



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society
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CALAVERAS HOSPITALS

Calaveras County has long been concerned with the care of its indigent sick and elderly residents, but, as in many another rural area, has seldom been very generous in providing for care. In recent years, state and federal assistance has drastically changed the picture. We are interested in this issue, however, in an historical look at the County's hospitals, and in some of the problems faced by the physicians in practicing here in the years gone by. Readers will remember that two of our earlier issues were dedicated to Calaveras doctors ("Las Calaveras" for July, 1973, and October, 1974).

Doctors practicing in Calaveras in the past were always handicapped by the lack of adequate local hospital facilities. Some doctors established their own private hospitals for the more easily treated problems. Others used whatever services, however meager, that the county hospital might provide. It was not until 1946,

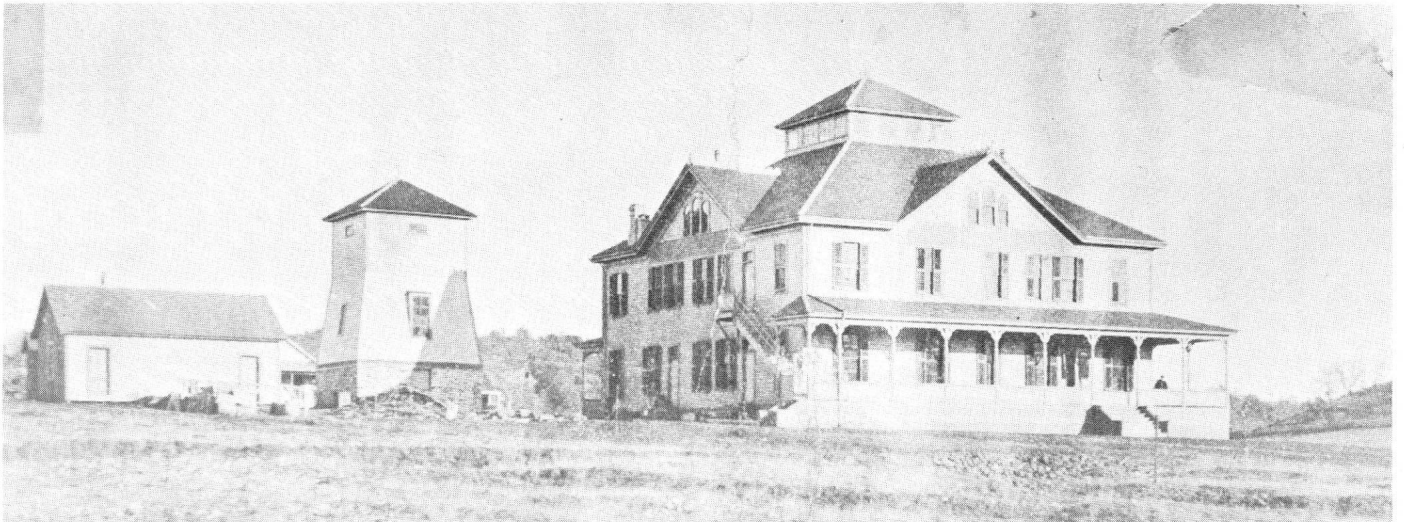
when under the leadership of the Grange and George Poore (then Master of the Grange), a county-sponsored organization was created (Mark Twain Hospital District) and plans made for a real well-equipped hospital. This was financed in large part with state and federal funds, except for Wards A, B, & C. The latter were built by the County for the indigent, but in more recent years, the nursing and convalescent homes and hospitals have taken over this responsibility. The Mark Twain Hospital, completed in 1951, was the first in the history of the County to provide modern facilities where the medical practitioners could take care of any but the most difficult of their cases.

Mrs. Zelma Altmeyer, one of the very active members of the Mark Twain Hospital Auxiliary, has summarized the history of hospitals in the County for presentation at the February meeting of our Society. She has based her study on research by the late Edward Leonard, on newspaper articles, and from conversations with Mrs. Addie Reid, who worked at the former County hospital as well as at Mark Twain. Other materials from Society files have been incorporated into this issue. These include short papers by Ed Leonard and Emmett Joy that were presented before the Society nearly a decade ago.

COUNTY HOSPITALS IN CALAVERAS

by Zelma Altmeyer

In 1858, the County Board of Supervisors accepted the responsibility for the care of the indigent sick and elderly. At this time the county seat was at Mokelumne Hill. They



THE COUNTY HOSPITAL

A view of the "new" building as it appeared shortly after it was constructed in 1890.

Society Files



**VIEW FROM MOUNTAIN
RANCH ROAD**

Loaned by Addie Reid

contracted with Dr. A. H. Hoerchner to care for these patients at his private hospital situated at Pleasant Springs, in Upper Rich Gulch, between Mokelumne Hill and Glencoe. Dr. Hoerchner continued with this care for eleven years. He received \$583 per quarter. In 1860, there were thirteen patients in his care.

San Andreas was declared officially the county seat in 1867. In order to win the election, the citizens of San Andreas had agreed to furnish all of the county buildings without expense to the remainder of the county. Some \$15,000 was raised by public subscription for this purpose.

By the following year (1868), the Hospital tax funds, as well as other tax funds, were running short, and so the Supervisors advertised for bids for the care of the indigent. Dr. Hoerchner's bid was the only one received and was deemed to be too high. The Supervisors then accepted a generous donation from the citizens of San Andreas. This was the Gold Hill House, a two-story stopping place and roadhouse located near the present intersection of Cement Plant Road (now Pool Station Road) and Highway "49", about where the former Shell bulk station was situated.

This land was conveyed to the county in February, 1869. By bid, Patrick McAllen, former proprietor of Gold Hill House, agreed to provide wood, milk, and all the necessary labor to care for the indigents for \$65 per month, plus board for himself, his wife, and two children. Mr. R. W. Russell, a local livery stable operator, was hired to transport the patients from Dr. Hoerchner's hospital to Gold Hill House. A steward, W. B. Johnson, was hired and Dr. E. B. Robertson appointed as physician for two years, at a salary of \$50 per month.

A Potter's Field cemetery was established nearby, northwest of the hospital. Many of the indigents buried there were said to be Indians and Chinese. The graves were shallow and unmarked, and nearly all surface evidence of the cemetery is now gone.

Two years after Gold Hill House became the county hospital, it burned, and two patients died in the con-

flagration. A new building was soon constructed, just across the road from the old site. This served as the county hospital for nineteen years. Lumber was supplied by Wyllie and Washburn for \$851.46, and labor by J. M. Shinn, H. T. Toon, and C. L. Chase for a total of \$634.00. In 1875, Dr. W. E. Rush was serving as County Physician and Superintendent for \$1800.00 per annum. Hospital supplies furnished that year under bid included:

A. Bader; beef of each and every kind at 7¢ a pound.

A. Cassinelli supplied the groceries:

Flour	3¢ lb.	Butter	35¢ lb.
Graham flour	2½¢ lb.	Crackers	7¢ lb.
Bazo beans	4¢ lb.	Cornstarch	14¢ lb.
Sugar	12½¢ lb.	Rice	7½¢ lb.
Coffee	23¢ lb.	Onions	2¢ lb.
Cornmeal	3¢ lb.	Potatoes	2½¢ lb.
Tea	55¢ lb.	Lard	16¢ lb.
Codfish	7¢ lb.	Mackeral	\$2.50/kit
Salt	2½¢ lb.	Syrup	87½¢/gal.

Mustard, pepper, spices, \$1.62 a dozen

The hospital population grew to an average of forty patients, greater than the hospital capacity. So in 1889, the Supervisors (James Snow, ch'm, J. Salcido, F. W. Fish, T. Peters, James Creighton, and A. L. Wyllie, clerk) called for plans for a two-story building capable of handling the patient load. A bid from A. S. Thomas was received for \$7,240 and was accepted, but before everything was finalized, the Supervisors declared the Gold Hill House site unacceptable. They purchased sixteen acres from Robert Leonard on Mountain Road (site of the present Government Center) for which \$1000 was paid with an option for 38½ more acres to be purchased within the year for \$2500.

The Supervisors contracted with Mr. Thomas to build the two-story structure on the sixteen-acre site. He was to furnish all lumber and labor and to be paid in installments as the work progressed. D. L. Morrill, Hospital Superintendent, was also the Building Superintendent. The additional acreage was farmed. The old hospital was cut into sections and moved to the new site to be used as wards.

An incomplete list of the Superintendents for the new hospital is as follows:

D. L. Morrill
S. H. Burgess
N. Burrow
J. H. Burgess
Wm. T. Harper
Robert Crossett
John Dallon

From this point on, I base my report in large part on the comments of Addie Reid who worked at the Hospital from 1940 until it was replaced by Mark Twain Hospital.

One approached the front door along a drive bordered by shady elms and a rose arbor. The extensive grounds were planted with many trees, shrubs and flowers. Entering the main floor, one found the waiting room to the right. Other rooms were the Steward's Office, and emergency room, six rooms for patients, two dining rooms (one for patients and one for hospital help), the kitchen, laundry, pantry, and storage. The second floor held the nurses' quarters and a maternity section. The nurses lived at the hospital, worked 12-hour shifts, six to seven days a week, helped with the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and were paid \$40.00 per month, plus room and board. They often acted as midwives for Indian women in maternity. A room above the second floor was a store-room of sorts. Addie loved to spend free time there, for it contained innumerable ledger books and trunks, a collection of many years. To her regret, she does not know where any of these things were taken after the hospital was razed in 1959. The hospital closed in 1951 and the patients were moved to Mark Twain Hospital Wards A, B, and C.

Outside to the left were the Women's Cottage and the Men's Cottage. Each had a long veranda, matching the veranda that surrounded the first floor of the hospital.

On these porches the patients and their friends enjoyed the sunshine or the breezes that came through the gardens. Patients who were able and willing helped with the gardening and with the caring of the animals.

Behind the main building was a large flat area where the Steward's Cottage was built in 1910 by Mr. W. E. LaRiviere. Other buildings included a tank house, a T.B. ward (moved from the old Gold Hill site), the "jail" for unmanageable patients, and the "pest house" for patients with contagious or communicable diseases. Behind this area were a large vegetable garden, the pig-pens, the chicken pens, rabbit hutches, and a barn for the sheep and cows (only one building still standing). All of the produce from these activities was used in the hospital kitchen. Well beyond this and up higher on the slope was the "Potter's Field" cemetery. It was there that an Indian grinding rock was found for this area had been an Indian campsite. Addie persuaded the workmen to move it to the hospital grounds and place it near the fish pond in the gardens. The nurses were responsible for the cleaning of this fish pond once a month. The grinding rock is now placed beside the flagpole at the new Mark Twain Hospital.

Among the doctors frequently at the County Hospital was W. B. March, who settled in Burson in 1885, and cared for many of the residents of the lower part of the county when that town was a busy freight-handling center at the railroad terminus. When the railroad was extended the next year to Valley Springs, the population of Burson decreased and in 1893, Dr. March moved down to Brentwood for awhile. Later he returned to Burson and resumed his practice there. Another doctor with patients at the County Hospital was J. A. Holland who lived in San Andreas.

Angels Camp had the greatest concentration of doctors. Some of the early ones came looking for gold,

HOSPITAL STAFF – 1945

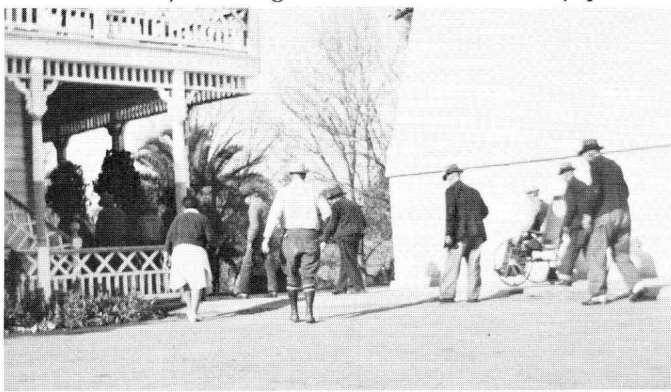
Loaned by Addie Reid



and some were employed later by the mines to care for accident victims as well as employees families. Some left soon, some stayed and built private practices. Their offices were in their homes. They traveled by horse and buggy or on horseback to visit their patients, and often instructed a family member how to properly nurse the patient. In their black bags were drugs and other items that must serve for any emergency.

If the doctor was out on his rounds when an emergency arose, there was a method, unique to the times, to find him. A call was made on the party telephone line, and as many of the others on the line would listen in, someone, somewhere, would know the doctor's approximate whereabouts, and would thus help to find him.

Collecting payment for medical services was often a very casual matter. The patient paid what he could, when he could, and almost never in full – just on account. Dr. William Kelley, of Angels, used to occasionally place a



DINNER CALL

Courtesy of Addie Reid

notice in the local paper announcing that payments could be made at his office, in full or in partial payment, because he was in dire need of money.

Some of the respected and beloved doctors of Angels were G. F. Pache, E. W. Weirich, C. Freeman, J. R. Dorroh, and G. P. Cooper. Dr. Cooper was especially skilled in mine rescue work. He was among the first into a mine when disaster struck, in order to ease the pain of the victims, and he devised many types of emergency equipment for use at mine and construction accidents. As County Health Officer and Director of the County Hospital, he hired Addie Reid as a hospital nurse in the following manner: Addie had come to the hospital as a private nurse for a patient who died about four months later. She wanted to stay and asked the Steward about employment. He told her that Dr. Cooper did the hiring and firing. At that time the Doctor visited the hospital every Friday, so Addie readied herself for the interview. She walked into the Steward's office. Dr. Cooper looked her up and looked her down – without saying a word. Then he said, "Hell, keep her on!" Dr. Cooper would bring his family to the hospital for Sunday dinners, for

the food was good and plentiful, and besides, there was home-made ice cream on that day.

At one time, "Lev" Binum, a member of an early, much respected Negro family living at Lower Calaveritas, cooked at the County Hospital. His wife was a skilled mid-wife, delivering many a baby in the San Andreas area. Lillian Filippini was one of them.

The hardships and exhaustion caused at least one doctor to resort to the use of whiskey as a crutch. This was Louis Maddock of Sheep Ranch – a loved and respected physician, and trusted in spite of his weaknesses. It was said that he had an antidote which enabled him to have a clear head and a steady hand when needed. He once stayed at Charles Filippini's parents' home for days until critically-ill Charles had passed the crisis. The unspoken agreement was that there would be a bottle there. Dr. Maddock delivered Don Cuneo, whose middle name is Maddock. Louise Cuneo Greenlaw bears the feminine form of the doctor's given name. This is testimony to the Cuneo family's admiration for him. Dr. Maddock performed skillful surgery when my husband, Walter Altmeyer, as a boy, shot himself in the foot, necessitating removal of shattered bone and much suturing. Later there was no evidence of this accident except for a missing toe.

There were two other medical methods that should be mentioned. One of these included the mothers and grandmothers with a knowledge of herbal medicine. They searched for leaves, roots, and barks with which they made teas or poultices that worked miracles. Another was the "Doctor Book" that many isolated homes had. In it were listed every ailment known to man, and a treatment for each. In 1927, when I was teaching in the Banner School, seventeen miles from San Andreas on the Railroad Flat Road, I developed a bladder infection. At that time I was living with Mr. and Mrs. Tate. Out came Mrs. Tate's Doctor Book. The treatment: drink copious amounts of a tea made from dried pea pods. She did not have any pea pods but she had, hanging in the shed, what remained of the summer's bean crop. She made a tea from the dried bean shells, watched while I drank it, and because of the awful brew, or out of self-defense, I got well and the Doctor Book got the credit!

There were some private hospitals in the early years. A Dr. Moncel established the small French Hospital at Campo Seco about the same time as Dr. Hoerchner had his at Upper Rich Gulch, in the 50's and 60's. There was a maternity home near Vallecito. Dr. Hill had a hospital of sorts in San Andreas near the present location of Treat's Store. This was built with Calaveras Cement Company funds, so that there would be facilities for treating employees of the company as well as their families. The Utica Mining Company had earlier established a similar hospital at Angels Camp for their employees. There were also two maternity homes in Angels Camp. One of these was operated by Addie Minard on Democrat Hill where

JUST BEFORE THE END
 The old hospital stood proudly but alone and forlorn for several years after its closure in 1951 before being demolished for construction materials.

Gift of Marguerite Luly



more than 300 babies were brought into the world.

So here we have just a sampling of the early dedicated people who, against hardship, rough conditions, and often adversity, cared for their equally durable patients and friends as well as they could, and a brief description of the rather primitive hospitals available for this purpose.

THE UTICA HOSPITAL

by Ed Leonard

Dangerous working conditions in the Utica mines at Angels Camp led to serious trouble in 1894. The miners went on strike and threatened to blow up the mine. The first serious incident occurred on February 4th. Many of the miners lived in the boarding house which was operated by Mr. Magud. They placed a charge of powder in the building and blew it up. Mr. and Mrs. Magud were trapped under the fallen roof, but miraculously they all escaped serious injury.

The mining company appealed to the Sheriff's office in San Andreas for protection. The Sheriff appointed ten Special Deputies who were armed with rifles. They patrolled the mine, in squads of five, day and night. As an added protection the company installed lights at numerous locations on the property. A Vigilance Committee of 600 people was organized to drive objectionable characters from Angels Camp.

The main complaint of the miners was that there were no facilities to care for their injured and sick. It was the general practice of the company, in the case of an accident at the mine, to have a buckboard or cart from Love's Livery Stable take the injured either to his home or to the

Angels Hotel. So, in March, 1894, to meet the demands of the striking miners, the Utica Mining Company erected the Utica Hospital. It was built on Main Street, a short distance south of the bridge across Angels Creek.

The Utica Hospital building still stands, and at this writing is owned by T. L. Auten and is used as an apartment house. It is a two-story building, forty feet by forty feet in size. Each floor comprised a ward for eight patients, and special note was made at the time of its construction that it was equipped with toilets and wash stands! It was dedicated to the use of company employees and their families. Dr. John Dorroh, physician and surgeon, was hired as the mine doctor and placed in charge.

During the serious influenza epidemic in the fall of 1918, the Angels Hospital and the large home of Dr. Dorroh adjoining were used to care for patients brought in from the surrounding area. After that emergency, the Utica Hospital was closed, as the mines had shut down for good. Dr. Dorroh's residence is also used today as an apartment house, as is Dr. Pache's residence next door.

MUTUAL BENEFIT SOCIETIES AND HOSPITALS OF MOKELUMNE HILL

by Emmett Joy

French Pioneers founded the first hospital in the County at Mokelumne Hill in a tent-house on September 2nd, 1851. Mr. de la Riviere was the individual respon-

