



## TELEGRAPH CITY —GRASSHOPPER CITY

*By Charity Maness*

All that remains of the once bustling copper mining town of Telegraph City (Grasshopper City) just west of Copperopolis off CA-4 are miles of rock walls, a creaking windmill and the stone wall remnants of a once grand barn where one-time residents of the area, the Parks and Murphys families, would quarter their livestock.

Though the area around the Gopher Ridge range had been used as winter range land for years, it was in May of 1860 that Hiram Hughes was rounding up strays on the Gopher Range when he discovered a ledge which produced gold. Experienced in gold mining—Hughes had spent time in Virginia City's Comstock Lode—Hughes staked the claim with J.F. Treat of San Andreas, formed a small mining company, and named the claim Quail Hill No 1.

Within months of his gold discovery, Hughes was out prospecting near his claim with his 10-year-old son, William Napoleon Bonaparte Hughes, when his son struck his pick in what looked to be a producing ledge and unearthed heavily mineralized ore. After confirmation that the ore was indeed high-grade copper ore, Hughes

turned his main focus to copper mining. At one point during the transition from gold to copper mining the Quail Hill No. 1 mine was rumored to have one wall of the ledge producing gold and the other wall producing copper.

“When he was bringing in rocks and pounding them up, looking for copper, the people around there thought he was going crazy,” said Wade Johnston in biographical notes taken by his daughter Effie Enfield Johnston. “He struck gold on one wall and copper on the other. I saw that myself...”

By 1863 a town had grown around that first claim and the many claims that followed. According to Johnston the town was first called Grasshopper City. When the telegraph running from Stockton to Sonora came in, Eaf Gatewood changed the name to Telegraph City.

Telegraph City grew in size and population boasting several stores, a hotel, post office, an express office, blacksmith shop, restaurant, billiard saloon, shoemaker and livery stable, as well as large ranches owned by well known families of the time, the McCartys, Shafers, and Suits/Beardslees.



**The grand barn in Telegraph City, circa 1925. Calaveras Historical Society photo.**

In 1861 Johnson recalled that the recorder, Ed Laughlin “reported on his Bancroft questionnaire that 150 persons voted in the last election, but there were now at least 500 people in the locality.”

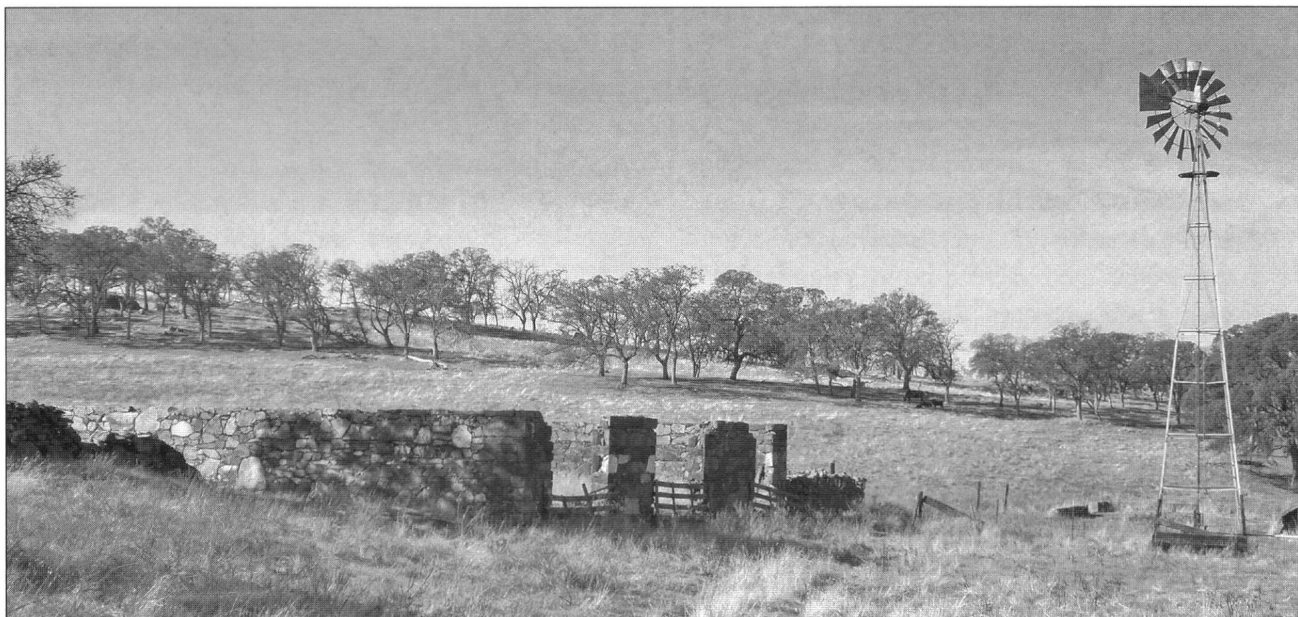
According to Elsie Flower in a 1963 *Las Calaveras*, the stone walls of the once grand barn were built by stone mason Jimmy Sykes.

Flower further claims that the last known authority on the rock fences was Fred Burnham who died in 1951. Apparently Burnham had actually watched the fences being built by Jimmy Sykes and two Wirth brothers; uncles of Mable McCarty Manuel.

A glimpse of first-hand history of the town was found in a letter written in January 1961 to then *Las Calaveras* Editor and County Superior Judge J.A. Smith from long time resident of Telegraph City Robert B. Parks:

*“...I have been told the name of Telegraph City originated through the telegraph line going from Stockton to Sonora. The city was established in the early 1860s and was on Reed’s Turnpike.*

*The buildings which I remember being there were the Telegraph City Hotel, which was operated by my father and mother, Mr. E. Parks and Mrs. Mary Parks, and a general merchandise store*



**The stone wall is all that remains of the once grand barn in Telegraph City. Photo by Charity Maness.**

owned and operated by C.S.S. Hill. There was also a large mine about two miles from Telegraph City, known as Quail Hill Mine.

In the early days, the 60s, there was a great many miners prospecting for copper; several hundred. This was during the war and copper was selling for about fifty cents a pound, which brought a great many people to the city.

The old palm trees near the side of the road were planted in about 1900. I had these planted there...”

Yours very truly,  
Robert B. Parks.

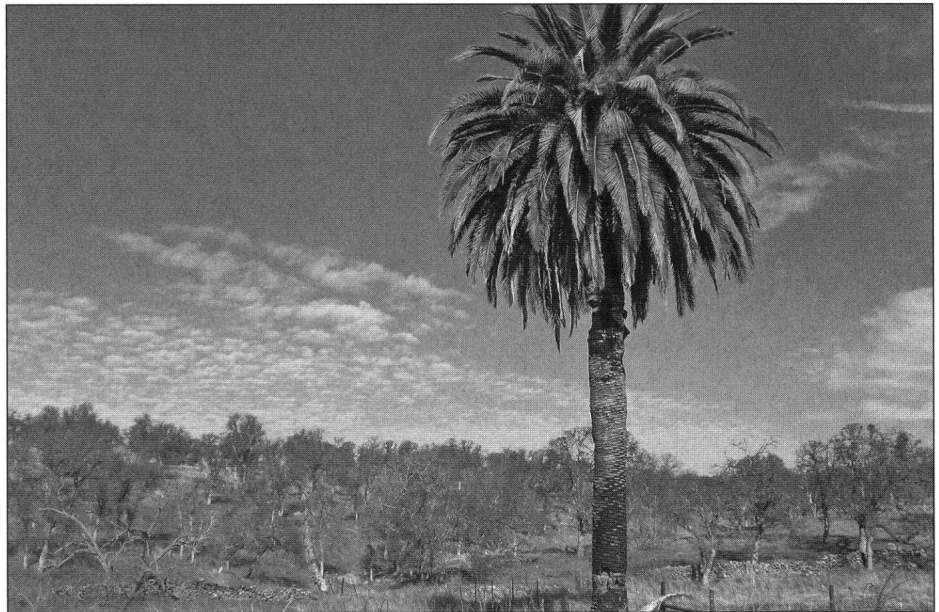
### ***Local Roadways To and From the Mines***

In the early 1850s, a road from Stockton to the mines was built. This road was known alternately as the Stockton and Copperopolis Stage Road, or the O’Byrnes Ferry Road, Reynolds Ferry Road or Shirley Road, depending upon the destination of the traveler. It followed the approximate route of State Route 4, came over Hog Hill from Shafer’s Store in Telegraph City and continued as far as McCarty’s Log Cabin Ranch, where it turned southeasterly toward the ferries.

By the 1860s the need for a good road to the many mines within the Gopher and Copperopolis mining regions was imperative. Reed’s Turnpike was constructed as a toll road in 1864–1865 to connect the mines to the main Stockton Road. Built by William K. Reed, co-owner with Thomas McCarty of the Union Mine, the toll road existed until 1885, when it was taken over by Calaveras County. In the 1930s State Route 4 was constructed slightly north of, and replacing, Reeds Turnpike. A small section is still in use today connecting CA-4 to O’Byrnes Ferry Road.

### ***Telegraph City Cemeteries***

Just east of Telegraph City on what was once Reeds Turnpike, now Telegraph Road sits a small



**Telegraph City palm tree planted by Robert Parks in 1900 that dwarfs the rock wall remains that snake across the open fields. Photo by Charity Maness, 2016.**

cemetery on the private land of Wagner Ranch with one lone headstone visible from the road. This cemetery is known as Beardslee Cemetery. Though some sources surmise there may be multiple graves, there exists only the one headstone engraved with “Robert Beardslee born Feb 18, 1826, died May 11, 1888, aged 62 years. Pioneer of CA and native of PENN.”

The Shafer Place cemetery is recorded as being located on a hillside just north of CA-4 at the junction of the road to Quail Hill Mine on the Murphy/Barger Ranch.

The Napoleon Mine cemetery is recorded as being located just south of CA-4 and Telegraph City.

According to the current Wagner Ranch foreman, Bill Harvey, an additional cemetery lays back in the hills south of Telegraph City near a mine he recalls as Independence Mine. The cemetery is located along Church Springs Road which, according to Harvey, was the old wagon trail to Knights Ferry, connecting Telegraph Road to Sonora Road.

Additional cemetery information at the Calaveras Historical Society, found in data compiled by Edith Jensen and Bernice Olsem in the mid 1960s, lists the Telegraph City Cemetery as a private cemetery. The following are listed as buried at the Telegraph City Cemetery:

James Lewis Bolton—miner—Tennessee Born 1833, died November 13, 1905.

Silas Shumake—stockman—Tennessee—Born 1838, Died October, 11, 1910—age 72 years.





**The Beardslee Cemetery.** Photo by Charity Maness, 2016.

### ***In the News***

Telegraph City was no stranger to the news during her formative years; some stories stranger than most.

*Daily Alta California, July 13, 1863—Telegraph City—A man shot a rat on a shelf in a store at Telegraph City in Calaveras County. The ball passed through the rat and the side of the house, continued its course about 50 yards, struck Samuel Eldridge, of Stockton, on the temple, glanced off, went through the glass of a window, and lodged in the hat of Wm. Morris, of San Francisco.*

However, much more coverage was given to the success and seemingly endless expansion of the mining area and the more than 100 mining claims being worked. The *Daily Alta* broke down the copper mining area into two districts, the Gopher District and the Copperopolis District. The following italicized mining snippets are taken directly from an overview of the region in the *Daily Alta California*, December 17, 1862

*The Calaveras Copper Mines, (from an occasional Correspondent) Telegraph City, Dec. 15.*

*...Calaveras county is divided into two mining districts; one lying 35 miles from Stockton,*

*around Copperopolis, and the Gopher District, situated 29 miles from Stockton, in the vicinity of Telegraph City. Both are on one great copper belt, but are divided by a range of foothills and, of course, are in some degree rivals.*

### ***The Gopher District***

*The copper mines of the Gopher district are six miles nearer Stockton than the Copperopolis belt. A long and tiresome mountain road is thus avoided, and a saving of two dollars per ton effected in hauling the ore.*

*Napoleon Mine... it is the great leading mine, and the only one regularly shipping ore from Gopher...A village has sprung up around it; and the company's houses, machine shops, and steam works have gone up like magic... The Napoleon is taking out about two hundred tons per month at a depth of forty five feet, and of this, over one hundred and twenty five tons are shipped... The workmen employed are principally Cornish copper miners, and everything moves like clockwork... the work is prosecuted day and night, giving employment to fifty miners, teamsters, woodcutters, etc.*

(Napoleon Mine: 1.2 km (0.7 mile) SE of Telegraph City, on the lower N slope of Hog Hill and NW of Quail Hill (6 miles SW of Copperopolis) discovered in 1860, first produced in 1865. The Napoleon Mine was considered the largest producer of copper in the district's mines with an estimated production of one million dollars worth of copper.)

***Camp and McNulty Claim...***  
*This lode is situated three-fourths of a mile from Napoleon. Very rich ore has been struck at a depth of twenty five feet, and fifteen tons shipped to test its quality. It will doubtless be a valuable mine; but the true lode has not yet been reached, and the terrors of litigation hang over it.*



**The headstone of Robert Beardslee.**  
Photo by Charity Maness, 2016.



*Star Claim...* This mine is also undeveloped but there is every indication that the lode will be reached. It lies between the Napoleon and McNulty.

*Live Oak Mine...* In that portion of Gopher District, on the rancho of Henry Botcher, is another well managed mine, principally owned by San Franciscans. The shaft has been sunk some eighty feet, and from this the miners are drifting to the lode... Superintended by Mr. Botcher, the original locator, the value of this mine is but a question of time.

(Live Oak Mine: 5 miles E of Jenny Lind.)

*Hughes Mine—Quail Hill...* principally owned by Hiram Hughes, and is mined for gold as well as copper. Mr. Hughes is developing this valuable claim according to his own views... At present the workings are limited, but at a future period the value of this large deposit of mineral wealth will be fully appreciated.

(Quail Hill Mine: 3.1 km (1.9 miles) NNW of Telegraph City, and about 10 km (6½ miles) WSW of Copperopolis, near the Stanislaus County line. Quail Hill Mine operated during the periods 1888 to 1916 and 1917 to 1945.)

### ***Additional Gopher District Mines***

Telegraph Mine (Diamond J): 2.8 km (1.7 miles) SSE of Telegraph City, S of Hog Hill, near the Stanislaus County line. Production in 1865 and 1914.

Pioneer, gold and copper mine, located 2 miles NE of Telegraph City. Operated intermittently from 1933 to 1940 by G. C. Copp of Copperopolis.

Quail Hill No. 2—Eagle Mine...

Gopher Hill Mine (Gopher Ridge): N of Telegraph City, on the divide between Buckham Gulch and Copper Gulch, operated during 1921 and 1934 to 1936.

### ***Copperopolis District Mines***

North Keystone Mine: 0.6 km (0.4 mile) NW of Copperopolis, E of the Copperopolis Reservoir dam, Operated during the periods 1861–1866, 1867, 1942, 1943, 1944 & 1945.

Union Mine (Calaveras Copper): in the town of Copperopolis. Operated during the period 1861 to 1946.

Empire Mine (Cleveland; Jumbo; Royal): located in Copperopolis believed to be a continuation of the Union lode.

Jackson McCarthy Mine (Old Calaveras Mine): S end of Copperopolis (S of the Empire claim).

In 1862, the *Daily Alta* also listed other mines of the time in the Copperopolis District: the Webster Mine (SSW of Lightner Peak; 3½ miles SE of Copperopolis), the Kentucky Mine and the Calaveras Mine, which would become the Jackson McCarthy Mine.

Wade Johnston recalled working as a sub-contractor sinking shafts at \$3.00 per foot in mines such as Lochinvar and Wee-Wee-Antic.

According to the Hudson Institute of Mineralogy, the total production of the Copperopolis copper mines—primarily from the Keystone and Union mine—for the period 1861 to 1946 was approximately 73,000,000 pounds of copper. This amount of copper had a value of over 12 million dollars.

During the Civil War much of the copper ore mined in the two districts was smelted on the Atlantic coast. From the Telegraph City and Copperopolis mines the copper was sent to Stockton, then San Francisco, loaded on ships and taken around the horn to the east coast.

It is estimated that more than 100 mining claims dotted the hills of Gopher Ridge during the copper rush.

### ***History Marker***

Work began in earnest by the members of the Calaveras Historical Society in the late 1970s to erect a historical marker near Telegraph City. By 1980, all permits and permissions were granted and a dedication took place at the vista overlook just west of Copperopolis. According to the dedication pamphlets of the time, the marker commemorated the discovery of Copper in Calaveras County by Hiram Hughes, the establishment of Telegraph City and the opening of the Copper Mines as a result of the discovery.

### ***Bibliography***

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*Daily Alta California*, July 13, 1863  
*Las Calaveras* January 1972

# Calaveras County Historical Society

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The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas; and the historic Red Barn Museum at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, also in San Andreas, which is open Thursday to Sunday, 10:00 to 4:00.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museums while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com; Red Barn Museum (209) 754-0800.

## October–December 2016

### New Members:

Ted & Rosa Towle—Converted to Lifetime Membership  
Leroy & Sandra Rader—Converted to Lifetime Membership  
Joseph Celentano—Converted to Lifetime Membership  
Ted & Lucile Fenner—Converted to Lifetime Membership  
Pat & Kathy George—Mountain Ranch  
Jenai Marinkovic—New Lifetime Membership (Mokelumne Hill)  
Jack Norton—Hayward

### Donations:

Katie Clark—American flag flown at U.S. Capitol Building the day the Butte Fire broke out  
Betty Carlson—Certificate of appreciation given to Larry Carlson from the Red Barn Museum 2004  
Mark Leegard—Carving of two granite plaques for display items in the Downtown Jail Yard; one for the arrastra, the other for the Pelton Wheel  
Adam Farrel—Granite for the plaques for the Downtown Jail Yard  
Wilma Hughes—Pocket knife with Blewett's Café on one side and "Sporting Goods" on the other  
Keith A. Tallia—Mining books (5)  
Phil & Florence Alberts—Dictionaries from early 1900s, raffle box from Mountain Ranch, photos of Mountain Ranch  
David Bonneau—Electric fan from early 1900s  
Bill Wennhold—Donation (6) round bottom fire buckets for ladder wagon  
Roark Weber—Antique chair with wicker seat  
Rita Millsaps—Collection of original survey books belonging to the late J. H. Finley, Surveyor from late 1800s to early 1900s, most containing surveys from early mines