



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society
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"UNCLE ABE" VANDLING

By COKE WOOD

While gathering material for my little book, MURPHYS, QUEEN OF THE SIERRA, I borrowed a clipping from Joe Hiensdorff of Murphys that was written about 1889, about the death of his grandfather, who was also Joe Hiensdorff. The article stated that Joe Hiensdorff, Sr., mined Murphys Diggins when the gravel in the mines was unbelievably rich. It referred to the "million dollar hole" and "Uncle Abe's thousand-dollar pan." I was very curious about the latter statement, but none of the old timers, such as Amon Tanner, Tony Malaspina, and Ed True knew about Uncle Abe. All of them knew where the "million-dollar hole" was and pointed out that it was just in back of Kramer's barn in the Deep Cut.

For some reason I forgot to ask Elizabeth Kaler about it when she was alive. She could have surely given me some information about it. However, not long after she passed away I asked Loretta Kaler if she knew anyone by the name of Uncle Abe who had washed out a thousand dollars worth of gold in one pan. She thought for a moment and then replied, "That must have been Abraham Vandling. I remember him as an elderly man when I was a little girl. We called him Uncle Abe as he lived across the road from us and would bring apple syrup over to us for our hot cakes. On these visits he would sit on the steps and talk to mother about the old days when he first came to Murphys. I remember him as a tall, broad-shouldered man but not a really big one.

"I don't remember hearing the story about the 'thousand-dollar pan,' but I do remember the story of him carrying his gold rocker or cradle on his shoulder all the way from San Antone Creek to Murphys and everyone was amazed at his strength. He died in 1889 and is buried in the Protestant Cemetery. His good friend E. B. Christ had his last request granted and is buried beside him."

When I asked Judge Smith about Abe Vandling, he replied that he knew the story about Uncle Abe's great strength. However, he said it was a long tom and not a gold rocker that he carried from Secret Diggins to Murphys on his shoulder. Secret Diggings was located on an old river channel between Mt. Ranch and Rail Road Flat. Judge Smith stated that Abe Vandling was the one given the credit for inventing the long tom by extending the trough of the rocker. However, the Judge never heard the story about "Uncle Abe's thousand-dollar pan."

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CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. and Mrs. Amon Tanner of Murphys, who celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary on April 16. They are charter members of the Calaveras County Historical Society and Amon served as vice-president for several years.

ESMERALDA

By LOUIS DOMENGHINI

Mountain Ranch

The first record of this place was included in that of Indian Creek. Indian Creek extended from its confluence with San Antonio Creek some nine or ten miles east of its beginning, just above the present Mary Osselin home on Indian Creek. This was in the year of approximately 1864.

Walter Gibson claims to be the man who named the district Esmeralda. Fred Martin was writing a book which he called *Esmerulb*, meaning "Esmeralda." Mr. Gibson liked this name, Esmeralda, and suggested that the district adopt this name. The place was thereafter known as Esmeralda.

Angelo Canavero was clerking for Frank and Carlo Cuneo at San Antone Camp when the Cuneo Store burned down. He then went to Indian Creek as it was then known and started a saloon and general store in partnership with Paulo Segale in approximately 1864 or 1865.

They operated it until approximately 1874, when Canavero was injured by being thrown from a horse and died about a year later. Stephen Valenti then bought out Paulo Segale and married Canavero's widow in 1876. They operated the store for approximately one year and then moved the stock to the present Valente home on Indian Creek near the old Calaveras Mine.

During the time that they operated the store in Esmeralda it was a rich placer mining district. The quartz mines were all discovered later. There was no school or post office at that time, mail being received by way of Murphys. There were only five women in the entire community at that time. They were Mary Ann Cunningham,

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"Uncle Abe" Vandling

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MORE ABOUT ABE VANDERLING

Taken from THE CALAVERAS PROSPECT
September 9, 1922

We were handed the other day a letter which as it contains many historic facts we are printing below. The letter was written evidently in the early eighties, but bears no date. It was written by "Tim" Davis, a rather eccentric character, who resided for many years above the Big Trees at what was later known as the Richards or Hinkleman place. He was a man of remarkable memory, and wide reading, and more than average intelligence. The letter was written to Ed Christ, for many years the Murphys correspondent of the PROSPECT.

The Abe's Tom, to which he refers, relates to a well-known story that was current in and about Murphys forty or fifty years ago. Abe Vandling was the name of the man noted for his prodigious strength. The writer of this recalls him as he was in 1873, a man about 6 feet 6 inches tall, thin as a rail, slightly stooped and weighing then, in his old age, fully 200 pounds. It was told that he packed the finished "tom" on his back, from Secret Diggings to Murphys, and depressions in the solid ledge on San Domingo Creek were pointed out to the credulous as having been made by Abe's feet as they sank in the solid rock under the weight of the "long tom" he carried when he crossed the creek. We print the letter with no changes:

"Friend Ned, I read your article in the PROSPECT of April 4. You expressed the wish that I'd tell you about Abe's tom and the Secret Diggings. The Diggings was located about two miles N. E. of the Mountain Ranch, and about half a mile N. of the head of Murry's Creek, and about two and one-half miles north of the town of El Dorado. I saw Abe and his partner McIntosh making the tom. I afterwards for weeks saw the tom when finished standing against a tree to season. As near as I can recollect the tom was about the following dimensions: Extreme length, about 9 feet; width 12 or 13 inches; sides 8 or 9 inches deep. The sides and bottom was a little more than an inch thick. At the Diggings every body got there supply of water from the same spring and every one that packed a bucket of water was sure to see Abe's tom. It was about half seasoned when he packed it to Murphys, so you can judge the weight of it. Early the spring following, (Oct. 1850) Abe and McIntosh were using the same tom washing dirt about a mile below the toll house on Murphys Creek. Of all who left Murphys in that Hegira I don't know of but two that is now living. Boney Biggs is one, and the fellow that is scratching this is the other.

"All long toms in use in '50 and '51 were made from lumber that came from below and were generally 12 feet long. In years after when lumber became plenty the miners made thier toms short and broad and attached sluices to them. Ole Abes tom was a sise smaller than the toms in general use at that day. With a stiff upper lip and not a d-d drop of coal oil in the house I'll respectfully scratch."

"TIMOTHY S. DAVIS."

(Editor's Note: Any additional information on Abe Vandling would be welcome.)

Esmeralda

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Mrs. Paulo Segale, Mrs. Angelo Canavero, Mrs. J. S. C. Davis and Mrs. John Kelly.

Mr. J. S. C. Davis, more familiarly known as "Pumpkin Davis," operated a store and saloon here prior to and during the time that Canavero and Segale operated their business and ran it for some years later. He also ranched and raised fruits and farm produce of all kinds.

When the first post office was established on June 18, 1887, "Pumpkin Davis" or Mr. James S. C. Davis became its first postmaster and operated it until March 26, 1908, when Agostino De Martini became postmaster. Clara E. Davis, a daughter of J. S. C. Davis, became postmaster March 16, 1916. Her brother, Cyrus L. Davis, succeeded her as postmaster on June 22, 1920. John Pozar became postmaster on February 12, 1925, which was about the same time that he purchased the Davis holdings at Esmeralda. Mr. Pozar continued in this office until sometime in March, 1943, when the post office was discontinued and moved to San Andreas.

Ed Kelly and a man by the name of Strauss found the Esmeralda Mine. After operating for a short period of time they sold to Fred Martin and John Davis who later took in Walter Gibson and Louis Bohn. This mine was first known as the Bohnshard Mine. A five-stamp mill was used in the mining operations.

When the Esmeralda Mine closed down, John F. Davis and several others went to Death Valley, having heard of a gold strike in that area. John F. Davis bore no relationship to James S. C. Davis but it is reported that he afterward became a member of the State Senate of California.

On March 5, 1888, a petition was received from citizens and taxpayers of Esmeralda and vicinity asking the Board of Supervisors to create a new school district from part of the Calaveritas School District and others to be known as Esmeralda. A communication was received from the County Superintendent of Schools asking that the matter be put over until the May meeting, 1888, as the residents of the Calaveritas School District claimed they had not had sufficient notice. Upon motion, action on the matter was postponed until Monday, May 7, 1888, at 2 o'clock p. m. at which time permission was received for formation of the new school district. August 27, 1888, Hugh W. Gallagher received a salary of \$60.00 as teacher.

John Saltwater was one of the old timers of Esmeralda. Tony Baker now lives on the old Saltwater property.

Some Italians were working at Esmeralda when they decided to go to Duck Creek on the Stanislaus River where they had heard of a rich strike. One of them named Pellegrini asked Mrs. Canavero's permission to cut a limb from a fig tree to be used as a walking stick for the journey. On arriving at Duck Bar, Pellegrini stuck his walking stick upright in the sand where it took root and is now considered to be the largest fig tree in Calaveras County.

When Stephen Valente and Mrs. Canavero were married, Indian Creek was so high that the priest from Angels Camp could not get there to perform the ceremony on account of the high water. Everything was in readiness

for the wedding. The guests were present and the food prepared. But someone was needed to perform the ceremony.

Some of the guests went to Murphys where they secured the Justice of the Peace, Judge Shepherd, the father of the late Judge Shepherd, to perform the ceremony. When they arrived at San Domingo Creek and Indian Creek, Pellegrini, the same Pellegrini of the fig-walking-stick fame, proceeded to carry the Judge across each stream on his back and the wedding was performed as scheduled.

GUMBOOTS MINE

Tramontini Bros. owned and operated an arrastra on the creek to mill the ore from the Gumboots Mine. One of the brothers always wore gum boots and was called "Joe Gumboots" — hence the name, "Gumboots Mine."

BENCE MINE

The Bence Mine was discovered in approximately 1887 by Adolph Bence. He and his brother Adam operated it for approximately two years. They had an arrastra on the property. It was a pocket formation and was extremely rich down to a depth of 50 feet. The shaft was sunk to 80 feet and a tunnel was run in to tap the shaft. The ore was not of sufficient value to warrant continued operation and the mine was again closed. It is now in possession of the Hengen Brothers who are nephews of Adolph and Adam Bence.

There is no known cemetery in the Esmeralda District.

The following item is taken from the CALIFORNIA STATE GAZETTEER, by R. S. Polk and Company, 1888:

ESMERALDA—Recently founded on Indian Creek, in Calaveras County, 10 miles east of San Andreas, the county seat, and 19 east of Valley Springs, the nearest shipping point. It is a good location for quartz mines, also a fine resort for tourists, the scenery being grand. Deer, squirrels, and quail are plentiful, while fish abound in the streams. Telephone and express at San Andreas. Nearest bank at Stockton. Mail by special supply. J. S. C. Davis, postmaster.

Cuneo Bros., Saloon.

Davis, John F., Lawyer.

Davis, J. S. C., General Store.

Davis and Martin, mining.

Demartini, A., Hotel.

Mooses, Edward, mining.

This item is from the CALIFORNIA STATE GAZETTEER, 1893:

ESMERALDA—In Calaveras County, 10 miles south-east of San Andreas, the county seat, and 20 miles southeast of Valley Springs, the nearest shipping point. Telephone and express at San Andreas. Nearest bank, at Stockton. Mail, by special supply.

Davis, J. S. C., Gen. Store.

Demartini, A., Saloon.

Valente, Stephen, Saloon.

Special acknowledgments go to Mary Osselin, Clorinda Domenghini, Lottie (Bohns) Replogle, Charles Schwoerer (schools), Paul Lewis, and Judge J. A. Smith for their valuable contributions of information included in this paper.

RECRUITING IN CIVIL WAR DAYS

Since we have become so conscious of the Civil War Centennial, these items, taken from the CALAVERAS CHRONICLE, should be of interest:

Recruiting—Mr. Messenger of Campo Seco has been appointed in the place of Thos. Hunter to raise a company of men in this county for the 7th Regiment, Calif. Volunteers. Those wishing to volunteer cannot find a better man to enlist under than Capt. Messenger.

Union Meeting at Campo Seco—Judge Badgley addressed the Union men of Campo Seco on Saturday evening of last week. A club was formed at that time and over a hundred names added to the list. The good work goes bravely on in old Calaveras.

Union Meeting at Murphys—There will be a mass meeting at Murphys this evening. Hon. Alexander Campbell and Harlow S. Love with other distinguished speakers will address the people.

Mass Meeting at Copperopolis—There will be a grand Union mass meeting at Copperopolis on Sat., Oct. 22. Some of the best speakers of the State will be present.

Union Meeting at Independence—Judge Badgley and Hon. Wm. H. Leonard will address the Union men of Independence Monday evening, October 17. Let there be a jolly rally of Union men.

Quite a number of returned volunteers are in town, who have served their three years' time. The boys all look well and hearty.—Calaveras Chronicle, October 22, 1864.

Company E, 7th Regiment California Volunteers

This company, raised through the exertions of Capt. Messenger and Lt. Hunter, left on Thursday morning for S. F. Some 130 men have been recruited into the service from this vicinity.

The company will compare favorably with any yet raised in the State. Many of the recruits are young, able-bodied men, who will give a good account of themselves if they are ever brought into active service.—Calaveras Chronicle, November 19, 1864.

L. N. Tower of Mokelumne Hill has received a commission from his excellency, Gov. Low, to raise a company in this county for the 8th Regiment. Mr. Tower is well known to all our citizens and the fact that he will have charge of the company will induce many young men to enlist, who would not do so under some of the officers who have been heretofore commissioned. He has belonged to the Mokelumne Rifles since the organization of that company; for the last six months he served as orderly sergeant and then was unanimously elected as first lieutenant which position he has held ever since. The Rifles are one of the best drilled companies in the State and from his experience in the militia we believe he will make an excellent army officer.

Although one company has just been recruited in this county for the 7th Regiment, Mr. Tower will have no difficulty in filling up his quota of men. It speaks well for his personal popularity to find so many of his old acquaintances in this vicinity ready to enlist under him.

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OFFICERS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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 Claude Smith, West Point; Louis Domenghini, Mt. Ranch.

Editor of Las Calaveras Coke Wood, Murphys

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The Calaveras County Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Courthouse in San Andreas. Dinner meetings are held each quarter at different places in the county.

EDITORIAL

All members of the Society are happy that our beloved President, Judge Smith, is showing signs of improvement in his health. A great deal of interest and zest disappears from our meetings when he is not with us. We hope he will have many more years of association with us. We need his leadership.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Amon Tanner on their Golden Wedding anniversary on April 16. Amon is one of the four members who have been voted honorary life members of the society.

The Murphys meeting in the Old Sperry and Perry Hotel was, as usual, one of our finest meetings. It is always fitting that the historical society should meet in this historic hotel that was opened for business on August 20, 1856, by Sperry and Perry. We were honored to have as our speaker Judge Thomas Coakley, Superior Judge of Mariposa County and past president of the Mariposa County Historical Society. Judge Coakley gave a very fine talk on the topic, "Law Enforcement in the Early Days in the Mother Lode." Since this meeting Judge Coakley has announced that he is a candidate for the position of State Attorney General as a Republican to replace the incumbent, Democrat Stanley Mosk. I'm sure we can all wish the Judge the best of luck in his campaigning.

As this article is being written, the reports from Vice-President Paul Lewis indicate that the East Bay Municipal Utility District has agreed to move the graves from the old Poverty Bar Cemetery on the Mokelumne River to the Pioneer Cemetery near San Andreas. This arrangement has been worked out with Bill Lange of EBMUD who has become a member of the Society and is very coopera-

Recruiting in Civil War Days

(Continued From Preceding Page)

We can assure those living at a distance that they will never have a better opportunity for enlisting under good officers than at present.—Calaveras Chronicle, November 20, 1864.

D. P. Clark, one of our oldest residents, has joined Company H, 8th Regiment, California Volunteers; Capt. Tower. Mr. Clark came to California in Colonel Jonathan Stephenson's Regiment and has resided in Mokelumne Hill since '48. Dan was one of the first to enlist in Capt. Tower's company, and will make as good a soldier as he has been a citizen.—Calaveras Chronicle, December 10, 1864.

At an election of officers for a new militia company composed of citizens of Rich Gulch and Independence Flat, the following were elected: Capt. C. A. Mead; 1st Lt. R. T. Grant; 2nd Lt. E. B. Patridge; 3rd Lt. Wm. H. Post; 1st Serg. J. G. Hoey; 2nd Serg. Eben Page.—Calaveras Chronicle, December 17, 1864.

tive in an effort to preserve the historic values in the area to be flooded by the Camanche Reservoir. As the Pioneer Cemetery is already registered as a State Historic Landmark, this arrangement is a good solution to the problem.

We hope those members who had difficulty climbing the stairs in the courthouse realize that we now are meeting in the Grange Hall where there are no stairs. I personally miss the atmosphere in the old court room but we want to make it easy for everyone. The Grange, because they were the original sponsoring body for the Society, are giving us a very fine rental rate and we are grateful for their generosity.

Members of the Society are urged to be alert to Proposition 11 on the November ballot. This is the Senate Constitutional Amendment which has been sponsored by the Conference of California Historical Societies to exempt taxes on buildings that have been declared historic sites and cannot be altered and, therefore, the assets are frozen as far as the owner is concerned. This amendment would give him a chance to appeal to the assessor for tax relief. It wouldn't be granted automatically but the historic significance would have to be shown.

The statewide history study which was introduced by our Assemblyman Paul Lunardi has gotten off to a good start under the direction of History Study Coordinator Herb Heinze. All of the Society members of the Conference have been asked to help compile an historical inventory as a beginning of this study. Also, four counties are being used for pilot studies by the Coordinator to show what can and should be done throughout the state. However, the funds appropriated for this first introductory study will be depleted by July 1 and it will not be until the 1963 Legislature appropriates further funds that the study can be completed.

Congratulations to Mrs. Hattie Hertzog for again conducting a successful essay contest on local Calaveras County history.