



# Las Calaveras

Volume XLIII

Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society  
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Number 1



## Calaveras County Historical Society

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San Andreas, California 95249

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The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the county, locations of which are announced in advance. Dinner meetings also are announced in advance.

The Society's office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4 p.m. The telephone number is (209) 754-1058. Visitors are welcome. The Society also operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10 am to 4 p.m. in the historic county courthouse at 30 Main St., San Andreas.

### MEETING SCHEDULE

This month's meeting of the Calaveras County Historical Society will be October 27 in the Mokelumne Hill Town Hall. It will be a dinner meeting with dinner served at 7 p.m. The history of mark Twain Hospital will be presented.

The November meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. November 17 in the Courthouse Museum in San Andreas. The program is to be announced.

The Society's December meeting and annual Christmas party will be held at 7 p.m. on december 15, in the Metropolitan, in San Andreas. This will be a dinner meeting.

### IN MEMORIAM

Wilma DeMott, of Selma, Ore. June, 1994  
Prof. Clyde Wahrafting, of San Francisco  
Joann Long, of San Andreas August 31, 1991

## NEW MEMBERS

The Calaveras County Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

Golda Lawlor, of San Andreas  
Michael Rush, of Lodi.  
Winifred Burke, of Plymouth.  
Teresa Bailey, of Valley Springs.  
Esther Strehle, of Mountain Ranch.  
Jean Fanucchi, of San Diego.  
Ann Huberty Duncan, of Benecia.  
Mary Ann Ghialieri, of Vallecito.  
Jayne Dunlap, of West Point.  
Wakefield Stornetta, of Annapolis, MD  
Larry Cuslidge, of Bermuda Dunes.  
F.C. "Bud" Landreth, of Valley Springs.  
W.r. & Deanna Littau, of Mountain Ranch  
Judy Howard, of Pioneer.  
Wes & Vi Howard, of Linden.  
Walter R. Padgett, of Modesto.  
Ivan & Yolanda Hamlow, of Stockton.  
Michael B. Arkin, of San Andreas.  
Jack & Gladys Dillashaw, of Altaville.  
Virginia Safford, of Sumter, SC

## MUSEUM DONATIONS

Calaveras County Historical Society wishes to thank the following persons who recently made donations to the Calaveras County Museum.

Fred Cuneo, of Calaveritas: Photos of Bacigalupi Store in Angels Camp and of the original Fricot home which burned in 1916.

Katheryn Cuslidge: Cash donation.

Taylor & Ann Howard, of San Andreas: Cash Donation  
Dr. D.L. Albasio, of Angels Camp: In memory of Virgil Chialieri, a cash donation.

Cocoa Shearer, of San Andreas: Index to registration affidavits

Howard Lewis, of Stockton: Cash donation

Norma Snyder, of San Andreas: 1904 Calaveras County map

## OUR COVER PHOTO

During the 1880's the steam powered mill at the Del Monte Mine on the North Fork of the Calaveras River was considered state-of-the-art. At lower left is George I Wright. Percy Lamb and Jack Etcherverry stand at ore bin. Trammer, (far right) remains unidentified.



## GUY CASTLE, A LIFETIME OF MINING MEMORIES

By George Hoyer

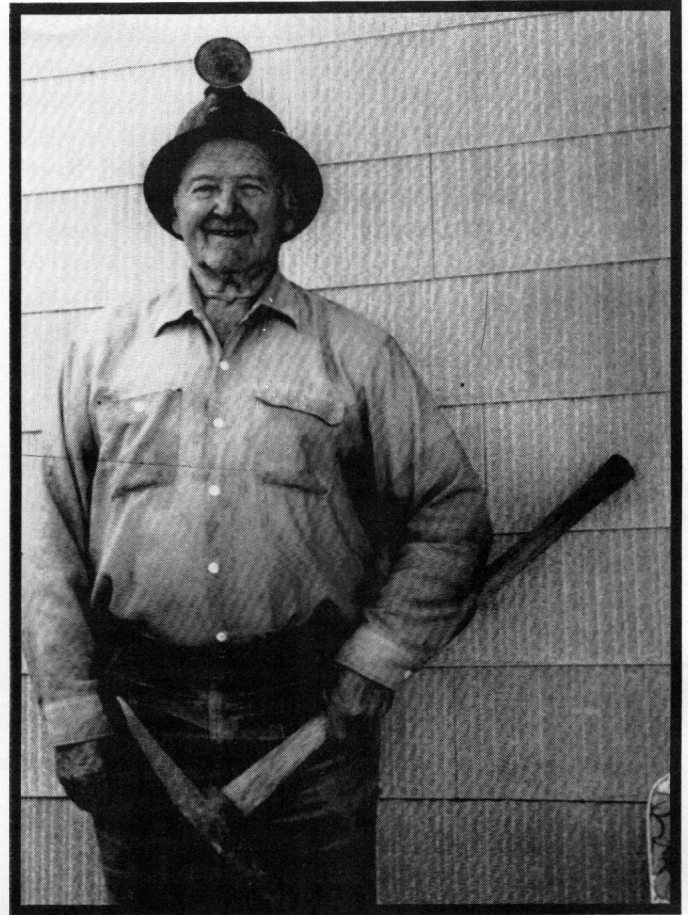
From his South Main Street home Guy Castle can view the surrounding hills of Angels Camp where once stood headframes of the deep mines in which his father worked. Since early gold rush days there has seldom been a time when some members of the Castle family has not been involved in gold mining somewhere along the Mother Lode. And, at age 85, Guy, one of the last of the gold country's hard rock miners and life-long gold prospector, still is actively involved in the search for and extraction of the yellow metal.

Two of his great uncles, Wellman D. Castle and Duane Castle, later followed by his grandfather, Lemuel Isaac Castle, left Corunna, Michigan, in early 1849 to join the growing hoard of argonauts headed for the California gold fields. They traveled swiftly on horseback, and late summer found them descending the western slope of the Sierra. Within weeks they were mining successfully, first on the American River, then on the Yuba River and finally, in an area that is now Amador County, west of Plymouth.

But, unlike many 49'ers who continued to try and eke out a living from mining after the initial boom ended and the cream had been skimmed off, the Castles as the easy mining ended, quickly looked to other fields of endeavor.

Having given up mining, Wellman D. Castle, eldest of the Castle brothers who had brought his wife and children West in 1852, settled in northwestern Amador County at what had become known as Forest Home. There, on the major travel route between Sacramento and the town of Plymouth, he operated a hotel and way station and became involved in the livestock industry. But, he had not forsaken mining. He grubstaked various miners and mining enterprises and the family prospered.

However, tragedy struck Wellman Castle in 1860 with the sudden death of his wife, Frances. A year later, Castle, then 36, married 16-year-old Mary Reed. Castle and his second wife remained at Forest Home until 1868, when in order to provide better education opportunities for their growing family, they moved to the Santa Clara Valley. There, near San Jose, Wellman Castle took up cattle ranching on a large scale. His younger brother, Lemuel Isaac Castle who in 1867



Guy Castle, hard rock miner.

had married Alice Annette Harsha, of Owosso, Michigan, followed him to San Jose and also took up cattle ranching.

Isaac and Alice Castle raised a family of seven children that included Guy Castle's father, Darling B. Castle, born June 25, 1875. Their other children included Wellman Doctor Castle, born in 1868; Lewis Henry Castle, 1870; Bertram Isaac Castle, 1872; Eolene Castle, 1877; Luella Price Castle, 1882 and Alice Anette Castle, 1883.

Guy castle's father was born in San Jose and attended public school there, but an urge for independence and the interest in mining that had lured his family westward, drew him to the mines. Darling B. Castle quit elementary school to go to work in the quicksilver mines of New Almaden, in the Santa Cruz Mountains, south of San Jose. How long he remained there is not known, but he still was in his mid-teens

Please see, **MINING**, pg. 3

**MINING, cont. from pg. 2**

when he left for Calaveras County to work with his uncle, Duane Castle, and an older cousin, Christopher Graham Castle, who had discovered and were developing the Pine Log Gold Mine at Hodson, location of the present-day Royal-Mountain King Mine. It was there that Darling B. Castle learned the underground mining skills that were to bring him employment in the deep quartz mines of Angels Camp.

Shortly before the turn of the century, Darling Castle married Alice Smith Bayne, of Visalia. Their first child, Walter, was born in 1901. Guy Castle, their third child, was born August 24, 1910. His other brothers and sister included Leota, Beulah, Howard and Ruby. All of the Castle children attended Angels Grammar School on Finnigan Lane, only a short walk from their home on Gold Cliff Road.

The gold mines of Angels Camp were enjoying their heyday. The Angels, Lightner, Stickles and the Utica Mine were running full blast and the city was enjoying prosperous times. Things were going well for the Castle family, then in 1915, Darling Castle, employed as a shift boss in the Utica Cross Shaft, was seriously injured when a ladder broke. Hospitalized for an extended period, he never fully recovered and was unable to return to work. He died in 1934 at the age of 59.

Life was not easy for the castles during those years. Walter, oldest of the Castle children, was forced to drop out of school in order to help support the family, but all the other Castle children completed their education and graduated from high school. Guy Castle graduated from high school and in 1929, the first year the newly competed Bret Harte High School fielded a football team, he was its quarterback.

Upon graduation, Guy went to work at the Calaveras Iron Works foundry in Altaville, to learn the pattern maker's trade. However, the stock market crash of 1929 changed the plans of many, including those of young Castle. In little more than a year the foundry, feeling the grip of the Great Depression, Closed its doors and Guy Castle, newly married to Dorothy Quinn, was out of a job. He did not remain unemployed for long.

The one industry the depression did not adversely effect was that of gold mining. The cost of steel, explosives and timber, three of the basic products used in gold mining, reduced in price and miner's wages remained at the same level they had been for years.



**Guy Castle, age 16, student at Bret Harte High**  
*Castle Family Album*

Mining all along the Mother Lode boomed, and Guy Castle went to work at the Calaveras Central, an underground placer mine at the northern edge of Altaville. It was the beginning of a life-long occupation in which Castle would quickly become among the top men in his field.

As did most young men, Guy started as a mucker -- "We were expected to fill 16 ore cars a day and if we didn't, they'd find someone who could." But, having been raised in an atmosphere of mining and eager to learn, he did not remain a mucker for long. He began learning how to install timbers in stopes, tunnels and raises. He worked in raises shafts and tunnel headings, learned how to run the big pneumatic drills and handle powder. (Miners even today, do not refer to the sticks of dynamite they use as "dynamite". Instead they simply call it "powder", probably a throw-back to the



days when black powder, dangerous and volatile, was the common explosive used in the mines.)

Among those employed at the Calaveras Central was Guy's former schoolmate, Chris Porovich. The two of them, lifelong friends, now have mined and prospected together for more than 60 years. Today, they still are actively engaged in development of a small quartz mine of their own.

Among the things that Guy and Chris, as young men at the Calaveras Central were learning, was the importance of underground safety and the rudiments of practical geology. But, Guy did not remain at the Calaveras Central. "The company had run into some kind of financial trouble and paydays were becoming few and far between. Married and with a new son, I couldn't afford to stay there, so in 1931 I went to work at the Morgan Mine side (the North side of the mountain) at the Carson Hill Mine."

At the Carson Hill Mine Guy worked at virtually every task to be done in underground mining and honed his mining skills. He helped drill and blast new raises from 900-foot level to the surface and at age 26, became the youngest shift boss along the Mother Lode. I was in charge of mining operations on my shift from the

1,100-foot level to the surface and Jimmy Davis was the shift boss from the 1,100 down to the 3,500-foot level. At that time John Burgess was superintendent of the Carson Hill and Frank Wagner was its underground foreman.

"When I was working at the Carson Hill there always were what we called tramp miners, coming and going from that and all the other mines. They were real professionals -- had worked everywhere, in Butte, and the Home Stake in Lead, South Dakota, in Arizona, Round Mountain, Nevada; and in Idaho's Coeur d'Alene. They knew every mining method and had encountered every kind of mining problem. You could put them anywhere and they knew exactly what to do. I learned more from them than anyone, but the problem was they wouldn't stay. They called the local miners stump ranchers and poison oakers. They knew they could get a job at mines anywhere and after a couple of paychecks they'd be gone."

Guy remained at the Carson Hill Mine until its mill burned in 1942 and it permanently closed.

"There still is good ore in the Carson Hill," said Guy recently, as he and Terry, his wife of 37 years, Please see MINING, pg 5



The Utica Mine Cross Shaft was on top of the hill behind the present Veterans' Building.

*Historical Society Photo*

**MINING, cont. from pg 4**

relaxed on a summer afternoon in their comfortable Angels Camp home. "Those lower level stopes are full of good rock. There are good spots in the upper levels, too. But when the last outfit that tried to mine it got down into the sulfide ore they couldn't save its values because they didn't use a ball mill to crush it fine enough."

"I remember one night when Jimmy Davis phoned me from the 3,500-foot level and said: " 'come down here. I want to show you something.' " So, down I went and he was waiting for me with a bunch of sacks. We climbed back over the muck pile to this little ore shoot and there on the foot wall was a streak of gold as wide as my hand. I forget how many sacks we filled. We took them out to the main shaft and sent them to the top where people were waiting. That's the last we ever saw of that stuff. It wasn't uncommon to hit sweet spots like that in Carson Hill."

"There was some highgrading at the Carson Hill. There was highgrading at all the mines where gold was visible in the rock or deep placer gravels. There was a fellow used to come up from San Francisco -- a lot of people knew him -- and he bought up highgraded gold at \$10 or \$12 an ounce. That was before 1933, when gold was worth about \$18 an ounce at the U.S. Mint.

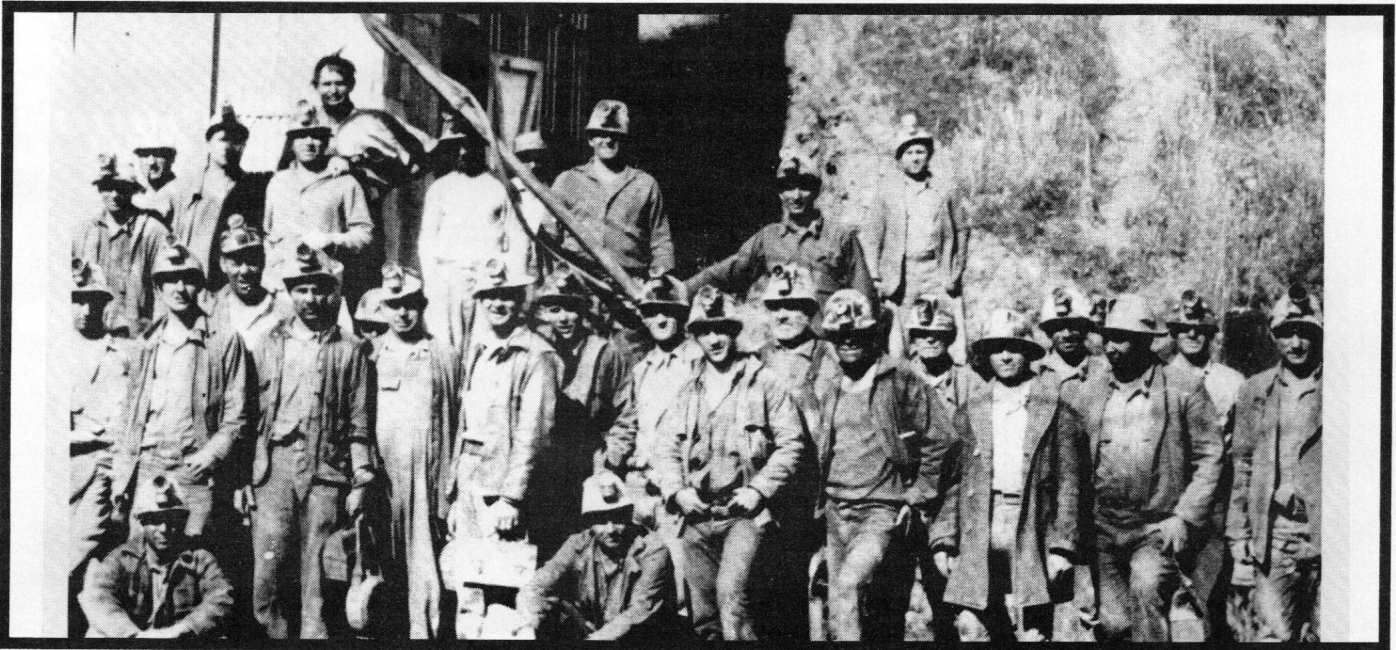
A couple of fellows started a mining operation down on the South Fork of the Calaveras River. Pretty soon they began showing people the beautiful pieces of gold they said they had mined. We all knew where it came from. It was highgraded gold from the Calaveras Central they had bought at \$10 an ounce.

World War II brought an end to gold mining in mid-1942 and Guy went to work at the U.S. Vanadium Mine, near Bishop. Later, when the Keystone Copper Mine reopened in Copperopolis, he went to work there as a shift boss in order to be at home with his wife and children.

"The focus at the Keystone was on production. They wanted tonnage. But the stopes were so dangerous -- they were caving so badly -- that we didn't dare send men into them. Instead, we used the shrinkage system. Drilled long holes from the raises and blasted down the ore. We produced eleven million tons of copper."

In 1946, Guy went to work in the Penn Mine, at Campo Seco, and when it closed he worked at the Altaville Mine, also known as the Austrian and later, as the Schmauder Mine, which reopened in the early 1950's.

By that time Dr. Dante Albasio had set up his medical practice in Angels Camp and he and Guy Castle became close friends.



**Crew at Carson Hill Mine. Guy Castle, shift boss, stands at center, top row.**

*Castle Family album.*



"Those were great days," remarked Guy recently. Doc and Buster Reidel, Floyd Segali, Virgil Ghiglieri and Smokey Airola and I used to deer hunt together. Doc's retired now, but he's still my doctor and when I go out to his place to say hello, before I leave he'll pick up his stethoscope and say, 'get that shirt off -- I want to check you out and see how you're doing.' "

But, the mid-1950's also brought tragedy to the Castle family with the death of Guy's wife, Dorothy. In 1957 Guy married long-time family friend and neighbor, Terry Greiner, and that same year, following the closure of the Schmauder Mine, he went to work at the Central Eureka Mine, in Sutter Creek.

"They wanted me to take a shifter's job there," said Guy, "but I could make more money contract mining. (Contract miners were paid by the ton for the amount of ore broken or for the number of feet per day of tunnel driven.)

"I stayed at the Central Eureka only eight months," said Guy. "It was a dangerous place to work because its shaft was in swelling ground. They had trouble keeping the shaft aligned due to pressure from the rock through which it had been built, and often crews were forced to trim the timbers so the skip could run freely up and down. This young fellow -- the skip tender -- was riding a loaded skip to the top one day when its bail hung up and he was killed right there in the shaft.

Three of us from Angels Camp were working there at the Keystone. "'Come on, Boys,' I said. 'Let's get the Hell out of here,' -- and we did."

That was the last commercial mine in which Guy worked for any length of time. Within weeks he was working at the Calaveras Cement Plant in San Andreas, a job he held until his retirement in 1973.

"Of course, Chris Porovich and I kept on prospecting and mining together on weekends and I helped out for a time when they were trying to reopen the Flume House gold mine -- an underground channel operation, near Mokelumne Hill."

Guy and Chris also, during the 1970's shortly before New Melones Reservoir filled, were employed by Barden Stevenot to plug the main tunnel of the Carson Hill Mine so that its lower levels which extend into the earth far below the reservoir itself, would not flood.

For some 20 years Guy and Chris have devoted considerable amounts of their time to development of a promising quartz claim on Chaparral Hill, northwest

## WHEN GOLD STILL WAS KING IN ANGELS CAMP

The deep gold mines of Angels Camp still were in full operation when Guy Castle was a small boy. He grew up with the constant rumble of the stamp mills in his ears. In fact, residents of the city had become so accustomed to the sound that they were unaware of it unless it stopped. Mining activity halted only twice-a-year, on July Fourth and Christmas Day, or, when a major mining accident occurred. If, during the night the sound of the mills ceased, the entire town awakened. The sudden silence sent fear racing through the heart of every person who had someone in the mines, for they knew that deep underground, something bad had happened.

The Utica Corporation owned not only the Utica Mine but the Stickles, Lightner, Madison, Gold Cliff and others, either within or on the edge of town. The original Utica Mine Shaft was located in what is now the City of Angels' Utica Park, flanking Highway 49, in the heart of the city. The Utica Cross Shaft that was used from about 1905 until the mines closed prior to start of World War I, was on top of the hill behind what is now the Veterans Building. The Stickles shaft and headframe was where the Wilmshurst Auto Agency

Please see **GOLD**, pg. 7.

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of the old Carson Hill Mine. Good weather still finds them working the claim.

They also served in an advisory capacity during the 1980's at the Carson Hill Mine when it went back into production for a time, as an open pit mine.

Only a few weeks ago Guy returned from Inyo County where, for the past 16 years, he has been engaged for several weeks each year to take charge of the annual assessment work for the owners of a series of claims that comprise the Betty Temple Molybdenum Mine, near the town of Independence.

Still in good health, Guy's interest in mining has never waned. He and Chris Porovich still spend considerable time at their mining claim.

"I had this operation on my arm a while back and I can't work as hard as I once did," said Guy, who celebrated his 85th birthday on August 24. "But, I still can tell them what to do, and I let that fellow running the bulldozer do the heavy work."

now is located and the Lightner Mine was only a short distance north of there. The Gold Cliff Mine was on the western edge of town.

"We kids used to play around the mine yards," said Guy. "On top of Democrat Hill (to the West of Utica Park) was the mining company's chlorination works. We played there, too. An aerial tram carried vats of Chlorine across the canyon to the mill where it was used in ore processing. We would jump up, catch the bucket carriage and ride our as far as we dared before dropping off. If a kid went too far he'd find himself 150 feet up in the air. Nobody ever got hurt and nobody ever gave a thought about toxic materials."

"The 120-stamp Utica mill was on Angels Creek, about where the Pacific Gas & Electric Company hydroelectric plant is now located. There were no tailing piles or tailing ponds in Angels Camp as there were in many other Mother Lode mining towns, such as Jackson. Instead, here in Angels, mill tailings simply flowed into Angels Creek and eventually washed down stream to the Stanislaus River. Steve Lavagnino's father caught the tailings on their way downstream, ground them even finer in four arrastras he built there, then used mercury to extract enough gold to provide his family a very good living," said Guy.

The mines operated on a two-shift basis. During the early years miners worked a 10-hour day, but in 1907 that was reduced to nine hours. Whether coming off day shift in the afternoon or night shift in the darkness, more than a few of those who earned their pay working underground observed the ritual of stopping for a "going home" drink. There were three saloons within a stone's throw of the major mine shafts. The Calaveras bar and Star corner Saloon were located in the Calaveras Hotel and the Central Corner Saloon was at the southwest corner of South Main and Hardscrabble Street. A glass of beer was five cents and a shot of whiskey was 15, but for a miner coming off shift, the first drink was free. "The saloons didn't lose any money by giving away those first drinks," commented Guy.

"When we were kids, Main Street in Angels Camp was unpaved. Dust was ankle deep in summer and mud was even deeper in winter. There were two board walk crossings downtown, one in front of the Star Corner Saloon at the Calaveras Hotel and the other in

from of the Post Office, where the Sportsman's Club is now. During rainy weather people who didn't use on of the wooden walks might suddenly find themselves wading knee deep in mud."

When Guy was a boy the "rustling line" -- unemployed men seeking jobs -- was as much a part of the mining scene as the mine headframes themselves. There was an accepted pecking order among the rustlers. Those waiting for a job the longest always stood first in line. If a new man showed up the mine official who did the hiring would question him briefly, concerning his experience. If a tramp miner arrived he might be hired on the spot, for he could be placed anywhere with confidence that he could do the job. The rustlers arrived each morning, waited silently for the foreman or superintendent who more often than not would simply say "sorry, boys, nuthin' doin' today." But sometimes he would pause and say, "I want you and you -- and you. Be here in the morning at seven o'clock."

Contrary to popular belief, the deep, hard rock mines of Angels Camp were not wet. In fact, after a blast had been set off in a tunnel or in the ore body of a stope the first thing a miner did upon reentering, was to hose down the muck pile and walls to kill a heavy accumulation of dust. With the muck pile saturated, the next step was that of "barring down". With a long, chisel bitted steel bar every fragment of loose rock was pried from roof and walls to make the area safe. However, miners did not refer to the top of the tunnel or stope as the roof or ceiling. Instead, in miners parlance it was called the "back", and anyone who referred to it as the roof was recognized as a rank amateur in the underground world.

"All of the deep Angels Camp mines had wooden headframes," said Guy. Soon after the last of them closed in 1918, their headframes, too, were torn down. "I guess most of them ended up as firewood. The only steel headframe was that of the Calaveras Central, up there north of Altaville, where I got my first underground job. That headframe still is there and there's still good paydirt in that mine."



## HISTORIC CAMPSTOOL RANCH WINS ARCHITECTURAL AWARD

A picturesque 106-year-old Rail Road Flat area ranch and former gold producing property is the recipient of the Calaveras County Historical Society's 1994 architectural award. On behalf of her children and her late husband, Eldred Lane, Blossom Lane of Mountain Ranch, accepted an award of merit for her family's effort in preserving and improving the historic



Stately Walnut tree provides summer shade for foreman's home at Campstool Ranch on Prussian Hill Road. *Historical Society Photo*

property while retaining it much in its natural state. The award was presented at the Society's July 28 meeting and installation of officers in San Andreas' Black Bart Park.

A blend of field and forest, the 2,400-acre Campstool Ranch flanks historic Prussian Hill Road and is traversed by headwaters of the Calaveras River where 49'ers found rich deposits of alluvial gold. The name of the ranch is derived from the design of its original cattle brand, an X with a line across the top.

The ranch was officially established May 10, 1888, through acquisition of a federal homestead patent by Valley Springs rancher Jacob M. Late. During the next 22 years Late and his wife, Dolly, filed additional homestead applications that expanded their holdings to 564 acres used primarily for summer pasture.

During the 1920's the Late property lay adjacent to 308 acres homesteaded in 1919 by Thomas E. Lane, a livestockman, butcher and grape grower in the Clements area. For several years Thomas Lane also brought vegetables, fruit and general provisions to the mountains with a team of Percheron horses. He also summered as many as 100 head of cattle on his Prussian Hill area ranch.

Lane's son, Eldred inherited the property from his father and in November, 1946, Blossom Lane and her husband purchased the entire Jacob Late ranch.

During the 1950's and 1960's, they acquired other surrounding properties. Those included lands originally patented for mining or ranching by Calaveras County settlers such as George Ira Wright, millwright and owner-operator of the Del Monte Mine and local ranchers Orrien and Archie Ames.

Today the Campstool Ranch with its 2,400 acres is operated by the Lane family as a cattle ranch and managed timber stand in conjunction with their Mountain Ranch holdings.

But, far more than simply expanding the perimeter of the original property, Eldred and Blossom Lane and now their son, Tim and his family, have preserved

Please see **RANCH**, pg. 9



Architectural Award Chairperson, Lorryne Kennedy (left) presents certificate of merit to Tim Lane and his mother, Blossom Lane, for their preservation of the Campstool Ranch.

**RANCH**, cont. from pg. 8

its historic sites while continuing to enhance the quality of the land itself through range improvement, water development and judicious management of its timberland. They have maintained and improved original pioneer roads that provide access to the interior of the property and help provide fire protection. They have built some 20 miles of fence, planted experimental seed crops of barley, oats and vetch and Campstool ranch is one of the few local ranches that has produced charcoal as a commercial product. Using portable steel kilns that could hold as much as four cords of oak, the Lanes cleared land and thinned stands of timber to promote better growth and provide greater measure of protection against wildfires.

They have built reservoirs and developed existing springs. Using a bulldozer equipped D-8 tractor the Lanes try to clear at least 25 acres of land each year on which is planted red clover, rye and other grasses that adapt to the land. Range improvement has helped provide forage for their cattle herd but they long ago learned that the ranch's most valuable resource is trees.

"We obtain Ponderosa Pine seedlings from the University of California at Davis to replace trees lost to bug kill. We replant other areas to provide timber harvest with an annual sustained cut. However, under normal circumstances, the trees quite successfully reseed themselves," said Tim Lane, recently.

Campstool Ranch includes the original site of several mining claims within the Rail Road Flat Mining District, including the Monte Del, Hazard, Calaveras View and Pina Vita claims which eventually were consolidated and operated a the Prussian Hill Mine and later, the Del Monte Mine. The Del Monte Mine was active from 1871 to 1874 and from 1887 through 1914, included a 10-stamp mill. Reportedly, it produced as much as \$3,000 per week in gold during the early 1870's. Also located on the ranch is approximately three miles of the Clark Ditch. The ditch, which intersected the North Fork of the Calaveras river,

supplied water to several mines in the Rail Road Flat and Glencoe Mining Districts and remnants of a large reservoir that it fed is located directly across the canyon from the Del Monte Mine.

In the late 1940's when Eldred and Blossom Lane became involved with the property there were virtually no improvements on it except a small, dilapidated cabin that leaked when it rained and through which the wind whistled. Now modernized and expanded, it serves the Lane family as ranch headquarters and



**Once a prospector's cabin, this gracious mountain home serves as headquarters and family retreat on Lane's Compstool Ranch.**  
*Historic Society Photo*

woodland retreat.

Said Tim Lane, "We intend simply to continue producing cattle and timber and improving the land. We don't plan to subdivide, we don't plan to destroy the timber and we are not going to exploit the mineral resources. The cattle and timber at least partially cover the expenses of maintaining the land and we are going to keep it for the family and the future."



## 1909 FLOOD CAUSED HAVOC IN ANGELS CAMP

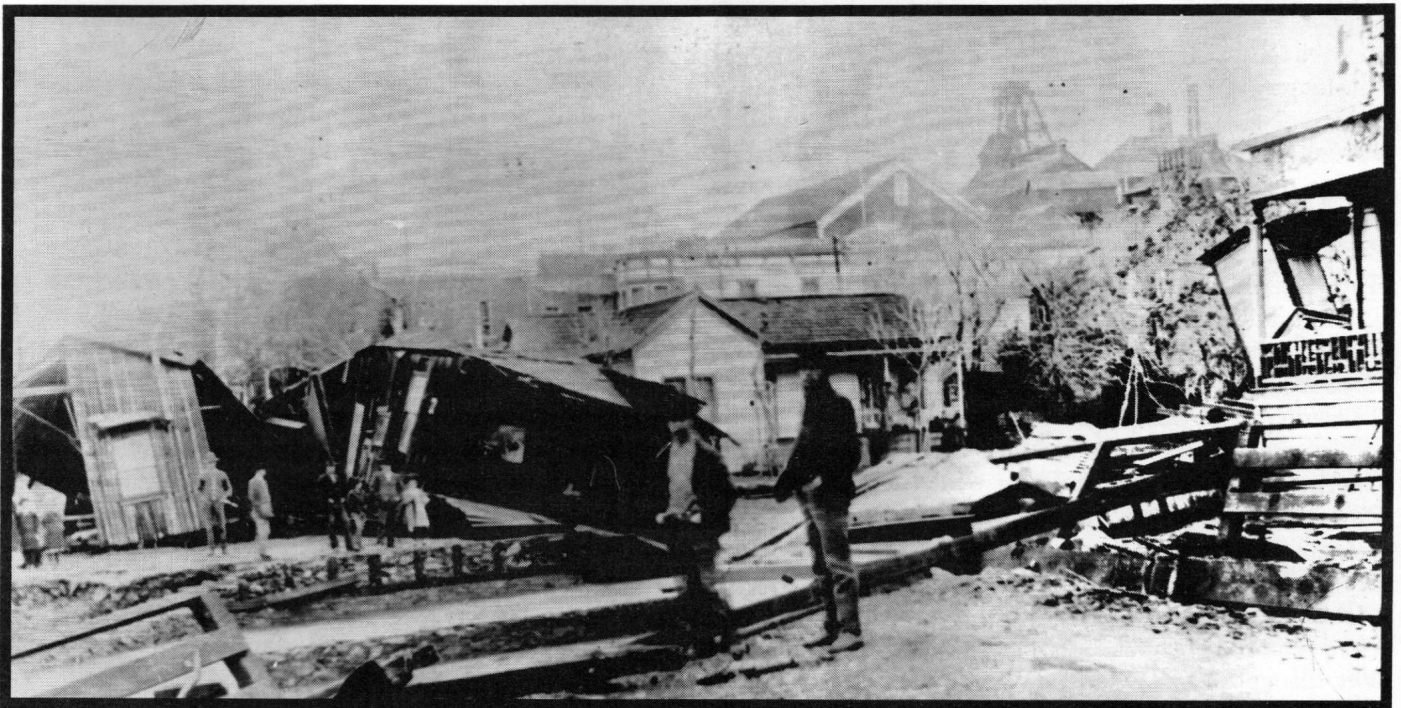
The fall of 1908 in Calaveras County had been extremely dry. Clarence Getchell, editor of the weekly Calaveras Prospect, reported that between July 1 and December 31, only 6.4 inches of precipitation had dampened its parched foothills. But, January 1, 1909, ushered in a period of almost constant storm that during the next 21 days dropped 16.43 inches of rain on the Angels Camp area, much of it arriving during the final two days.

By the third week of January central Calaveras County already was becoming well saturated by the almost steady rain and its normally dry creeks and ravines were beginning to carry substantial flows. Miners and gold prospectors who had virtually given up on having enough water for successful placer mining were looking forward to plenty of water for ground sluicing. Ranchers who had viewed their hungry cattle with alarm now looked forward to a good spring grass

crop. Then, on January 20 the intensity of the storm increased. Rain and hail lashed the lower elevations, extending well into the mountains. The already swollen streams began to become torrents.

The high water first attracted attention in Murphys where Angels Creek flows through it. By early evening it had begun rising out of its banks but the creek there is fed by a relatively short watershed and the volume of the runoff into it was not heavy enough to cause any major threat. However, as the storm continued with no sign of abatement and with darkness falling, a messenger was dispatched on horseback from Murphys to warn the residents of Angels Camp of the possible flood threat.

Already, the old mining settlement of Vallecito, on Coyote Creek three miles South of Murphys, was beginning to feel the effects of the storm. The creek early in the evening had jumped its banks and was threatening property. F.A. Dixon found the flood waters had turned his house and yard into an island. He managed to get a few personal belongings to the  
Please see **FLOOD**, pg. 11



Angels Camp's 1909 flood not only destroyed the city's South Main Street bridge across Angels Creek but caused extensive damage generally and blocked the intersection of South Main Street and Finnegan Lane with damaged and displaced buildings. This photo, looking north along Main Street, shows headframe of Utica Mine Cross Shaft at upper right. *Historical Society Photo.*

**FLOOD, cont. from pg 10**

home of Mrs. J. Moyle, which stood on higher ground, then carried his wife through the rising water to the Moyle home. The floor of the H.H. Tuchsens home was covered by two feet of water. At 3 a.m. members of the Maletesta family began felling trees and anchoring them along the creek bank in an effort to save their wash house and milk building. The flood swept away bridges, tore down fences and gates and left gaping holes in roads.

Although the flow of water in Angels Creek had been increasing all night, the crest of the flood hit Angels Camp about 4 a.m. on January 21. Rising some five feet out of its banks, the water smashed into buildings and bridges and overflowed streets in the downtown area of the city.

Worst hit was China Town, much of which flanked the creek itself along what is now Bird's Way. At least one resident of the Chinese community was drowned. A number of others saved themselves by cutting or breaking through the roofs of their water-surrounded cabins and climbing to safety. The bridge across the creek on the road to Carson Hill (now Highway 49) was carried away, as were all but one of the five footbridges that spanned Angels Creek through the length of town. Bridges lost included a vehicular bridge at Booster Way; the footbridge that connected Finnegan Lane to the Annex; (South Main Street) a bridge near what is now Tryon Park; another further upstream that led to Walsh's Soda Works, and the Sand Pile and Madison Mine footbridges downstream from the Carson Hill Road.

In addition to an undetermined number of Chinese owned cabins and shops destroyed or washed away, flood losses listed by Editor Sam Lewis in the January 23 issue of the Calaveras Weekly Citizen included: a two story house on South Main Street owned by Dr. George F. Pache; the building which had housed the Powell Restaurant; a two-story hardware store; Siegel's Blacksmith shop and several outbuildings and private stables. Water stood 18 inches deep in Richard's Stable and Livery but all horses and vehicles were removed without loss. Electricity and mail service was disrupted for several days and the Angels Camp school was closed because several inches of water and mud covered its lower floor.

The Calaveras Prospect of January 30 carried a letter from a young Angels Camp woman to a friend in San Andreas, describing her impressions gathered

during and after the flood. Editor Getchell, ever careful not to invade the privacy of either the author or the receiver of the letter, omitted both of their names. After naming the major buildings lost, the writer described a walk taken through the flood stricken area later in the day.

"The bridge, blacksmith shop and house where the restaurant used to be were completely carried away. Other buildings blocked the road and every house that had been built along the creek had been taken. Chinatown was another scene of wreckage. You couldn't get through there and there was a house across the remains of the bridge. Several shacks blocked the street. They moved one and tore down the rest. On one hill, when we walked up to Sequoia Springs, we saw where a cloudburst had caused a slide that took brush, trees, boulders and everything in its path off the hillside and swept it across the creek. It looked like a great hydraulic nozzle had played on the hill."

For weeks, crews under direction of County Supervisor Warren Garland who represented the Angels District (it was three years before Angels Camp was to become an incorporated city) labored to restore bridges, repair streets and bring order out of the chaos created by the flood.

But, Angels Camp was not the only Calaveras County area to suffer from the torrential rain. The entire county felt its impact. Travel to Murphys was virtually halted for several days. Larger creeks were so swollen it was impossible to cross them, even on horseback.

Flood water washed out large sections of the Mokelumne Ditch that supplied much of the northwestern area of the county, causing a huge land slide near the Queen Mine. Crews directed by J.D. Kline were forced to hydraulic the debris in order to obtain solid footing for rebuilding the flumes and ditch.

Another landslide caused by the cloudburst smashed the Union Construction Company's commissary at its Camp Nine powerplant on the North Fork of the Stanislaus River with a heavy loss of materials and supplies and washed away its Indian Creek bridge. Commissary manager Elmer Dunbar, sleeping in the building, escaped by jumping through a window. He lost all of his personal belongings and \$300 when the building slide into the river and broke up.

The Weekly Calaveras Citizen reported as the flood subsided that Union Construction Company



## OLD BRET HARTE HIGH DESTROYED BY FIRE

One of Calaveras County's most familiar landmarks, the 68-year-old Bret Harte High School building in Altaville, was destroyed by fire July 14, presumably the target of an arsonist. The fire broke out in its interior during the early morning hours of July 14 and despite efforts of several fire departments, it was impossible to save it. The old two-story structure which fronted on Highway 49 had served as home of the Calaveras County Office of Education for 17 years, since being abandoned for classroom use in 1977.

Financed by a \$60,000 bond issue when the original wood frame high school proved inadequate, the concrete walled school was completed in 1926 on land purchased from Frank Nuninger. It was built by the construction firm of Lewis & Green, of Stockton.

Although the Bret Harte District's 1926 graduates did not attend classes in the new school it was completed in time for them to receive their diplomas in its new auditorium. Prior to that, graduations had been held in the ballroom of Woods Hall on South Main Street, in Angels Camp.

Members of that 1926 graduating class included:

Martin Aroz	Cornelia Barden
Irene Beer	Theodore Bird
David Copello	Herbert Davies
Louis Delaurenti	Zilda Delucchi

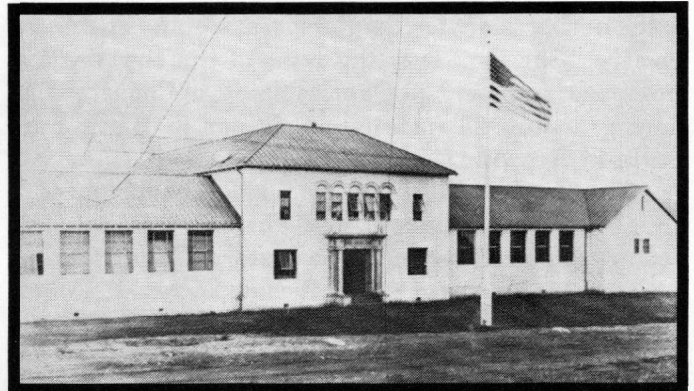
Superintendent Charles Norcott had hired as many men as he could find to begin repair work. The paper reported that two stage loads of men had left Angels Camp to repair trails to Camp Nine so that pack animals could travel them, as large sections of the Camp Nine Road had been washed away.

"Hardly a fence remains intact along the creeks and ravines and many creeks have changed their channels," said Editor Sam Lewis. "People in the flatlands say that since the flood much of their once familiar landscape looks like a different area." He said a house on the James Wilcox ranch had been carried downstream by a flooded creek and that stages from Angels Camp, Copperopolis and Jenny Lind were unable to reach the rail head at Milton.

Milton itself was isolated, said Lewis, and the train still was unable to reach on January 24. Wheeler's

Catherine Ferrando  
Irene Guisto  
Annie Lombardi  
Ernest Nora

Mary Gualdoni  
Phyllis Lewis  
Emmet Morley  
Amelia Paredes



**Bret Harte High School as it appeared when completed in 1926** *Tad Folendorf Collection*

David Paredes  
Oliver Raggio  
Lucille Starceвич

Marie Peirano  
Melvin Segali

Bret Harte fielded its first football team in 1929. Among those on that first squad were Oliver Bernasconi, Earl Brunner, Guy Castle, Sam Giovenetti, Ray Lagomarsino, Earl Lewis, Florin McAfee, Tom McClure, Paul McNutt, Tom Rolleri and Harry Austen. The school's geometry teacher was their coach.

blacksmith shop and machine shop in Milton, also was washed away.

San Andreas apparently was one of the few communities not severely damaged by the storm. The papers reported only that the town had been without electric power throughout Friday and most of Saturday. On the bright side, the Calaveras Prospect reported that local resident John Nunes had picked up a \$20 gold piece in the street where it apparently had been washed out by the rain.

Editor Getchell also quoted an elderly Chinese miner who had lived most of his life on the Calaveras River -- for more than 50 years -- who said the river raised higher than he had ever seen it. In fact, he said, he never before had been threatened by high water, but this time the river forced him to flee for his life and the rising water washed his cabin away.

## **CHERI FOLENDORF BECOMES SOCIETY'S NEW PRESIDENT**

Cheri Folendorf, of Angels Camp, whose home is the historic Utica Mansion, once the home and headquarters of famed Utica Mine owner Charles Lane, is the new president of the Calaveras County Historical Society. She took over the reins of the organization from retiring President Charles Stone, of Copperopolis, during a July 28 installation dinner in Black Bart Park, in San Andreas.

Cheri and her husband, Tad, longtime members of the historical society, are responsible for the remarkable restoration of the historic Utica House.

Other officers for 1994-95 include Willard P. Fuller, vice-president; Shirley Huberty, re-elected treasurer; Sheryl Lavaroni, recording secretary and Mary Jane Garamendi, re-elected membership and financial secretary. Former President Gloyd A. "Bud" Ponte, of Fricot City, was elected to the board of directors. Other directors who remain on the board include Barbara Beaman, Grant Metzger and Duane Wight.

The new officers were installed by Calaveras County School Superintendent Robert Bach, who as a longtime member of the historical society also is deeply interested in the history of this county and of the Mother Lode. The July outdoor installation of new officers has become a tradition in recent years.

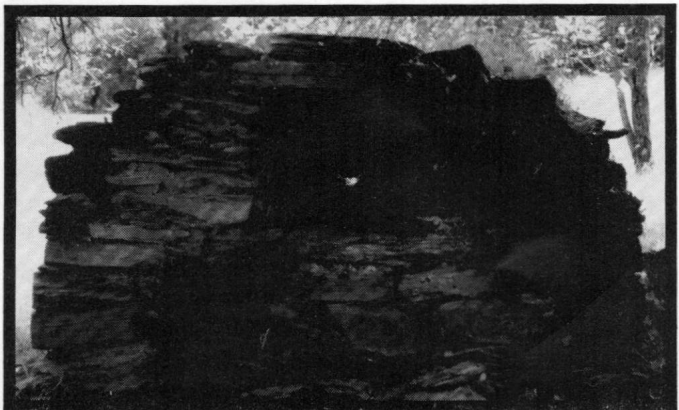


**Historical Society President Cheri Folendorf**

## **STONE OVEN TO BECOME A MUSEUM ARTIFACT**

A stone oven once used for bread baking by a pioneer Italian family which settled here, soon will be on public view in the walled courtyard of the Calaveras County Courthouse Museum on North Main Street, in San Andreas. The century-old oven from the site of the Ratto home, now the property of Bob Matteoli, in Calaveritas, an early day mining settlement, will be dismantled and moved under direction of Dr. Julia Costello, of Mokelumne Hill, an archaeologist-anthropologist who has done extensive work in the Mother Lode as well as in the Near East. She is being assisted in this project by Society Past President Don Cuneo, of San Andreas and other historical society volunteers. The moving and rebuilding will also be the subject of a documentary film by Vision International, for PBS distribution. The society also will receive tapes of the film for distribution to local

libraries, schools and local public TV. The moving project is scheduled to get underway on the weekend of October 8 and 9, and persons who wish to help may offer their services at the historical society office. It is expected the project will be completed with the oven in place by Thanksgiving.



**Pioneer oven, headed for county museum.**