committee, along with some of the Joaquin band of bandits and highwaymen. The Vigilance Committee always has been given a great deal of credit for hanging a couple of undesirable citizens, Corey and Casey, but the interior towns supplemented their work so effectually that the supplement was much greater than the original volume, much like the tail wagging the dog.

The Joaquin band had their headquarters on Harmon's Peak in the Bear Mountain Range, some seven or eight miles away, and from which they could signal to their confederates over a territory of one hundred square miles. After clearing up the moral atmosphere, the vigilant citizens renamed the town and settled down to using the serene and placid name of Altaville.

The last six years of the writer's stay in California were spent in this place. It was an ideal place for a home, away from the roar and racket of the ordinary mining town with its noisy quartz mills, and as it had no surface mining within its borders it could lead the simple life. Situated upon high ground, comparatively level, it commanded a fine view westward to the Bear Mountain Range, with its summits seven miles away, overlooking the deep depression between, in which were the beautiful and secluded Parnell's Valley, Smith's Valley, Harmon Valley, and Waterman Valley. To the east, the view extended to the snow-clad peaks of the lofty Sierras seventy miles away. In the writer's house a person could stand in the rear door with the thermometer at 100 degrees in the shade beside him and have a line of glittering white peaks in full view.

During his stay in Altaville, the writer was called upon to do his full share of work demanded by the public, mostly for the noble pleasure of serving his country with doubtful compensation or reward. First among these matters came jury duty. The county seat at that time was Mokelumne Hill, twenty-two miles distant. There were two ways of reaching there, either by stage or on horseback. The stage fare for the round trip was ten dollars, which, with board at the hotel at three dollars a day for the term of six days, made a total expense of some twenty-eight dollars or more. Should the party elect to go by horse-back it would amount to about the same, as the board of the horse would have to be taken into account.

The juror's compensation was three dollars per day in the county's promises to pay, the satisfaction of which might come along

---

\*We find no substantiation for the statement that Altaville was once called "Hangtown". Demarest either confused the origins of Altaville with those of Placerville, which was originally called "Hangtown", or he made this story up for his readers' entertainment. His nephew, D.C. Demarest, does not allude to the name "Hangtown" in the detailed history of Altaville in his manuscript, although he had access to the manuscript of the "Chronicles."

in the course of one or two years, depending upon the success of the high finance indulged in by the county magnates. However, there were brokers who had full faith or pull in the future who would buy the county's scrip at fifty cents on the dollar. So the profits, or lack thereof, for the six day's service can easily be figured out. The court fared somewhat better, for when the jury retired and found a verdict, upon returning to the courtroom it would be handed to the judge. He would make the announcement, "Plaintiff (or defendant) will pay the jury." This had to be done before the judge would read the verdict. No pay, no verdict. This was a trip that was taken almost invariably every year by the writer during his years in Altaville.

Should it be supposed that Altaville was a sleepy little town, after it took upon itself a respectable name, the party would find he was much mistaken. We were only a mile from Angels with all the possibilities of an hilarious old time and at any old time. Besides that, like any town in California, it was subject to a sudden awakening that at very short notice would recall the verities and significance of its former name. For instance, the writer in one year served on five coroner's inquests, the subjects ranging from a dead drunk, to accident, murder and suicide, and all this in the precincts of quiet Altaville. One poor fellow had fallen into a quartz hole and was not found until life was extinct. Another poor quiet and inoffensive teamster was shot by a vicious character over some insignificant quarrel, who by the barest margin escaped adorning some one of the surrounding trees before he was whisked off to Mokelumne Hill to be held for trial. Another was a suicide - our next door neighbor who had apparently tired of life and put a pistol ball through his head.

## THE BURIED RIVERS

In some long-gone-by Geological age, when the earth was still young, the river system of California that traversed the part of the State now covered by the Sierra Nevada range had its general course north and south, evidently flowing through deep canyons.\* Gold was washed down from veins in the then existing mountains and lodged in the riverbeds amid gravel and stones the same as in the modern ones.

In the course of time, during some great convulsions of the earth, the present Sierra Nevada was elevated after most of the rivers had been buried under a great mass of debris consisting of boulders, gravel and sand, intermingled in many places with fragments of tree trunks. In several places have been found human skulls and pottery - these last quite numerous. (No, see footnote regarding Calaveras Skull - Ed.) During this period

---

\*This was the commonly accepted picture of the early Tertiary river system, often called "the Great Blue Lead," a river that existed some fifty or sixty million years ago. In actual fact, it was a number of separate rivers, much as we have today. Their middle courses and tributaries often flowed north or south, but their lower courses flowed out to the Great Valley through "gaps" cut through the greenstone ridges of the foothills.

came also violent volcanic action pouring out vast quantities of volcanic ash and other debris that filled parts of the old canyons.

The principal old river system still traceable evidently had its headwaters well up in the northern part of the state, traversing several counties before entering Calaveras, everywhere marked by the high hills of cemented boulders and gravel and occasionally lava, which had partially resisted the subsequent scouring action of the elements. (See earlier footnote - Ed.)

In Tuolumne, the next county below, near Sonora is found the principal true lava formation. From some volcano far above Sonora (Dardanelles - Ed.) evidently a great torrent of lava was poured out, filling the old canyon for a distance of some thirty miles to the southwest to a depth of fifty to one hundred feet, and one quarter to one-half mile in width. This solidified in the canyon as if in a gigantic mould. Subsequent erosion of the surface has carried away so much of the surrounding country that the lava now stands as it was moulded in the canyon as a great wall standing one or more hundred feet high. Known as Table Mountain, it extends about thirty miles, beyond which point it had been carried away by subsequent erosion, and is no more traceable.

The top of Table Mountain stands a thousand or more feet above the level of the Stanislaus River to the northeast. The latter has cut a deep canyon across the old river channel at nearly right angles. The bottom of the old lava-filled river was formed of the same riverbed formation as the more recent rivers and likewise contained substantial amounts of gold. Inclined tunnels were driven under the lava on Table Mountain and rich placer deposits were found.

In Calaveras County, the principal ancient buried river was filled with debris, mostly boulders and gravel, and shafts were sunk in the lowest places generally from one hundred to three hundred feet to reach the pay dirt in the channel. In one such shaft at a depth of over one hundred feet was found the famous Calaveras Skull which has been a subject of so much dispute among scientists, the genuineness of which has never been questioned by those familiar with the circumstances of its discovery.\*

---

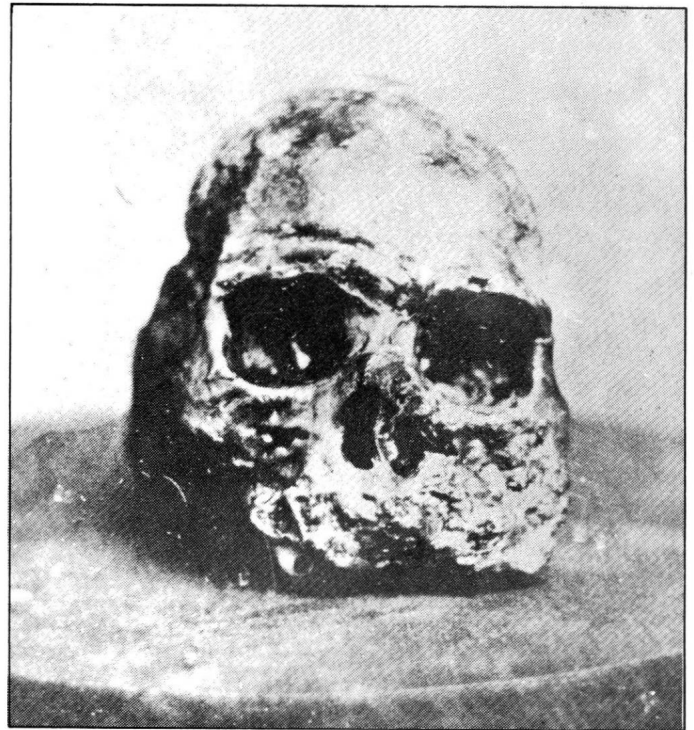
\*The Calaveras Skull hoax was one of the most celebrated in the sciences of Paleontology and Anthropology. A comparatively recent Indian skull was surreptitiously placed in a shaft on Bald Hill, near Altaville, in gravel beds unquestionably many million of years old. An incredulous miner, Jim Matson, "discovered" the skull which ultimately, through the good offices of Doctor William Jones (of whom we read in an earlier installment) fell into the hands of the eminent Harvard professor, J.D. Whitney. That learned scientist was so convinced of the genuineness of this "find" that he (along with a few other worthies that included Dr. Jones' friends, the Demarests) went to his grave believing that this skull was ten to thirty million years old. Modern scientific dating methods have demonstrated that the skull is only a few thousand years old. Bret Harte, who had lived in this area a few years before the find and was currently freelance writing in San Francisco, was tipped off to the hoax by his Calaveras friends.

The experience the writer had in this kind of mining will illustrate the hazards of it. At a place with the romantic name of Slab Ranch, where Angels Creek crosses the old river bed, and where the surface has been very much eroded in the formation of the valley of Angels Creek and where presumably the old channel was not very deep, a shaft had been started by a party of six men who combined for that purpose. Being hampered by the lack of capital and so being unable to install the powerful pumps necessary to take out the vast amount of water, they used a very primitive piece of machinery, worked by horses or mules traveling in a circle around a center stem which connected with the pump, and which was called a whim.

After working at the project some couple of years and having reached a depth of about seventy-five feet, one of the men in looking down the shaft to the workers below lost his hat. It unfortunately fell so that the suction of the pumps drew it in and it lodged in the valve, putting the whole works out of commission. Over six months was consumed before they could get the pumps raised to the top of the shaft, clear out the shaft and again regain the point they were at before the accident.

With no more money and discouraged for the future they sold out to a company of eight men, of which the writer was a member.

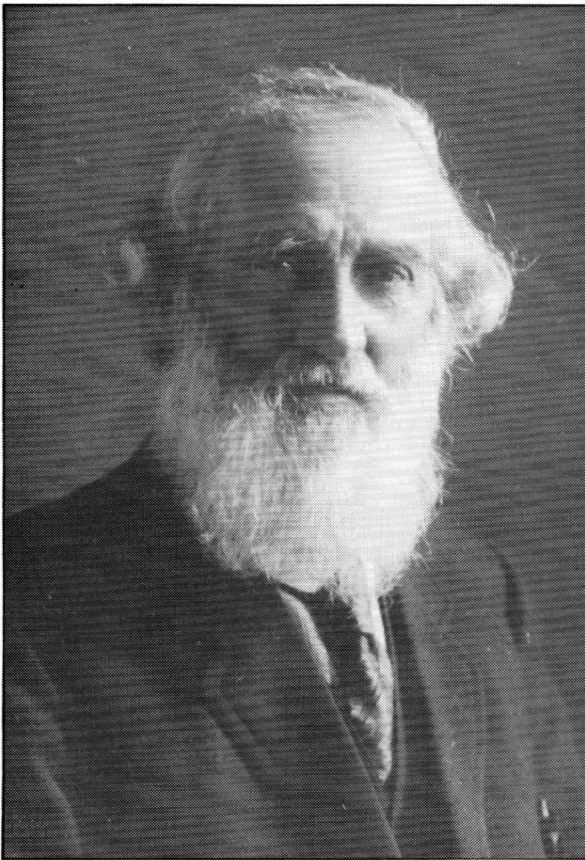
The new company put in modern pumping machinery and



**THE CALAVERAS SKULL**

Alonzo Rhodes, the telegraph operator at Murphys who was also an amateur photographer took this picture in 1866 of the famous skull just before Dr. Jones sent it down to Professor J.D. Whitney.

Gift of Fred Kenney



#### DAVID DURIE DEMAREST

The pioneer Demarest was born in 1824 in New Jersey and came west in 1849. His brother, Cornelius, joined him in Calaveras in 1856. Cornelius returned to the east in 1864, but David remained in the west where he lived to beyond the turn of the century. He and his son, Clarence, ran the Iron Works at Altaville.

Courtesy of the Stuart Library

speedily had the water under control. In about six months they reached the bottom of the channel one hundred and twenty feet, and drifted across it until they reached the opposite bank. They now concluded to wash up the dirt they had taken out and the result was the enormous sum of thirty-six dollars, representing an expenditure by the first company of about three years work for six men, and by the last company of over a year's time and the expenditure of over ten thousand dollars for machinery. In the mental vision, "All is not gold that glitters."

Bret Harte has made various people and localities in Calaveras famous through his writings. Among them are Dows Flat, the Society on the Stanislaus, Thompson of Angels, and Table Mountain, the scene of the game with the "Heathen Chinese". With true poetical license he mixes up his geography and draws very much on his imagination for facts, should there be any facts at all in his writings, which is very doubtful. For instance, he located Table

Mountain in Calaveras, whereas in fact it is in Tuolumne. He also locates Angels on the Stanislaus River, although it is seven miles distant. He it is who has thrown more doubt in the popular mind, through his poems, on the genuineness of the Calaveras skull than all the scientists who have investigated the facts concerning it, simply because he found a great many more readers for his poem than the scientists did for their investigations.\*

#### THE STANISLAUS RIVER

The climate of Calaveras, like that of California in general, has two simple divisions, viz: the rainy and the dry seasons, the rainy being winter, and the dry summer. The rainy season generally begins about November 10th and ends the first or second week in May. The intervening time is the dry season or summer, and a hot old summer time it generally is, the mercury very frequently playing hide and seek with three figures. The first experiences the writer had with that kind of summer was the first season after his arrival, when from the 15th to the 25th of June the temperature every day ranged from 100 to 116 in the shade. That the natives, who were acclimated, did not mind it was shown by the fact that a friend of the family was married in the evening of a day when the mercury had called at 116. Did the extreme heat interfere with the festivities of the occasion? Not much. Feasting and dancing went on until midnight in the most orthodox fashion until the bridal couple departed. The writer at that time was working some surface diggings, and though not having done any outdoor work in six years previous, felt no ill effects from the exposure to this extreme temperature. A most remarkable thing is that a case of sunstroke was absolutely unknown in the area. The cool night that always followed with its refreshing sleep, and the dry temperature during the day, enabled a person to stand a temperature that would be deadly in the moister climate of the east. The only inconvenience suffered on account of the extremely dry atmosphere was the immense amount of water required to be drunk. One day well remembered, the writer and his brother made away with three buckets full. So we were not on the water wagon so much as we were the wagon itself.

In the fierce summer heat the great river dries up or nearly so, due to the exhaustion of the snow on the mountains, so that a person could at some points cross it on foot by jumping from rock to

---

\*We cannot completely agree with Demarest's evaluation of Bret Harte's poems and stories of the area. It is true that Bret Harte used poetic license to suit his purpose. But not to the extent Demarest claims. Actually, a substantial part of Table Mountain lies within Calaveras County, a fact that escaped Demarest's normally observant eye. Harte's descriptions of our Mother Lode country, though vague as to geography, are some of the finest written. As to that delightful poem, "To the Pliocene Skull", and to Bret Harte's newspaper coverage of Professor Whitney's lecture in San Francisco on the skull, when these are read with a knowledge of the full historical background of the hoax, one can't deny that it was a writer's triumph.

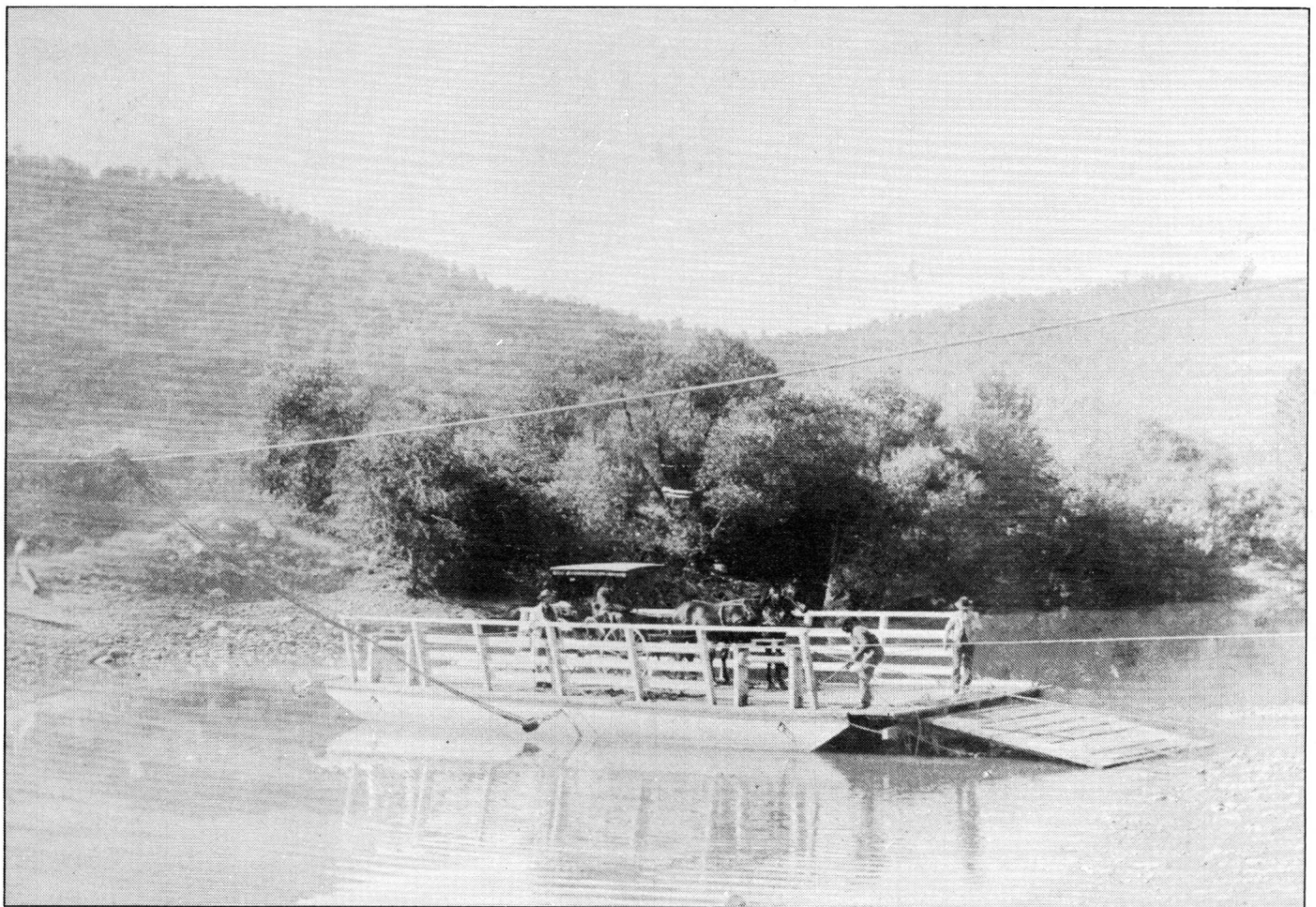
rock, provided he had agility enough to avoid falling off their slippery tops and getting an involuntary bath in the blood chilling and swirling water surrounding them.\*

The writer and his brother so crossed the Stanislaus on one of their frequent tramps of thirty miles to Columbia and Sonora in Tuolumne County in some of these hot summer days. We would generally leave home early in the afternoon of Saturday, pass the night in Sonora and return again Sunday morning. At the time mentioned we crossed the river about a half mile above the ferry, thereby doing the ferryman out of his fare, and also saving much time and distance. (Probably Parrots Ferry. Could have been Abbey's Ferry - Ed.) We left the stage road after going down a couple of miles, then plunged down the steep sides of the canyon at

\*In those days, before the Camp 9 powerhouse was in service, the Stanislaus behaved as Demarest notes. The advent of the powerhouse ensured a steady flow during the summer; that is, until 1977, when once again it is nearly dry.

an angle of forty-five degrees or more, and between walking, running and sliding we reached the river, crossed on the rocks without wetting as we possessed the required agility. And then! Oh, what a difference in the morning. Here we had to climb up a thousand feet of the almost perpendicular face of the canyon (or at least it seemed so to us) to regain the road. We learned to our great cost that this was not so much fun as the running and sliding down had been. On our subsequent tramps we were considerate enough of the ferryman's services to cross on his boat and enjoy the much easier grade of the road.

In the golden days of surface mining this was the main stage road from Angels to Sonora. These stages were usually drawn by four wild California horses, that several men could with difficulty harness. When going down the four or five mile grade to the river, winding around the spurs of the canyon or driving across the steep and narrow ravines that notched the canyon sides, the brakes were set and everything was let go at breakneck speed from top to



#### A STANISLAUS RIVER FERRY

A typical "rope ferry", this is a view of the one at Reynold's, and shows how low the Stanislaus could get in the summertime, (1895).

bottom. This is the kind of ride that Horace Greeley made famous in the record of his forty-mile ride down the Placerville grade with Hank Monk. On one side of the road was a perpendicular wall cut into the sides of the mountain to make the "L" shaped notch for the roadway, and on the other side, a space of a foot or two to the jumping off place, and if a slip were made, oblivion! What with the cracking of the driver's whip, which reverberated through the canyon like pistol shots, his shouted objurgations to his wild horses, the rumbling of the coach over the rough road, with its occasional swaying as it rounded the sharp corners, threatening, as it appeared to the greenhorn, to throw the whole equipment over the side, and with the cloud of dust that followed and sometimes so enveloped horses and stage as to render danger invisible, it altogether produced an experience that would not tempt the rider to ever repeat it for a joy ride. Bret Harte has immortalized a similar mountain road, in Nevada, thus:

"It was the Geiger Grade, a mile and a half from the summit: Black as your hat was the night, and never a star in the heaven. Thundering down the grade the gravel and stones we sent flying Over the precipice side, - a thousand feet plumb to the bottom."

At one time a pleasure party hired a private stage at Murphy's, intending to make a trip to Sonora, in Tuolumne County. Everything went all right until their return going down the long grade to the river. The entire party had evidently been indulging in rather a hilarious time overnight in Sonora, the driver particularly having filled up with too much of the peculiar kind of liquor often found in the average mountain town, called Tanglefoot or forty-rod whiskey. In his exultation he thought he could imitate the professional driver on the stage line or even Hank Monk himself. But, alas, for human ambition when stimulated by that which beguiles. In the attempt to demonstrate his skill by showing how close he could drive to the edge, he overdid the matter a little and the consequence was that the whole equipment went over the edge, down the steep hillside some two hundred feet or more, where it was caught in some trees that most fortunately obstructed the way, and saved them from a further descent of another thousand feet to the river.

It was a badly shaken up and battered crowd that finally emerged from the wreck of horses, coach, and other paraphernalia. A couple of the party were killed, all the others were more or less hurt. The horses were so badly injured that they had to be shot to put them out of their misery. As usual, on the old contention that the devil takes care of his own, the drunken driver, the cause of all this misfortune, escaped unhurt.

From the divide on the north side as we approached the river on our tramps we could see the small town of Gold Spring on the south side, and though it appeared to be only a pistol shot away, it took a good seven miles down to the river and up again to reach the little town.

The name given to this town was because of an enormous artesian spring pouring out a stream of crystal clear, nearly ice-cold water of a volume sufficient to supply a moderate sized city. Curiously, this was within a half mile of the descent to the river nearly two thousand feet below. The first time the writer saw this

wonderful spring was in the heat of the summer season when all vegetation was scorched up, with nary a green blade of grass growing. It was a veritable spring in the desert. At that time it was surrounded by a stone wall enclosing an area of about 50 feet square, the entire bottom was one seething mass of boiling sand through which the water forced its way to the surface. The overflow as it issued from the stone wall surrounding the spring was a crystal clear stream. It was a beautiful sight amid all the surrounding barrenness. It was at first conducted by means of a flume some little distance where it was used to run a number of hydraulic rams to pump water into the houses of the little town, after which it was transported in a ditch to some gold diggings where it went through the transformation that often affects so much of our poor humanity in their contact with too much gold. The end to this stream, its purity all lost in the filth of its surroundings, was when it was finally discharged into the river looking more like liquid mud than the crystal water that emerged from the walls of the spring.

The temptation to plunge in and take a bath in the sparkling waters of Gold Spring was only checked by the recollection that they were nearly as cold as ice.

The last time the writer crossed this river was in September 1903. He took a snapshot of the carriage containing our party as it stood on the ferry-boat showing the still water of the dam in which it floated, the length of the boat being nearly one-half of the breadth of the river. The river was dammed up to produce a depth of water enough to float the boat.

The way the ferry-boats on this river were operated was a very primitive one. A cable was stretched across the river to which the boat was attached by a block and tackle at each end, so that to move the boat across the river the attachment at the then rear end of the boat was lengthened and the boat being brought diagonally to the current was moved by its force across to the other side.

In contrast to this river which could be crossed in summer on foot over the rocks, is the river when at rare intervals it gets on a rampage in the wintertime. After the season of the great flood, of '62, an event well remembered to this day, the writer crossed the river and was shown a black mark on some rocks, to which the flood had reached at eighty feet above low water as it was the previous summer at the ferry cam. The irresistible flood swept the Canyon from the head waters of the river to its outlet in the foothills.

The rains in the year of the great flood began November 10th and without one moment's cessation day or night continued to December 10th, when the entire Stockton and Sacramento Valleys were under water, and a great inland sea extended from the foothills to the Straits of Benicia. The steamboat plying between Stockton and San Francisco went for a considerable time across country between Stockton and the Straits. Stockton itself could only be approached by boats from the nearest foothills twenty miles away. The Stanislaus River was swept bare; not a dwelling house, ferry-house, ferry boat, cable or picket fence was left on the river to show that mere man had ever attempted to curb its eccentricities. It is impossible to conceive a more striking ex-



#### THE DEMAREST HOME

This is how Cornelius Demarest's house at Altaville appeared years later (1916). It was the home to which he took his bride in 1862, and where their two daughters were born. They all returned to the east in 1864.

ample of man's helplessness in his attempt to control the forces of nature than the appearance of this river after the flood subsided.

Andrew, or Andy Gardner, as he was called, a machinist employed by the writer in the iron works at Altaville, owned a ranch in the foothills near that part of the Stanislaus where it emerges from the high mountains, and after the flood had subsided in the spring he decided to go down and take a look at his ranch. As this was a distance of thirty five miles as the crow flies, and rather an indeterminate distance by mortal conveyance, it was several days before he returned.

It was remarked that quite contrary to his unusual manner he was extremely quiet about his work. Finally, curiosity got the better of someone around the works and the question was asked, "Andy, how about that farm!" Andy broke out with, "Why, Great Scott, man alive, I have two farms, one on top of the other. The lower one can't be seen, and the top one, O Lord, what a sight!" It appeared that the top one was from five to twenty feet thick, consisting of boulders, many of them the size of a house. Houses, mostly in fragments, ferry boats, great pine logs that looked as if they might have lain on the ground where they had fallen in the mountains for a hundred years or more before the flood picked them up and landed them on Andy's farm, the whole garnished with picket fences, ferry cables in assorted lengths, and furniture of every imaginable description and in every imaginable state of dilapidation. The incidental debris was composed of boulders and cobble stones sufficient to build a fence all around it, and sand and slumgullion enough to level it all up to the top of the fence. Andy was thoroughly disgusted with the prospect of farming on that piece of land in the future.

#### ONE OF THE BONANZA KINGS

It would surprise most people to learn from what kind of roots spring some of our so-called first families, who think, or would like to have others think, that the bluest of blue blood flows in their veins, and who have managed to ally themselves with other families who labor under the same kind of delusions.

The roots of one family we have in mind we can easily trace back and find one of their ancestors was a Staten Island boatman. That was no disgrace for he presumably earned an honest living at that time, saying nothing about his subsequent career.

The pedigree of the other family is not so well known in the society they now attempt to adorn, one member having been a coachman and the other a cook. Not such a coachman as some of the present generation aspire to as the highest aim of their existence, such as driving a coach from the Holland House, or a Brighton coach from London to that fashionable suburb, but just simply a family coachman. The ambition of the later generation appears to be simply a case of atavism, a return to the wild. We might trace their ancestral tree in which they take so much pride to very humble roots in old Calaveras and further back to utter obscurity in New York.

In the early days of Calaveras, the main stage to Columbia and Sonora in Tuolumne County crossed over the Stanislaus River at Robinson's Ferry, and on this road at Carson's, about four miles from Angels Camp, was for years a roadhouse kept by a Mother Rooney and her family. It was always Mother Rooney, as the Father Rooney and the other male Rooneys did not count in the enumeration except as ciphers. Tom and Theresa were the children. Tom was as the Scotchman would say, "a ne'er do weel," who practiced at the bar, spending much more time in taking observations through the bottom of a glass than he did in gaining an honest living. He did not believe in the old doctor's prescription for dyspepsia, i.e., to raise a blister on the palm of the hand by friction on the handle of a shovel. Theresa was the flower of the family, like a rose in a garden full of brambles, bright, intelligent, and seemingly well-educated. Her presence in the family redeemed it from utter worthlessness and vulgarity and made her a valuable asset in the roadhouse.

She was the live and about the only 'soul' in the little Catholic Church at Angels to which she journeyed on foot a couple of times a week to minister to the visiting priests and keep things clean, mostly keeping things clean.

An amusing incident occurred one Sunday afternoon while the writer and some companions were standing in front of Thomas' Blacksmith Shop exchanging the gossip of the camp, when Miss Rooney came along on her way from the church. Of course, she was the observed of all the observers until she had passed by, when the conversation was resumed. Suddenly a great racket was heard on the slope of the hill down which she was walking. An enormous turkey gobbler was determined to make much too intimate an acquaintance with her and, as the average woman is afraid of a mouse, it was not to be supposed that she would take kindly to the onslaught of a great turkey gobbler. It certainly afforded great amusement to the boys to see the frantic efforts she made to keep the savage bird at bay until rescued from his attack by the combined efforts of the gallant boys who had so much admired her as she passed by. Miss Rooney was, of course, the cynosure of all eyes possessed by the marriageable young men in the vicinity.

The writer, on his voyage to San Francisco, made the acquaintance of a young man named William Timbers, familiarly called Billy Timbers. Some three years after parting from him at San Francisco, the latter turned up at Angels Camp and secured employment at the iron works at Altaville, then operated by the writer. As he was of the Catholic persuasion, he very soon became acquainted with Miss Rooney at the Church and after a while presumed to walk home with her and was introduced to Mother Rooney. He did not appear to have impressed the head of the family very favorably and she finally thought it well to break this growing tender passion, so one time on his appearance with Theresa, the old lady broke out with, "Cynthia dear, and where did you pick up this chip?" She had a sort of hazy idea that he was some kind of woodenware but whether it was timber or a chip she hardly knew, so applied the diminutive. Needless to say, Billy made no more visits to the Rooney domicile.

It was just about this time, when peace and order had been restored by the firm hand or tongue of the household head and the enemy routed, that our Prince Charming came along, not exactly

unheralded and unsung, for the fact is he was heralded in many devious ways and he made various people sing a doleful song before he took his departure at a later period. The individual was afterwards called the Honorable James G. Fair, Senator of the United States from Nevada, but just now he was plain Jim Fair, alias Slippery Jim. As coming events cast their shadows before so coming, individuals sometimes cast their reputations before. He was what is commonly called a North of Ireland Scotchman, keen, shrewd, a combination that never, or hardly ever, lets anything get past them that is worth holding on to.

Jim had figured in some shady transactions before he turned up at Angels. Shortly after his arrival he obtained possession of an old quartz mill and a supposedly worked-out mine.\* For some time he worked this with various success. By a soft insinuating manner and a peculiar purring way of talking he managed shortly to ingratiate himself into the confidence of many people, to their speedy undoing. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart". He had obtained considerable material and supplies at the Altaville Iron Works, for which sometimes he had money to pay and as frequently not. Each time that he ordered goods, inquiry was made at Scribner's store, who generally acted as bankers for him, and many others, to find out whether his credit was good for the amount.

As an example of Fair's character and business ethics an instance will show. One day he came to the Iron Works and stated that he proposed to make some extensive alterations and additions to his mill and requested an estimate as to the probable cost. When this was done he wanted the estimate itemized and put in writing, which was also done. The next morning he was seen on board the down stage on the sixty-mile ride to Stockton and thence to San Francisco, where it was learned later that he went to the State prison and obtained the goods made by the convicts on the specifications written out for him at Altaville. Such transactions

\*This may have been the Utica. He is reputed to have "salted" the Utica and sold it to an unsuspecting investor. Later, the Utica was developed into a very successful mine.



**WE VISIT OUR BIRTHPLACE**  
Elizabeth Demarest (Leonard) and Margaretta Demarest sitting on the porch of the Altaville home where they were born. From a snap taken in 1916.



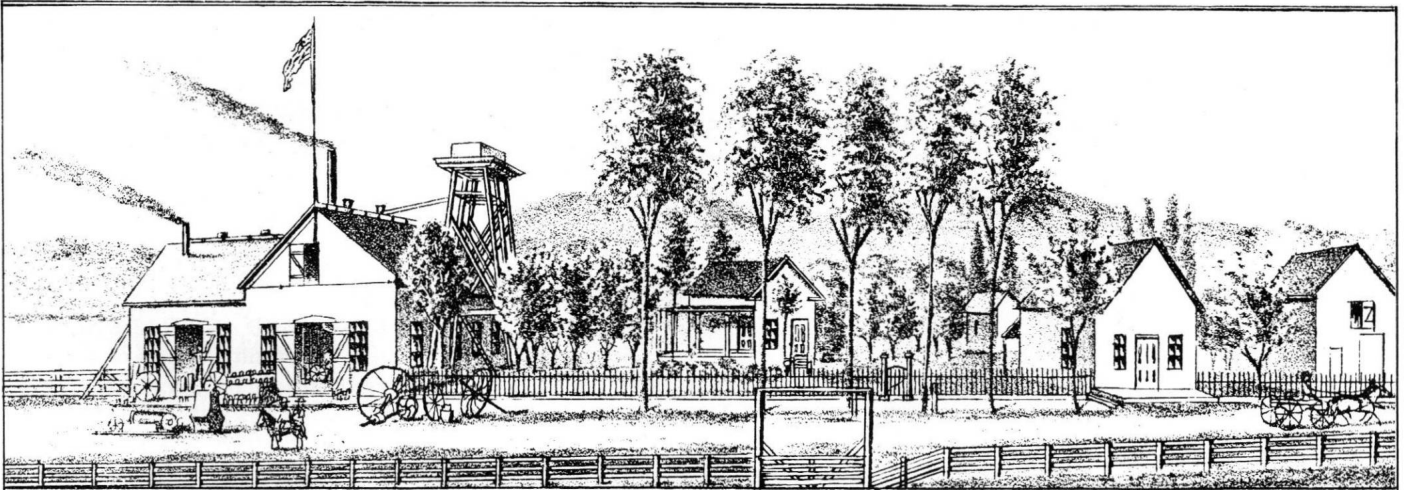
had given him the popular name of Slippery Jim and he certainly lived up to it at Angels. The next interview between Jim and the writer was rather an interesting one resulting in some conversation that was more forcible than polite.

Jim Fair carried on his business with varied success for some time afterwards when he made his exit from the town and crossed over the mountains to Washoe, as it was called, to the Comstock silver miles in Nevada. This was thereafter to be the scene of his activities and where they were to learn by bitter experience in the years to come the exquisite irony of his nickname. He formed that co-partnership that finally became famous as the four Bonanza Kings, and became known over the civilized world as the wealthiest combination then in existence and the synonym of fraud and chicanery. Mackay was the underground foreman of one of the mines in which Fair bought an interest, whose stock by the usual method of milking the unfortunate stockholders had become so depressed that it was worth in the market only a few cents a share. Mackay, in this combination, was as a man of putty in the hands of Fair, whose stronger character and lack of conscience soon dominated the situation. So it was now Fair and Mackay, but it required some allies to enable them to work the stock market, and to do this two more men of easy-going virtue were added to the combination, Flood and O'Brien. These parties kept a large saloon in the financial district in San Francisco largely frequented by brokers and others who passed their lives in the whirlpool of stock speculation. It was a sort of unknown blind firm and by means of the usual underground means of communication, one end of the wire in the saloon and the other end in the bottom of the mine, the people were worked to the Queen's taste. It was notorious that the workmen were compelled to be blind and deaf if they wished to retain employment. If a fine run of ore were uncovered, it was soon buried up from sight until the loss

of revenue from working barren ore, and the ticker at the other end of the line being worked, such that assessments were levied in sufficient amounts to frighten stockholders into selling their holdings for little or nothing. Who was so handy as our saloon men through their brokers to buy all that was offered or sold out at public sale, until the lowest point was reached, when behold, a chimney of rich ore was struck, probably the same one that was covered up. Tremendous excitement was caused by the wonderful strike, the stock soared to the skies only to be sold again to the same gullible public at an enormous profit.

For every million taken from the mines tens of millions were taken from the people by this method of stock manipulation. When the public had been milked dry and no more riches were to be obtained that way, then banks were established and grain cornered, developing into a little more genteel form of robbery, but the same old spirit animating them that made their former operations so successful. Fair became so deeply involved in the wheat corner that he would have been ruined had it not been for the action of Flood who came to his rescue. As it was he was shorn of several millions of his ill-gotten wealth.

Fair concluded to run for United States Senator from the State of Nevada, still retaining residence in Virginia City. Nevada has been sometimes called the Pocket Borough with a population smaller than a single ward in New York City, composed in about equal proportions of miners, coyotes, prairie dogs and jack rabbits, and it has never been charged that it ever elected a Senator that was not rich enough to buy the whole state. Fair was elected, of course, and went to Washington and appeared occasionally in a body of law makers which he never adorned by his eloquence or benefitted by his intellect, finally leaving it to die in obscurity, unhonored and unlamented.



**DEMAREST IRON WORKS AT ALTAVILLE**

Originally established during the Angels-Altaville mining boom in the late 1850's, it was operated by Cornelius Demarest in the early '60s. Later David Demarest and

his son, Clarence, ran the business for many years. More recently it has been carried on by the Lawrence Monte Verda family, and Cyril Monte Verda is the current proprietor.

## Officers of Calaveras County Historical Society

16 Main Street  
San Andreas, California

President	Tad Folendorf, Angels Camp
First Vice-President	Milton B. Smith, Murphys
Second Vice-President	Fred Cuneo, Calaveritas
Treasurer	Drew Garland, Murphys
Secretary	Mrs. Cheryl Smith, West Point
Directors	Mrs. Grace Alford, Angels Camp Francis Quierolo, Stockton Miss Bessie McGinnis, Angels Camp Mrs. Geraldine Wells, Rail Road Flat Ellis Dragomanovich, San Andreas R. Coke Wood, Stockton, (Honorary)

### LAS CALAVERAS

Editor	W.P. Fuller, Jr., San Andreas
Associate Editor	Mrs. Ida Long, Mokelumne Hill
Assistant Editor	Miss Anne Richard, Angels Camp
Production Editor	Mrs. Zelma O. Altmeyer, San Andreas

Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. Individual memberships (\$5.00 a year). Family (\$7.00) and Junior memberships (\$1.00) include subscriptions to Las Calaveras. Non-members may obtain copies of Las Calaveras from the Secretary. The original historical material in this bulletin is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source will be appreciated.

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

Address correspondence to the Society at P.O. Box 721, San Andreas, CA. 95249.

### NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome these new members to the Historical Society:

Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Bigelow, Murphys  
Mr. Earl Bowles, Alexandria Bay, N.Y.  
Mr. Ralph Covarrubias, Stockton  
Mrs. Opal Eldridge, San Andreas  
Mrs. Georgia Everson, Murphys  
Mrs. JoAnn N. Gardiner, San Andreas  
Mr. Lloyd Graves, San Francisco  
Mr. & Mrs. Allen Grimes, Stockton  
Mr. & Mrs. Gus Hawver, San Andreas  
Mrs. Mary Ivie, Altaville  
Mrs. Patricia Sackett, Valley Springs  
Mr. & Mrs. John Tiscornia, San Andreas  
Mr. Glenn Walker, Sr., Valley Springs

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

June 23.....Madelon Jack Carley, "Sierra Vista & the One Room School House"

July 28.....Annual Meeting. Location to be announced

### RECENT EVENTS

April meeting - Authentic Cornish pasties headed the menu of the April dinner meeting at the Mokelumne Hill Town Hall. Entertainment for the evening was provided by Colonel Don Matteson and The Fife & Drums of Old Calaveras, followed by Mrs. Jane Hess, accompanied by Marge Biagi, with songs reminiscent of the early mining days.

Program for the evening featured Mrs. Eve Zumwalt introduced by Ray Garamendi, reading her narrative of the Mokelumne Hill Pageant. (Originally written for the 1948 Centennial).

May Meeting - Hodson was the location of the spring picnic held on Sunday, May 15, 1977. Willard Fuller spoke of the history of the Royal Mine and town of Hodson. Mr. Toni Dutil and Mrs. Mary Dutil Ivie gave their accountings of their growing years in the mining town.

### IN MEMORIAM

Norma Cassinelli Cerruti  
Charles Edwin Taylor  
Mary Lavagnino Tarbat

### ERRATA

In the January issue, on page 19, "Tower & Bixby Ranch" should have been "Tower & Bisbee Ranch".

### BACK ISSUES

A list of our back issues is available for the asking. Out of print issues will be supplied as "xerox" copies. Price to members is 60 cents a copy, and a discount is given for orders over \$10.

### "CALAVERAS COUNTY DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED"

There are still copies of the soft-bound edition of this reprint of the W.W. Elliott book, originally published in 1885, available for \$5.25.

### PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

An exhibit of 50 colored photographs by Victor Van Lint entitled "Ghosts of the Gold Rush" is now on display on the upper floor of the old County Courthouse. The mining display is sponsored by the Calaveras Heritage Council through the courtesy of the California Historical Society.