

Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society  
Volume XV January, 1967 Number 2

## SOME COPPEROPOLIS PIONEERS AND OLD TIMERS

By ELLA M. HIATT

### The McCarty Family

Thomas and Agnes McCarty came out from New York via the Isthmus of Panama in 1852 and homesteaded land on Log Cabin Creek on the site of the Copperopolis-Telegraph City road (now Highway 4). Mrs. McCarty's two brothers also came out and established the Dean Ranch on the northwest side of Salt Spring Valley. The McCartys often visited the Dean brothers, a distance of about ten miles, and a visit was a day's trip. They would also visit the Wheat, Tower, and Hettick ranches when in Salt Spring Valley, for Thomas McCarty had first lived there before returning to New York in '52 to bring his bride to California.

The McCartys raised a family of nine children. These were Ransome, William, Edward, Charles, George, Jackson, Deborah, Agnes, and Caroline. Three were born at the Hettick Ranch and the others at the Log Cabin Creek Ranch where all the children were raised. Some of them attended school in Telegraph City and later they went to Copperopolis after a school was established there.

Mr. McCarty operated a trading post and store. The miners in the area usually bought supplies with their gold dust, which McCarty would weigh out on a set of scales. He would often deliver groceries to the neighboring ranches and settlements. In 1860, he was traveling through a particularly muddy section of the road, when his wheels became mired and he had to dig them out with a shovel. In doing this, he discovered some copper ore in the mud, and this site later became the town of Copperopolis and the historic Union Mine.

About the same time, William K. Reed also discovered some copper ore in this area, and he and McCarty became partners. In 1862 they sold most of their interest in Union Mine and built a turnpike from Copperopolis through the McCarty Ranch, and on through to Telegraph City. The road was often called "Reed's Turnpike."

Mr. McCarty was active in community affairs and some of his sons belonged to the Odd Fellows Lodge at Copperopolis. It was after a program here in 1901 that one of them, George, met a tragic death. He was taking a lady to her home, on behalf of a friend who had been called away from the meeting on business. He was shot by Johnny Gorham, a jealous rival of the lady's suitor. When Gorham discovered that it was his best friend, George McCarty, and not his rival, driving the buggy, he



JACKSON DEAN McCARTY  
1858 - 1935

went to the top of a hill nearby and destroyed himself with dynamite.

The McCartys lost another son in a brush fire. Edward was helping fight the fire, manning the water barrel while another man was driving the team. The horses became frightened, swerved, and he was thrown into the blazing brush and fatally burned before he could be rescued.

Of Thomas McCarty's daughters, Deborah married Leigh Hunt of Milton, and they had five children, Leslie, Elmer, George, Leora, and Deborah. Agnes married Robert B. Parks, of Telegraph City, and the Parks children were (Dr.) William, Roy, and Elbert. Caroline McCarty married Gardner P. Copp, of Telegraph City, and their children were Arline, Geraldine, Allen, and Dorothy.

Thomas McCarty remained on his Log Cabin Creek Ranch for the rest of his lifetime, raising horses, cows and sheep. Then his sons, Ransome Thomas and Jackson Dean, carried on in the ranching business. They took large bands of sheep to the mountain ranges on Ebbetts Pass near Blood's Meadow. At that time a toll was required to take livestock to these ranges. There was usually quite a discussion with the toll collector as to what was the correct amount for sheep. Sheep were less than cows, but as there were so many more of them, the tolls always seemed high.

There was a race track near Copperopolis on the Flower Ranch, and the McCarty boys often raced their horses there, along with the other ranchers of the area. Their foothill horses gave Stockton and San Joaquin steeds "a run for their money" many times. The horses in the Copperopolis country were used for the raising of

livestock and were hardy and in good condition. Not only the saddle horses but even the pack ponies won many races.

The two McCarty brothers eventually dissolved their partnership, divided the livestock, and each bought separate ranches. "Rant" McCarty owned a ranch near what is now Tulloch Reservoir. He married Miss Nettie Worth, of Copperopolis, and here they raised their nine children, including Mabel (Mrs. Ray Manuel), Tessie (Mrs. Eugene Casenave), Ione (Mrs. Nelson Williams), Arthur, Theron, Norris, Merten, and Winn. In later years Rant sold the ranch because of his ill health, and he and Nettie moved to Stockton. They have a number of descendants still living in the Stockton area.

J. D. or "Jack" McCarty, as he was usually called, bought the Alban Hettick Ranch in Salt Spring Valley in 1901. This purchase included the buildings, all the livestock, and the AH brand. The property had been a roadhouse and stage stop for teams in the '80s. A few teams still stopped here as late as 1920. Ben Campbell was the last of the teamsters to come through, and he continued up until about 1925. He hauled groceries and other merchandise from Stockton through Milton to Copperopolis. The old stage-stop house burned in 1916, but the large barn that accommodated the teams is still in use.

The Dean Ranch, or the "Ranch Mine Ranch," as it was later called, was bought by Jack McCarty. He purchased the original Log Cabin Creek Ranch from his brothers and sisters. In addition to sheep and cattle, Jack raised many horses, some for sale to other stockmen, some for use about his own ranch, and some just for pleasure.

He was a great lover of horses, and at times there were as many as seventy or eighty head roaming the ranch. They were of a good breed, and some of the horses in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties today can be traced back to the McCarty strain. And at the present time there are still a few left of this breed at the McCarty Ranch.

Contrary to the beliefs of most of the cattlemen of that day, Jack McCarty was a firm believer that sheep and cattle could be raised on the same ranges of his ranch. It worked out well for him, and he concentrated on sheep when the cattle market was down, and, conversely, on cattle when lamb and wool prices were weak. He took his sheep to the summer ranges on Sonora Pass, starting in 1910. These trail drives took about ten days. People were always interested in seeing the great bands of sheep passing by, and came to the roadside to watch them.

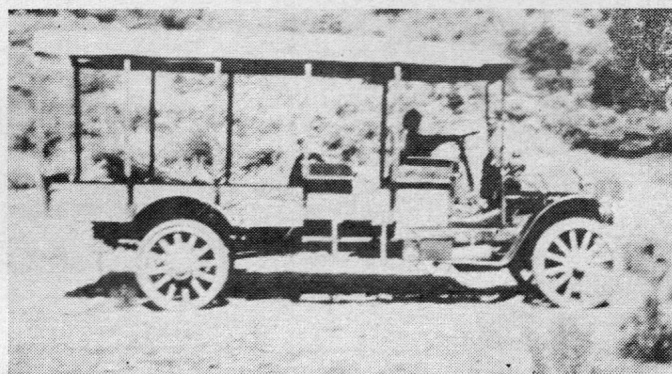
In 1902, Mr. McCarty married Miss Helen Hunt, and there were eight children born to them. They were Agnes (Erion), Helen (Stanaway), Jackson Taft, Lucille (Doe), Cyril C., Albert L., Thomas Dean (dec.), and Ella (Hiatt). His wife died in 1918 and Mr. McCarty raised the eight children at his ranch. He continued taking the sheep to the mountains, with the help of his sons and daughters when they were old enough.

Mr. McCarty was also interested in mining and had mining claims here and there on his properties. He spent many a day and night, in the early days, fighting off claim jumpers. His mining activities helped him over the lean years when the wool and livestock prices were down. He once owned the famous Eagle Shawmut Mine in Tuolumne County, and operated a gold mine and mill on his "Ranch Mine Ranch" in Salt Spring Valley.

He always drove a fine span of horses and liked a good saddle horse, but in 1916 he fell for the Model T Ford.

So he had to learn to drive when he was 58 years old! In 1917, he bought a Federal truck from George Trask, of Columbia. The truck's body was constructed of wood and metal, painted a dark maroon red, with yellow wooden wheels and solid rubber tires, and a yellow canvas top. It was built like a passenger bus, with five removable seats the same width as the truck. There were side curtains also.

This truck had been used for a Columbia-Sonora stage by Mr. Trask. McCarty bought it mostly to haul supplies to the mountain cabin at Dardanelles, on Sonora Pass, the headquarters for his summer sheep operation. But it was often used for side trips, and for taking family and friends to picnics and the like. It was quite an improvement over the teams that he had always used before. When Mr. McCarty purchased the truck, he was not quite able to master the intricate gears and their operation, so Mr. Trask taught McCarty's son, "Little Jack," how to shift the gears and to steer the truck, and thus they got it back to Copperopolis. Young Jack was ten years old at the time. He was not too large for his age, and it was always a constant wonder to people seeing the small boy at the wheel of so large a truck.



**"LITTLE JACK" McCARTY  
At the Wheel of the Federal Truck**

Little Jack drove the truck on the long trips up over Patterson Grade to the Dardanelle region many times during those summers there. There were hair-raising stories told of experiences, when Little Jack and his father were hauling posts from the mountain ranges to the home ranch, when the brakes did not hold, or the truck slipped out of gear. As the other boys grew older, they also learned to drive the truck and drove to the mountains.

This old Federal truck is in good operating condition, having been repaired by using parts from a similar truck later bought from Mr. Trask. It is still in the family and is stored at the McCarty Ranch. "Little Jack" can still "make it run" and drove it in the Murphys Homecoming parade in 1960. It was also used at the Jumping Frog Jubilee that same year. The sign on the side of the cab that reads "Columbia Sonora Stage" is even now faintly legible.

Jackson Dean McCarty passed away in 1935 at the age of 77. Most of his ranches have remained intact and are divided among his sons and daughters.

Grandfather Thomas McCarty and his wife are buried in the large quiet cemetery in Copperopolis, as are many of their descendants. McCarty's part in the history of the Copperopolis region was commemorated by including his name on the Historical Landmark monument placed in that town in 1949.

## The Doctor McCoy Family

Dr. William Woodruff McCoy was an old-time cancer specialist, well known in early days for his treatment of malignant skin growths. He and his wife, Annie Stagner McCoy, first lived in Milton in 1874, and then moved to Salt Spring Valley and settled at Carmen City, a teamsters' stop at the foot of Carmen Hill, on the road from Salt Spring Valley to Angels Camp. There is nothing left of Carmen City now except the ruins of a chimney and basement, and the old barn across the road, constructed of hand-peeled timbers. There was also an Indian burial ground at Carmen City.

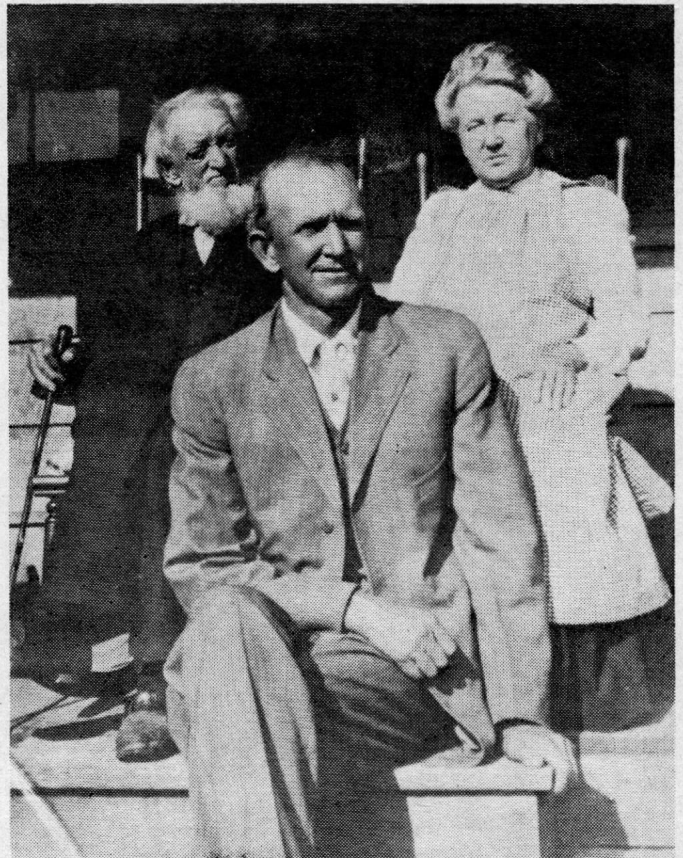
In the early 1900s Dr. McCoy moved to Copperopolis and opened an office there. This was located in the Union Copper Company's old office, about one block north of the present post office. The new mine office had been moved to a building at the south end of town, next to the Armory Hall.

Not long ago, a descendant of Dr. McCoy was passing through Copperopolis. He had, with him, a casebook that had belonged to the doctor. In this book was printed "the patient is guaranteed a cure, or there will be no cost to the patient." When shown this book, Mr. George Thompson, of Copperopolis, recalled one of the many cures that Dr. McCoy made. Bill Graham, a woodchopper, had cancer of the tongue. The doctor put some sort of a plaster formula on it, and in 18 or 20 days the cancer was gone. He remembers another man who had a malignant growth removed from his neck. Dr. McCoy did not record his secret formula for the plaster, and his descendants know nothing of the ingredients it contained.

Later, because of Mrs. McCoy's ill health, they sold the Carmen City ranch, and moved from Copperopolis to Stockton. There, he opened an office with another doctor. Dr. McCoy, who was born in 1829, died in 1913. His wife passed away ten years later.

The McCoy's had a son by the name of Timothy Reavs McCoy, born on March 23, 1863. When he was a young man, on the Carmen City ranch, "Tim" McCoy raised cattle, and like his friend, J. D. McCarty, always said that there was nothing to the tale that cattlemen and sheepmen could not raise their animals in harmony. Tim also ran a freight line to Yosemite Valley.

Tim McCoy designed and built a block-building machine. In 1914, he and his stepson, Frank Merwin, con-



**DOCTOR AND ANNIE MCCOY WITH  
THEIR SON TIMOTHY**

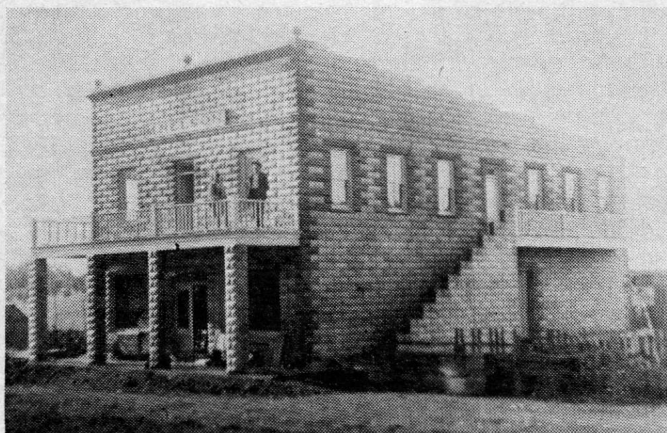
structed the store that is still in use as a grocery in Copperopolis. The new store was dedicated in 1915, and a large celebration was held for the occasion. The store was built for Martin Nelson, and was first operated by Nelson and Howell. The owner sent for his nephew, August P. Nelson, from Sweden, who operated the store after the death of his uncle and Mr. Howell. It was then known as "Nelson's Store." When "Gus" Nelson and his family moved to Stockton in 1952, Robert Erion and Tom McCarty took over, calling it the "E and M" store. Mr. and Mrs. John C. Leitner were the next proprietors, and the Albert McKeels now operate it. The old original wooden sign on the tall front of the building has never been changed and still reads "M. Nelson."

After building the Copperopolis store, Tim McCoy and his wife, Hattie, moved to Stockton, and he continued his concrete building business there. In 1927 he built the cement cabin at Douglas Station, on the Sonora Pass road, for J. D. McCarty. He passed away in March, 1952.

## The Thompson and Hendsch Families

George Thompson, Sr., came to Copperopolis from Madrid, St. Lawrence County, New York. In 1886, he married Matilda Hendsch from Springfield, Tuolumne County, California, at Copperopolis, Reverend Tubbs officiating. They built a large two-story home at the lower end of the main street of Copperopolis, where they raised two sons and a daughter — George, Henry, and Clara.

Mr. Thompson was the underground foreman of the Union Mine, under general manager G. McRoss. Losing



**THE NELSON STORE — 1915**

his eyesight in an accident at the mine in 1918, he was forced to retire. He continued to live in Copperopolis until his death, at the age of 85 years. His wife, Matilda, passed away at 78. They are both buried in the Copperopolis Cemetery.

William and Amelia Hensch, parents of Mrs. Matilda Thompson, built their home next to the Thompsons. There were five Hensch boys — Emil, Bill, Guey, Charlie, and "Tex" (Justice). Guey and Bill worked as deputies with Sheriffs Ben Thorn and Joe Zwinge, of Calaveras County. Bill passed away in 1934 and Guey three years later. "Tex" was a blacksmith and wagon-maker in Copperopolis.

In their early years the Hensch boys operated the Big Trees Hotel at Murphys, as well as a blacksmith shop and bar. These buildings and the Big Trees Hotel were located on the road leading from Murphys toward Big Trees. This was about 1900. From there they came back to Copperopolis and lived in their family home. Their nephew, George Thompson, Jr., now lives in Copperopolis in the original Thompson house, next door.

George Thompson, Jr., was born in Copperopolis in 1890. He was superintendent of the Calaveras Copper Company and the Engels Copper Company for 17 years (1917-35).\* He was also master mechanic of the mine at one time and was the last man on the payroll when this great copper mine finally closed in 1935. Most of the principal workings of the mine were closed in 1930, but some operations continued on a very small scale until 1935.

George and a man named Charley Mineer were running the mine when Mineer was shot and killed by an unknown assailant with a shotgun. This incident took place in front of Nelson's store at about 1:30 A. M. on December 23, 1931. No one was able to prove who shot Mr. Mineer. However, it was suspected it might have been one of the Mexicans who formerly worked at the mine.

After his friend and co-worker was shot, George Thompson took over the copper mine operation alone. He had charge of the mine until it was dismantled by the California Liquidating Company. George worked for the California Liquidating Company until December, 1936. He left Copperopolis in 1937 to work for the California Alabama Gold Mining Company in Penryn, California, and was their surface foreman and master mechanic until the mine was closed in 1942 by Gold Order L-208. That company sent him to Lake County where he had charge of the surface and equipment for the International Metal Corporation of Seattle. He then took a position with the Bercut Richards Lumber Company at Oregon House, California, from 1947 until August 1956.

Thompson and his wife moved back to Copperopolis in September, 1958, to retire from his hard and busy years at the mines, and to repair and restore the Thompson family home. However, his wife, Viola, passed away on October 29th of that same year, and the hopes of spending some happy years were much dimmed by her passing.

\*Although operated separately in the early days, the Union, Empire, and Keystone mines were consolidated in the late 80s, when the new smelter was built. An ore concentrating plant was later added, and the smelter enlarged. In 1909, this Copperopolis mining and smelting operation was reorganized as the Calaveras Consolidated Mining Company, Ltd., often called the Calaveras Copper Company. In the late 20s, the Engels Company, and, during World War II, the North Keystone Company, operated the north end of the Keystone as lessees.

George now helps run "Joe's Place," owned by Irene Corneau. This interesting old place is about 100 years old, was built by Ed Moore, and was originally called the "Old Corner." Mr. Thompson enjoys visiting and talking with old friends and new, as they stop on their way through historic Copperopolis.

George has only one Thompson relative left. This is his nephew, Billy L. Coffey, who lives at Coffey's Corner, Jeffersonville, Sonora, California.

## The Stone Family

James M. Stone was born in Sebastopol, Sonoma County. He married Rose O'Hara of Sonora, California, and they came to live in Copperopolis in 1890. He bought the blacksmith shop in the middle of town from Mr. Charles Hartsook, who had built it and the house that is still standing on the property. At that time there were two other blacksmith shops in Copperopolis. One was Weeselhoff's, across the street from Hartsook's, and the other was at the south end of town, almost opposite the Armory Hall, and owned by a Mr. Braides.

Charles Hartsook married Kate O'Hara, sister to Rose O'Hara Stone. They moved to San Andreas, where Hartsook set up again in smithing, later in partnership with John W. Dietz (Mrs. Hattie Hertzog's father).

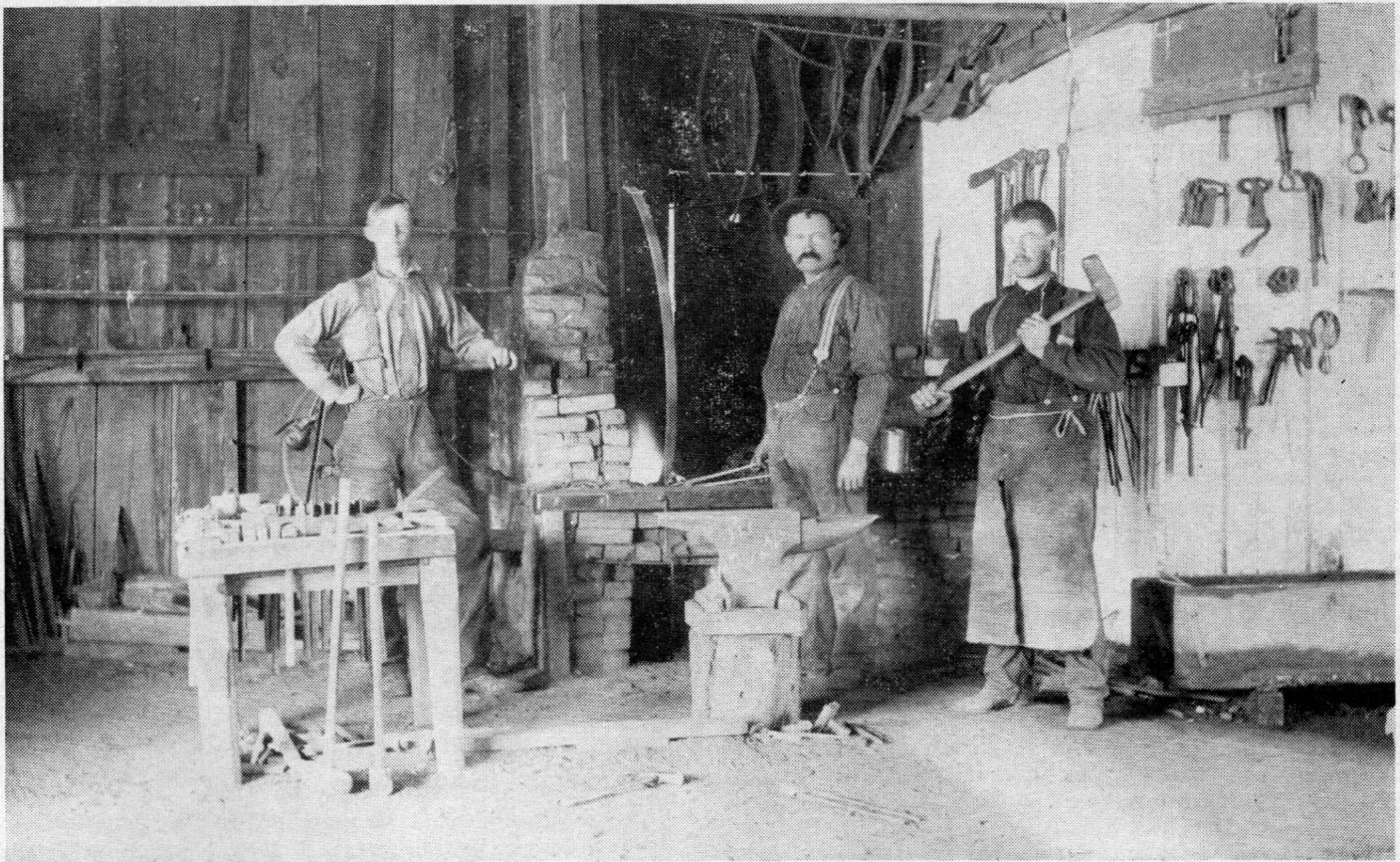
James Stone was deputy constable in 1901, and was serving in that capacity when Johnny Gorham killed George McCarty. He was trustee for the Copperopolis school district in 1905, and saw them build the present schoolhouse, after fire had destroyed the original one. At this time there were about 90 children in school at Copperopolis.

James and Rose Stone had three sons — Frank, Charles, and James, Jr. Frank resides at Park City, Utah, where he lived for 53 years. He was master mechanic for the Silver King Mine for 35 years before retiring in that place. His brothers, Charley and James, live in Copperopolis.

In 1915, realizing that the horse and buggy days were fast disappearing, James Stone, Sr., built the Stone Garage, one of the buildings still standing in Copperopolis. Sons Charley and James worked in the blacksmith shop with their father, and then later in the garage. When Charley was only 17 years old, he worked at the machine shop at the mine, and was also an electrician's helper. Later, when his father became too old to run the garage, Charley took it over on his own.

Charley has many interesting stories to tell of his experiences through the years. He remembers riding in an automobile for the first time in 1906, a Pope-Hartford, at Copperopolis. Among the cars he worked on was a steam automobile, made by the White Company, and owned by the copper mine. His brother Frank drove this car for the mining company. He repaired Studebakers, and recalls an E. M. F. auto. This model was named after a man named Flanders, but Charley says at Stone's Garage the initials meant "Every Morning Fix 'em." In those early automobiling days he also worked on Buicks, (Walter Murphy's and Joe Eckandi's) and on a 1910 Rambler, and, of course, on Model T Fords.

Charley and his wife, Catherine, recall that there were fifty or sixty people of Mexican descent working at the copper mine about 1920. They used to sit on the fence in



**THE STONE BLACKSMITH SHOP**

back of the Stones' house to eat their lunch. On Sunday they were accustomed to going down and sitting outside the Catholic Church, though they would not enter. But when the copper mine finally closed down, these people became very angry, for they no longer had employment, and they went into the church, cut up the altar, and desecrated the vestments. The Mexicans, in the majority, were good workers but often quarreled among themselves, with several stabbings and killings through the years they worked at the mine. Mexicans had been employed in the early days, during the Civil War, at Copperopolis. They were also used at the Royal Mine at Hodson, later.

Charley Stone was away from Copperopolis for only one year (1921), when he operated an automobile repair shop at Watsonville, California. There were only 8 or 10 men working at the copper mine at that time and business was rather slow. He then came back to Copperopolis, and continued working at the Stone Garage with his brother James.

The mine closed for good in 1930, and so Charley Stone went to work for the State Forestry and then, in 1933, opened a garage in the old McGaffey Livery Stable building opposite the Congregational Church at Angels Camp. Charley operated this garage, with his brother Jim and his sons and son-in-law, for 20 years, commuting from Copperopolis. After closing his Angels garage, he was a deputy for Sheriff McFall in 1955. He also served a term as a member of the Calaveras County Board of Education, and was trustee of the Copperopolis School for seven years. His wife was clerk of the Copperopolis School Board for several years also.

Charles and Catherine Stone have six children — Charles A., Rosalie (Worthington), Howard, James

## **Farewell to Our Treasurer**

After five faithful years as our treasurer, Mrs. Marian Brandt has resigned this post, and is moving to Fresno, to live with her daughter. At our December meeting, Mrs. Ruby Taylor read a tribute to Mrs. Brandt, and to her good deeds in Calaveras County. She recalled that Marian first came up to Rail Road Flat from the Bay Area in 1932. She later moved to San Andreas. President Poore, in behalf of the Society, presented her with a corsage and a pen set. We will all miss her, up here in Calaveras County, and wish her good health and happiness in her new home.

## **New County Museum**

Visitors to the old Hall of Records are most pleasantly surprised with the progress that George Poore is making there. The walls are being paneled with mahogany plywood to about two-thirds of the distance to the ceiling. The old fireplaces have been restored, and upper walls, moldings, and window and door frames painted. The nucleus of the museum will be in the old Recorder's office but plans are afoot to use as much of the old Courthouse building and Jailyard as can be prepared, for additional exhibits.

There will also be facilities for Historical Society files and for bound newspapers, books, and maps, for research purposes. This project is being carried out under the direction of the County Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee and financed by county funds.

("Babe"), Walter, and Kathleen (Fiske). The sons all served in the armed forces, and all are now living and working in the vicinity.

# OFFICERS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

San Andreas, California

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Editor of Las Calaveras .....W. P. Fuller, Jr., San Andreas

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

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## EDITORIAL

The Copperopolis area has long been an intriguing one for the local historian. For a decade after the beginning of the gold rush, this region was inhabited only by pioneer ranchers and occasional gold miners placering the rather low-yielding streams in the locality, and hopefully prospecting the few quartz veins.

The spectacular discovery of the Union copper lode by Reed and McCarty in 1860 transformed this quite remote spot into one of the major U. S. copper-producing districts for the duration of the Civil War. A devastating fire and a severe post-war drop in the price of copper paralyzed the district until a major comeback was effected in the late 80s, when the new smelter was built. From then on until World War II, the old camp has had several periods of renewed activity. But none has matched the feverish mining of Civil War days when the Union, Empire, and Keystone shafts were hoisting incredibly high-grade ore from the "enriched zone" close to the surface.

We think that Ella McCarty Hiatt's account of some of the pioneers and old timers of Copperopolis, in this issue, is an admirable contribution to the recorded history of this fascinating region.

Readers interested in the Copperopolis area will find articles in **Las Calaveras** on Rock Fences (October, '58), Salt Spring Valley (April, '60), Copperopolis history (October, '60), Telegraph City (January, '61), Lost City (July, '61), and the first Calaveras County fair, held at Copperopolis on the Flower Ranch (July and October, '62).

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Wanted by the editor—A member to help index  
**Las Calaveras.**

## Quarterly Dinner

A delicious dinner was served to some 55 members and guests, on October 27th, by the Covenant Women, at the Grange Hall, San Andreas. This was followed by a brief business meeting, at which it was decided to expand the Judge Smith Memorial Fund into a general Memorial Fund, as other such gifts have been received. By combining these and future gifts, the money can better be used for significant county historical projects.

The program was put on by Mr. and Mrs. Emmett Perry, of Lockeford, and was entitled, "The Four Seasons and History of Carson Pass." A large number of excellent colored photographs were shown on the screen, accompanied by an informative and most interesting narration, on tape, by the Perrys. Artistically presented, this has been one of our nicest after-dinner programs.

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## November Meeting

Copperopolis Pioneers and Old Timers was the subject of November's meeting, with Ella Hiatt in charge of the program. Most of the papers are printed in this issue of **Las Calaveras**. In addition to these Mrs. Edna S. Lane read her story of the Stephen Box family (her grandparents).

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## Symposium of California Historical Societies

The ninth annual Southern California symposium of the Conference of California Historical Societies will be held in Long Beach at the Edgewater Inn Marina Hotel, February 10-11th. The theme will be "Hides, Harbors, and Haciendas." One of the events will be a tour of Long Beach Harbor by boat.

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## December Meeting

The traditional Christmas Meeting was held on the 15th at the Grange Hall. Some forty members and guests were entertained by the "Monday Nighters" of Stockton. Coke Wood read "The First Christmas in California" and an historical description of life in San Joaquin and Calaveras counties in 1847. Christmas carols were sung to the accompaniment of Mrs. Robert Wolfe. After the Christmas Tree ceremony, pie and coffee were served.

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## Forthcoming Meetings

February 23rd — Some Calaveras County Pioneer Families (Reports not covered in earlier meetings).

March 23rd — Pioneers of the Camanche Area.

April 27th — Dinner Meeting, place and program to be announced.

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Mr. David Myrick, of San Francisco, has assembled a large amount of material on the Copperopolis area, particularly on its mining history. He is planning a book on this subject. Mr. Myrick's last publication, a beautifully illustrated two-volume study of the railroads of Nevada and eastern California, is one of the best of its kind that has appeared in recent years. Mr. Myrick would like to obtain copies of historic photographs suitable for his Copperopolis volume.