



Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society  
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## PIONEERS AND OLD TIMERS OF RAIL ROAD FLAT AND GLENCOE

(The family biographies in this issue have been adapted or condensed from the interesting papers written by Tim Murphy, Frances Guillemin, Geraldine Wells, Nellie Seeman, Myron Greve, Effie Schaad, Florence Widdows, Daisy Nyte, Myrtle Raeder, Beulah Yount, Linda Phelps, and Mary Sandoz, which were presented at the June, 1966, meeting of the Society.)

### Edwin Taylor

Edwin Taylor was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1830, and moved as a small child with his family to Canada, settling at Hamilton. When he was 15, the Taylors crossed over to the United States, to Illinois, and then to Missouri.

Edwin worked on Mississippi river boats as a cabin boy. After gold was discovered in California, he came west by way of Nicaragua, in 1853, to Hangtown. Then he moved to Buckeye, a small community just east of Mokelumne Hill. In 1860 he started running a store there.

In 1865, Taylor married Alameda Lancaster. A year later they moved to Rail Road Flat, then a booming town, with several stores, hotels and saloons. There, in '67, he built the present store and post office. He was appointed postmaster on March 18, 1869. In addition to running a general store there, he also had freight hauled from Stockton.

By his first marriage, Edwin Taylor had four children. His wife, Alameda, died in '80 in the Black Fever epidemic. Later he married Alice Doe, and they had four children. Two of their daughters, Mrs. Eva Guerard and Mrs. Amy Hedberg of San Jose, are still living.

In addition to owning a large part of the town, Taylor also acquired the well-known Petticoat Mine, about a quarter-mile east of town. He helped build a school on the meadow just west of the community. He was a civic leader in every way.

Mr. Taylor retired from the post office on April 12, 1913, after serving 44 years. (He died shortly after, at the age of 83.) His son, Thomas W. Taylor, succeeded him as postmaster until 1925. Then the wife of another of his sons, Mrs. Ruby E. Taylor, was appointed and continued in this post until 1962, making a total of 93 years that Taylors were postmasters.

Invite a friend to join the Historical Society.



EDWIN TAYLOR  
1830 - 1913

From a photographic portrait presented to the Independence Lodge, No. 158 of the I. O. O. F., by his friend, Ira Hill Reed. Mr. Taylor is shown in his fraternal regalia. He helped organize this lodge and was a charter member. In early days, lodge activities were a most important part of life in most mining and mountain communities. Rail Road Flat was no exception to this. In later years, the Independence Lodge was consolidated with the lodge at West Point.

### Erastus Houston

Erastus Houston, the son of John and Mary Houston, was born in Zanesville, Ohio, on August 2, 1826. At the age of 15, he ran away from home and shipped as a cabin boy on a river boat on the Mississippi. Later, when working in Nebraska, he met and married Elizabeth Lawless.

The Houstons came west by covered wagon and settled first in Linden. Then they moved to Rich Gulch, and again to Rail Road Flat. The Houstons had eight girls and three boys, including two sets of twins. Black diphtheria struck the family, at Rich Gulch, and all the twins died within 72 hours.

Erastus Houston ranched for many years at Rail Road Flat. Elizabeth died in 1907, and her husband passed away five years later. One daughter is still living—Minerva Houston Reed, now 97, residing at Berkeley.



## John Doe

John Doe came to the Rail Road Flat area in the 'sixties. Originally from Montpelier, Vermont, he had worked in the silver mines in Nevada, and at Chinese Camp and Indian Diggings before settling at Rail Road.

Doe married Harriet Wolf. They raised seven children, and lived in a house on Independence Road, across from the Ted Jones house.

One of the Does' children, Walter, married Katherine Lancaster, and homesteaded in the Banner District near Rail Road Flat. They also had seven children. Walter discovered several mines, including the "B.F.," J. Copper, Sunnyside, and Hazel Dell. Walter sold the homestead to Henry Lavin, a son-in-law.

## Abraham Pickering

Abraham Pickering was born in Massachusetts and when a young man, came west around the Horn to Oregon. From there he moved to Rail Road Flat about 1869. In 1867 he married Phoebe Lancaster. She was one of the daughters of the Stanley Lancasters, and was born in Missouri. The Lancasters came west when she was a small child.

Abraham and Phoebe Pickering settled in Glencoe where he worked as a millwright. Five children were born to them, the youngest son dying in infancy.

In 1878, the Pickerings purchased land in Rail Road Flat from Alden Padridge. There Abraham farmed and raised cattle. It was on this ranch that he met with an accidental death in '07, at the age of 79. He was a member of the Odd Fellows, having joined the Independence Lodge, No. 158, in 1869.

Three of the Pickering children are still living: Nellie Seeman, 86, of Jackson, Frank Pickering, 82, of San Francisco, and Grace DeHay, 79, of Santa Rosa.

## J. B. Guillemin

J. B. Guillemin came to this area in the early 'seventies. Coming from Mount Blanc, in France, he had been in the United States just a few years.

His first employment, after arriving in Calaveras County, was at the Heckendorn Mine at Blue Mountain, where his father-in-law also worked. In 1883, he discovered the Fine Gold Mine, located on the Bosseville Road. Mr. and Mrs. Guillemin lived in the Bosseville area until 1900. Then Mr. Guillemin sold their land for \$700 and the Fine Gold Mine for \$20,000. With this money he bought land in San Luis Obispo County, and moved his family there. There were seven children born while they lived at Rail Road Flat, and five in San Luis Obispo.

## David McCarty

David McCarty was a native of Franklin County, New York. His first wife was Eliza Dillon whom he met at North America House, a stopping place about three miles below Valley Springs on the Bellota Road. The McCartys had six girls: Emma J. (Greve), Sadie (Christie), Hannah (Watt, then Sharpnack), Blanche (Suessdorf), Mamie, and Charlotte (Fitch). There were three boys, Allen, John and Frank.

Eliza died of lockjaw in '81. In June, 1884, McCarty married Susan Story Winchester of New York. By this marriage he had one son, David Winchester McCarty.

In 1857, David McCarty took over the operation of what became the present McCarty ranch from John Frederick Wilhelm Greve.

The Mokelumne Hill-Campo Seco Canal and Mining Company were operating a canal that supplied water for Mokelumne Hill, the Gwinn Mine, and communities below, nearly to the San Joaquin line. They were cutting and furnishing their own timber for this canal from a sawmill located on the Woodcock property at Glencoe. Dave McCarty agreed with the Canal Company to move the sawmill from Glencoe to the McCarty Ranch and to furnish them with all their lumber. For one of his first shipments, in February of '63, he received payment for 210,000 feet of timber, hewed and delivered at \$13 a thousand feet. He used some Chinese labor, and the hauling was by oxen. About 1900 the sawmill was moved to about a half-mile north of West Point and was operated by George Bruce and Allen McCarty. The McCarty Reservoir, on the headwaters of the North Fork of the Calaveras River, was constructed by the Canal Company on the McCarty ranch.

David McCarty was known, in his time, as a good businessman. He was also considered a "sport," for he had fast sulky horses, and in the 'seventies took an active interest in horse racing at Mokelumne Hill. He liked to play poker at the Leger Hotel. He passed away at San Francisco in 1891, at age 64, of dropsy of the heart.

## James Darwin Day

James Day came to Glencoe from Emporia, Kansas. He was married to Annie Bayles, of Redditch, England, at Mokelumne Hill in 1900. The Days had one daughter, Effie Alice Day, who married Edward Schaad, of West Point. A resort is conducted on the Schaad ranch.

## Armand Laidet

Armand Laidet, born in France in 1854, at the age of 15 ran away from home to become a cabin boy on a French merchant ship. Hearing of the Mother Lode gold mines, he left his ship when it stopped at San Francisco. Then, with money made in mining, he returned to France for a visit, when he was about 30 years old, and there fell in love and married.

Returning to the U. S. with his bride, he first lived at Astoria, Oregon, next in San Francisco, and then in Stockton. At that time (1885), the Fine Gold Mine was a well-known producer at Rail Road Flat. So, as the Laidets had friends in this community, they decided to come here. They had six girls and three boys in their family. Armand mined for awhile, but as there was a great need for food in the area, he decided to go into farming and ranching. At the turn of the century he received a patent for his homestead. This patent, hand-written, was one of the last signed by President McKinley before his assassination.

About 1895, Laidet and his neighbors built the one-room school which they called the Fine Gold School. His love for mining never ceased, and he continued prospecting for the precious metal all his life. He died in 1934 and was buried in San Andreas.

## Swen Magnus Danielson

Swen Magnus Danielson was born in Wekso, Sweden, in 1845. He left his native land when about 21 years old to visit relatives in Minnesota. After about two years



there, completing his schooling and working on river boats, he came west to San Francisco (1870), where he had an uncle who had made money on Comstock silver mining stocks. First mining for his uncle at Chili Gulch, he moved up to Rail Road Flat to work at the Petticoat Mine. In 1873, when mining slowed, he went to work for Edwin Taylor at the store. While there, he met and married Gertrude Houston. They moved to Glencoe, and Danielson worked at the San Bruno Mine. He homesteaded at Glencoe in 1879. Here he developed a very productive ranch, raising fruit, vegetables, and hay, as well as cattle and other livestock. The Danielsons had thirteen children, of whom ten are still living. To bring up this large family, he supplemented his ranch income by working in the mines. In the earlier days he used oxen on the ranch, but in the 'nineties replaced them with horses.

When the Alaskan gold rush commenced, in '99, Danielson went to Nome to work for the Streeten and Utica companies. After three years there, he returned to get his sons to go back with him. While home from Alaska, he was badly burned in an accident and so was unable to return to Nome.

Danielson was a member of Independence Lodge. He died in 1910 and was buried on his own homestead.

### Orion Sherman Ames

Orion Ames was born in Levant, Maine, in 1851. He was descended from English ancestors who came to Massachusetts about 1650. Coming from a large family, he went into the Maine woods as a helper at a logging crew's camp when only thirteen. Until he was nineteen years old, he worked in the woods except when at school. Then he started west, spending three years logging in Minnesota.

When first in California, Ames was employed in Humboldt County in logging. Then he secured a job while in San Francisco, with a timber company at West Point that was supplying the Gwinn Mine with timbers, floating them down the Mokelumne during high water.

While at West Point, in 1878, he met Mary Ann McManus. After a two-year stint in Northern California, he returned to Calaveras County, to marry Mary Ann at the Leger Hotel in Mokelumne Hill (1881). She was born at Mud Springs, near Placerville, in 1860, and moved with her family to West Point about ten years later. Orion Ames brought his bride to the ranch near Glencoe which he was homesteading.

When they were first settled on their homestead, bands of Indians, as many as 400 at a time, would camp near their spring every fall as they migrated from the higher mountains down to Rich Gulch, Jackson, and Ione for winter quarters. They would camp on the ranch for about two weeks. There are many granite ledges on a hill there with round mortar holes where the Indians ground acorn flour, one of their important winter foods. They buried their dead on another hill nearby.

Ames farmed and raised cattle. He ran a dairy on his ranch with butter one of Mrs. Ames' specialties. She sometimes made as much as 60 pounds a week, all by hand. Mr. Ames also logged on the ranch, hauling to McCarty's sawmill.

There were 11 children in the Ames family, of whom eight grew to adulthood. Two, Mrs. Ruby Taylor, of Rail Road Flat, and William Ames, of Mokelumne Hill, are still living. Late in life, Orion and Mary Ames moved to



**PETTICOAT MINE**

The crew of the Petticoat mine pose on the headframe. This photograph was probably taken in the 'nineties. Note that buckets were used instead of skips, sliding up and down the inclined shaft on wooden guides or tracks. Such a hoisting setup was often used for relatively shallow shafts and winzes in the Mother Lode country. It will be remembered that Elkannah Said, one of the first superintendents of this mine, was murdered in 1870, when leaving the mine with a shipment of bullion for the mint.

Rich Gulch to avoid the heavy winters above, and left the ranch to be managed by their sons. Orion Ames died in 1934, at the age of 83.

### Marianne Gauchet Seeman

Marianne Gauchet was born in Berne, Switzerland, in the year 1832. With her parents and brother, she lived on a small farm, and although work was hard, life was peaceful and they were happy in the beautiful country of Switzerland.

It was about 1849 when tragedy struck the Gauchets. One day, while working in the fields, Mrs. Gauchet collapsed. She was carried home, where she died a short time later, of sunstroke. The heart-broken Gauchets decided to leave their farm and sail to America. They settled on



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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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## Marianne Gauchet Seeman (continued from page 15)

30 acres near Brooklyn, New York. But the gold rush was in full swing, so they soon sold their land for \$1 an acre, and took passage on a ship for California by way of Cape Horn.

The six-month trip was a terrible ordeal, and seemed to take forever. The family settled somewhere on the Mother Lode. Mr. Gauchet and his son then started back east to bring out some of their friends. But the two men were never heard from again, and Marianne was left alone in the world.

In 1856, Marianne married Henry Seeman, a German sailor who had joined the gold rush, in Chili Camp at the home of Samuel Steinburger. The Seemans settled at Independence, then a thriving town boasting a town hall, general store, two saloons, and a population of 400. Henry and Marianne had nine children. After each child was born, she recorded the name and date on her marriage certificate, now carefully preserved by the family.

As the Seeman boys grew up, they mined for gold on their ranch. Two of them, Jacob and Philip, moved to Virginia City, where Philip became sheriff. Ferdinand also lived for awhile in Virginia City, but returned to Independence to operate a general store and saloon.

One December, in the early 1900's, the Seeman home burned down. It was replaced by the house standing here today. It was in this new home that Marianne died at the ripe old age of 96. At the time of her death, she was blind and very hard of hearing. She had lived through many hardships and tragedies, but with the spirit of a true pioneer of Calaveras County. One of her children, Adelle Jones, is still alive, residing in Los Angeles.

## Louis and Emma Sandoz

The family of Emma Courvoisier left Switzerland when she was eight years old. They crossed the Atlantic on a sailing vessel, taking 36 days to reach New York. The Courvoisiers settled in Brighton, Illinois, on a farm. A year later the family of Louis Sandoz arrived from Switzerland and bought the adjoining property.

In 1873, Emma, her brother, and her married sister and husband came by train to California, to work at the Heckendorn Mine at Blue Mountain. They arrived in May, and the men were put on as miners, and Emma and her sister ran the boarding house. At that time provisions were very scarce and wild game and beans were often their main dish. Mushrooms and wild greens served as vegetables, and frequently there was no flour for bread. When the mine closed in November, they moved to the Fred Greve place on Licking Fork, and later homesteaded close by. They sluiced for gold in Dutch Creek and made shakes and mine lagging for a living.

Meanwhile, Louis Sandoz had moved west, by way of Kansas, and went to work on the McCarty Reservoir, then under construction. He recalled that a worker received one dollar for a twelve-hour day, and boarded himself. If he had a team, scraper, or plow, he received \$1.50, but had to feed his horses. He saw men discharged for pausing long enough to fill and light their pipes. Many of the workers camped on the site and cooked over campfires.

Louis Sandoz and Emma Courvoisier were married in 1880 by JP John Smith. They lived first in Lockeford, then, in '83, bought the Harry Greve homestead on the Licking Fork, where they raised their family of six children.

## February Meeting

Papers read at this meeting included the Joseph Whittle family, written and presented by Mrs. Ida Mae Whittle Vergara, the Martin Fischer family, read by Mrs. Allen Peek, and the Genochio family, written by Mrs. Eva Soracco and read by Mr. Poore.

## March Meeting

This was the final meeting of the pioneer families project. An added attraction was an excellent history of Milton, written by Miss Cathy Smith, one of Prof. Coke Wood's students. Miss Smith read her paper and displayed a number of interesting photographs of early days at Milton. Family histories presented included the Frank Genochio, Kirk, Southworth, and Friedberger families, written by Mrs. Flo Peek, Mrs. Mervin Kirk, Miss Jennie Southworth, and Dr. L. Friedberger.

## Museum Open House

The new Calaveras County Historical Museum will be dedicated at 2:00 P. M. on Sunday, May 7th. The dedication ceremony will be followed by an open house until 6 o'clock. Those who have not yet seen how the Hall of Records has been transformed at the skillful hands of George Poore are in for a most pleasant surprise.

## Forthcoming Meetings

May 25th—History of the Jumping Frog Jubilee

June 22nd—The Demarest Papers

July 27th—Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers. Program and place to be announced.