

SIERRA COUNTY

HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

HOW IT REALLY WAS
ON THE YUBA
STAMPEDE ~ BEFORE
THE BIG WATER
MUSINGS TO MUNICH
YOUR SOCIETY NEWS

\$2.10

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SEPT. 26, 1972

THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 26, 1972

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THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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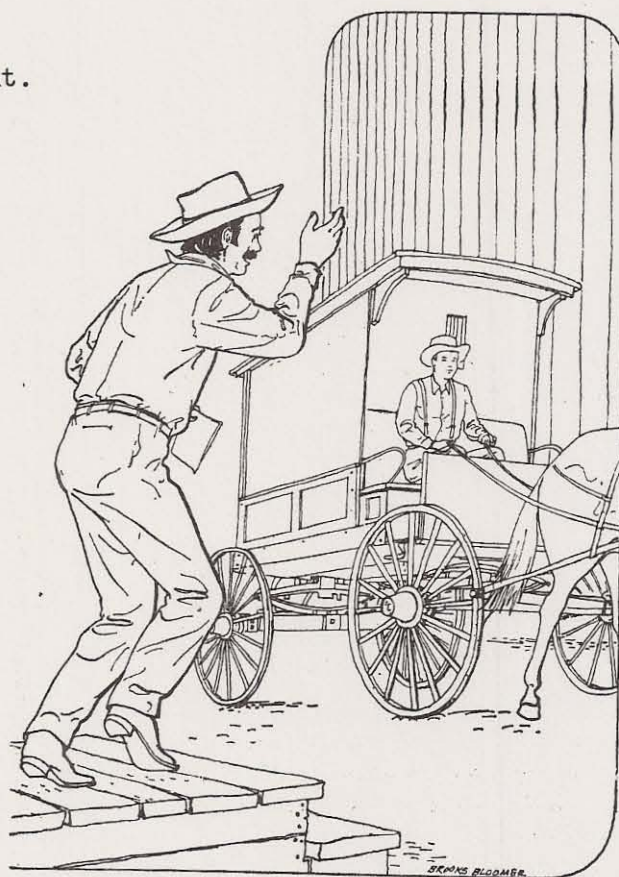
The Hitherto Unpublished Diary of an Early Day Downieville Miner

Part II

The Sierra County Historical is pleased to bring to its readers the second part of the diary of a miner of the 1850's. This Diary has never before been published. We again wish to thank Mrs. Marian Lavezzola, Sierra County Treasurer, for allowing us to print this diary; a diary found in an old family trunk. We would also like to again thank Mr. Harry Klein and his Sierra County History Class at Loyalton High School for doing the painstaking job of translating the diary from the original script into this typed form. Lastly, thanks to Mr. Klein himself for preparing this article for reproduction.

Monday Sept. 8th 1856

Slept but little during the night. Was up before the sun. Dr. Kibbe in lancing my felon yesterday did not touch the core. It is much more painful to day than yesterday. Have not done any work. Peter returned in the morning, & agreed to stop a month if I should want him. He is very slow and awkward but is quite willing to do anything that I tell him to do. Were busied more than half of the day in finishing the foot dam--had to shovel a great quantity of gravel out of the little pumphole. The ground was all dry in the morning. The Stove Pipe Flat Ditch which was broken down by the Empire Flume was not repaired until about two o'clock this afternoon. When we had the dam completed we bailed the water out of the lower ground on which we were working Saturday & tried to clean it up. Saw a very few pieces of gold. The wheels ran very slowly towards night so that the water gained rapidly on the pump. Have not been at work but feel as weary as if I had been at the hardest kind of labor, have a pretty severe cold in addition to my other misfortunes. George Macy called here this evening & chatted an hour or so, he is young & eager for information, is quite a voluminous reader. Wind blew up violently just before dark.



Tuesday Sept. 9th 1856

Awoke at early daybreak after a long refreshing slumber, there is nothing like health & exercise to make one sleep well. I did just enough of work yesterday to make me most enjoy the gifts of the sleepy god Morepheus-

Took all of the sluices down, moved them farther up & reset them with the ripple box extending over the foot dam. Stopped the lower wheel & took off the pump & let on the sluice head of water, when to my great disappointment the foot dam proved to be very defective. My principal object in building it was to stop all of the leakage from below & to that move certainly began this on the bed rock. But the dirt which was thrown in was so mixed with gravel that it allows the water to run through it freely. I felt a good deal amazed & in addition to that the hose which leads the sluice head into the boxes is very feeble & leaks very badly. The pump failed to take the water down, in fact the water gained on the pump. I did no work of any consequence myself but was obliged to be on hand all of the time so that Everything was properly done. I have exceedingly poor luck in getting men, they are drunk and lazy. So it goes I hope to make a finish of hiring men after awhile.

Wednesday 10th Sept. 1856

Built a fire immediately after getting up, went out to look at the wheel, found the diggings covered with water. the canvass in the lower End of the flume was loose. It was floating for one hundred & fifty feet, held down partly by tacks. After breakfast, stopped the wheel & took out the pump. Went two thirds of the way up the flume & let the water run out by taking off a sideboard. We took the old canvass & caulked all of the crevices as well as we could I took the new & stout canvass which I have reserved all along for a new pump belt, cut it into strips & tacked them over the joints of the bottom boards to prevent leakage there. Were nearly out of tacks. Sent Frederick to town he took a dollar & bought six papers. He was back by ten oclocke. We finished the whole job by two ocl'k. Started the pumps again, wheeled some dirt on the foot dam from the boxes for ground sluicing into the dam with a view to stop some of the leakage there & also to make the flum tighter with the mud of loam. All of us came in wet & cold, Davis came up from the Flat just before night & requested me to go down this evening & write a letter for him. I went down & filled a sheet for him. Read it to him, sealed it & directed it to his wife in Virginia. Have a severe cold, feel very unpleasantly along.

see 3

Thursday Sept. 11th 1856

Was out in the diggings soon after daylight, was agreeably surprised to find the water all out of the diggings. The pump worked well. The small quantity of earth which our ground sluiced in the dam had the effect to render the flum almost perfectly tight. It is quite as good as it was when we first began mining here & when the canvas that we had on the bottom was new--

All hands worked at ground sluicing until about ten oclock, when we began to wash--I worked on the foot dam two or three hours trying to stop the leaks, did not Effect much, however the pump takes the water out without any apparent trouble--gold is scarce, only saw a few pieces & only those just before quitting time. Do not expect to find much gold until we get up some fifty or sixty feet & perhaps not then. The channel appears to be deeper & narrower than it was. I think that there never was much of a deposit there. We have been washing now one whole month & have neither made any money nor gone over any ground.

The heat has increased very much of late. I have such a villainous cold that I do not feel like work nor anything else.

Friday Sept. 12, 1856

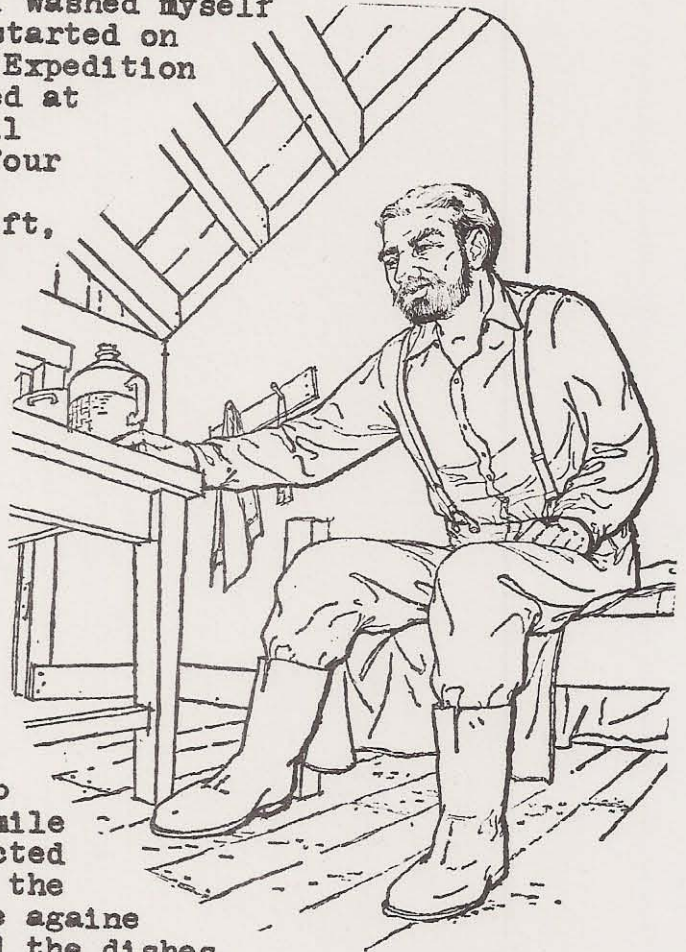
Cleaned out the riffle box that is small at the upper end of the large riffle & when I panned it all out and weighed it, found one ounce and a half, which with the ten dollars made on Monday will just about pay expenses this far in the week. Alex Miott (Aliott?) came down in the forenoon to get me to give him aproxy to vote in the Democratic District & Township Convention. In the District Convention will be nominated one candidate for Supervisor. It is supposed now that Mr Burgess of Goodyears Bar will be the candidate. In the township Convention are to be nominated two candidates for the office of Justice of the Peace & two Constables. Miott is anxious to get the nomination for Constable also Mr Drake of the upper Middle Fork solicits the same compliment. I gave Miott aproxy upon which he immediately left, I have felt the heat very much today. My cold is going off, but still my head feels very unpleasantly. Do not feel at all like working. Today did not labor over half the day, did more in the afternoon than in the forenoon. Cleaned off some rock, but it had been worked before, therefore found but little on it.

We have the pump on the bottom, the rock is much deeper in other places so that we may have some trouble to get all of the bottom dry.

Wm. A. ...

Saturday Sept. 13, 1856

Soon after breakfast washed out the upper riffle. I told the boys I was going away today & preferred that they would not work. However would allow them to act at their pleasure about it. As there was plenty of work to be done, they concluded not to work, but prospect a little around. I washed myself all over, dressed myself & started on another road tax collecting Expedition went up the East Fork, called at the first Co. which was still unpaid & found that of the four men who were there when I was there before, one had left, and the remaining three were so poor that they could not pay today. At the next Co. two men paid me. The third one had no change. Went a little above the Low Divide & found a German at work by himself. He was engaged drilling a hole out of a large boulder for blasting. He had no money but as soon as he made any would call & pay me. I gave him credit for what he said & passed on. Went up the Middle Fork & about one mile above the Low Divide. Collected Eight dollars on my way down the Middle Fork & arrived at home again by dusk. The boys had washed the dishes, towels & C. We soon had supper & they have all gone to bed. Frederick has been to Good Years Bar this afternoon, he returned since I did.



Sunday Eve Sept. 14th 1856

For once in a long time have been at home all day. Been reading novels. Finished Peter Simple & began Jacob Faithful. I feel too much worn out when I come in from work to attempt reading anything of a more weighty character, such as the "Decline & Fall" which I began about a year since but did not complete the first volumn. I advanced as far as the thirtieth chapter then commenced something lighter and have

not been able to resume it since. A person in my situation really does not have much time for reading. The first thing after getting up in the morning is to get breakfast, then work till noon. After dinner usually take a rest but I nearly always have something to do which occupies probably half of the time & leaves my hands black & greasy entirely unfit to take hold of a book with. I generally snatch fifteen or twenty minutes to amuse myself with by reading--a novel I can lay down & pick up at any time & immediately enter into the spirit of the story. My Evenings are more or less occupied by cooking or something of the kind--It is that I really have no time which I can devote the deep study or Even careful reading Dennis & I stopped at ~~home~~, fixed up the house, took the canvass which we had in the flumn & tacked it round the sides to keep out the winds--

Monday Eve September 15th 1856

Years ago when I was a small boy I recollect of reading an old law which ran thus. To be easy all night, let your supper be light, or else you'll (sic) complain of a stomach in pain. There is no truer saying under the sun than this & one which almost Everyone is made aware of by Experience yet with all of the knowledge of the past to guide us we still follow the courses we traced in youth. A habit once formed can hardly ever be broken in manhood. Indulging the appetites & particularly that for food & drink brings a great deal of misery on the human race. Yesterday I was home all day, took but very little exercise. Ate three hearty meals, it is true I went to bed late, but I awoke this morning about daylight suffering violent pains in my stomach. I have not been right well all day, but have kept myself at work. Want of self command is very injurious to me. I have always had a voracious appetite for food. Intoxicating liquors I seldom taste & then habit favors me as I have not been accustomed to drinking. I live without thinking of it & of course am better off both mentally & physically because I do not drink.

While I was getting dinner ready the stanchions which supported one end of the shaft of the little wheel gave way & let every thing about it down in great confusion. I delayed dinner about two hours in consequence of having to repair the damages--went up to Miotts & sharpened our axes--Dunbar came down just before night.

Tuesday September 16, 1856

Was up early, built a fire & went out to see how the pump was doing. Was much chagrined to find the diggings Entirely covered with water to the depth of six feet & more. A stick of wood in floating down the flume had caught under the wheel & broke it up a good deal, two paddles were off,

three ??? & several arms besides the wheel had backed the water in the flume, causing it to flow over the sides by which a large pile of gravel & sand was down into the pump. I did not attempt to fix it until after breakfast. We were occupied much longer than I Expected, got it to going again about ten o'clock. The pump worked very well but did not have the water down before sunset, so we have been idle all day. I have been reading began and finished "The King's Own". My passion for novel reading is growing most too strong. I shall have to quench it & take up something drier--the day has been very warm & very long apparently--

Wednesday September 17, 1856

On going out to the diggings soon after getting up I found them all dry. The water has not troubled us any today. We did a good lot of work, cleaned off considerable bed rock, but the rock had been cleaned before us & we did not find much. The sun does not shine on us until about ten in the forenoon because we are right under the hill, but in the after noon it pours down on us with tremendous power. We have a great lot of sand & gravel to move before we can get to the bedrock on the flume side of the stream. The flume is built on the outside sweep of the river & it generally happens that there is not much there--we will uncover the rock & if there is much gold will work it & if the show appears to be small will not work it. Davis & Co. on the Flat were obliged to quit work for the day in consequence of the Frenchmen who are at work about them & running water through the Flat, thus overflowing the ground which Davis & Co. are working. One of them came up here & sat down awhile to tell & gather news. They have not been doing much lately. They are beginning to get discouraged, one of the company went off yesterday & hired out to work for wages. He is to have seventy five dollars & board for a month, two of them went to town in the afternoon & thinking they might possibly bring some news for me if the mail had arrived I went down this evening but recd nothing.

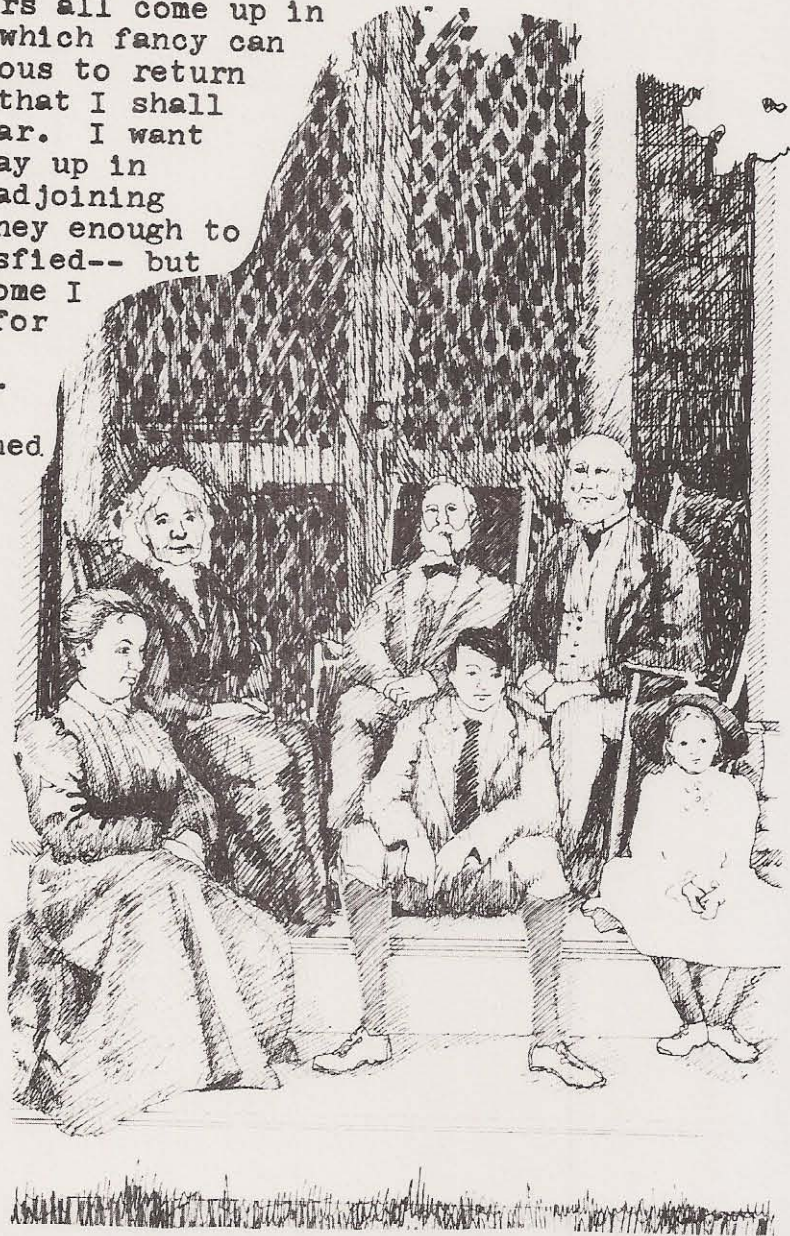
Thursday Sept. 18th 1856

One day is so much like another here on the river without an incident or a strange face to awaken curiosity or attention. The wind begins to howl mournfully around the hills, Swaying the tall pines and cedars & reminding us all that winter will soon be here. Out mining gets on very slowly it seems to me. We have not cleared off one hundred feet of ground yet & have altogether in the whole flume over four hundred & fifty feet. It is now more than two months since I began to work putting the flume in. I have made expenses thus far and that is all--nothing made yet &

I am afraid nothing will be. In spite of all that I do to the contrary while I am at work & at times when I am not reading my thoughts are ever wandering away off home. My wife and daughter, my father, Mother, Sisters & Brothers all come up in review in all the forms which fancy can portray. I am very anxious to return home but do not believe that I shall be able to do so this year. I want to get enough money to pay up in full for the small farm adjoining Fathers. Then I want money enough to take me home & I am satisfied-- but when it comes to going home I believe that I can work for my passage across both oceans-- Have been reading "The Pirate" by Captain Marrzatt & finished it since dark--

Friday Sept. 19th 1856

I have been in the habit of having the gold in the riffle box over night & wash out generally the first thing after going out in the morning. We have been making expenses all along since the commencement of the flume. The first week that we worked we did better than we have done since. This morning I had sixty dollars which is nearly equal to the expenses of the week. To day we have not done so well. Saw a good many pieces and they were quite small.



The sun shown very warm until about middle of the afternoon the sky became suddenly clouded & there was every appearance of an immediate rain & in fact it did sprinkle a little. In the forenoon there was a young man came from town for Peter to go down & assist in the musical part of the procession that was to form to escort Ex-Gov. Foote & others into Downieville. A mass meeting of the Know Nothing Party is to be held this evening in town. Gov. Foote &

several other prominent politicians of the dark lantern party were to be in attendance and address the meeting. I should like to have went down but was too tired. The lower Co. on the Flat did go--I sent two picks by Peter to get sharpened. Also gave him instructions to get my letters and papers if any in the P.O. Quite cloudy to night think it will rain soon when our warm weather will be over.

Saturday Eve Sept. 20th 1856

When I got up in the morning, found that Peter had come home in the night but did not bring any thing from the P.O. for me. He said that he tried to get in the office but was denied admittance on account of the lateness of the hour. Dennis began to pick up gold immediately after going out to work. he was cleaning bed rock near the lower End of the diggings. he found a piece that had a good deal of quartz mixed up with it but which altogether weighed one ounce. On going out after dinner found the hole nearly full of water--the wheel stopped & the water running out of the flume. One of the Elevators of the pump got loose & was caught by the next Elevator going up & of course the pump had to stop. It was well that I was out in time or the damage might have been much worse. As it was we were prevented from working any more on the bed rock at the lower end in the afternoon. Dennis & Frederick I employed in stripping off sand. I cleaned off some rock farther up. Peter assisted me. Dunbar was here in the forenoon. was going to town, promised to call at the P.O. for me & return this way. He did so & brought two Tribunes. All that had arrived--but no letters, although I did not very much Expect any--

The French Co. called here to night for water money. I told them that I could not think of paying anything for water when it was so low in the river.--

Sunday Eve Sept. 21st 1856

Awoke early. Rose, went out to the diggings and washed out the upper End of the Riffle box before I got breakfast ready. Had not so much gold as the day before. Shaved and bathed soon after breakfast but before I could get off to town it was ten ocl'k. Took three picks with me to get sharpened, left them this side of town at Hiney's shop. He is an irishman keeps a bar & works on Sunday--

Was too late to get in the post office in the forenoon, had to wait until two oclock. The P.M. is an irishman also & totally unfit for the situation. He is above his business and very surly. Sunday is the day when most of the people & miners Especially have leisure to go to town to transact their little business & hear the news. Well

then of all other times the P.O. ought to be open, but I suppose that the Downieville incumbent has the law on his side and will not swerve from his position. Even though he were to make hundreds of friends by the operation. Had to wait so long in town that I thought it best to take dinner, did not feel well then & have felt worse since. My head aches badly to night. Ate no supper, have read but little in Harper. The day was very warm & sultry. A small sprinkle of rain before night. Growing cooler now--

Monday Eve Sept. 22nd 1856

It grew cold after dark last night, was cloudy to day. Endeavored to make a bargain with the owners of the ditch for water, but they--that is--the French part of the Co. wanted me to pay them at the rate of twenty dollars per week. They have also asked me for pay at the same rate for the time that I have been using it. They wanted sixty dollars which I told them they never could get of me with my consent. They were so stubborn about the matter that I concluded as my only resource for water to take it out of my own flum. The difficulty is in taking it out of the flum I have not full enough for the boxes & then damming the current in the flume & makes it strike the wheel with less force, so that the pump has not done half duty since the water has been taken out of the flume. Hired another man in the forenoon. He began work after dinner--have four now. Must do better or I will be unable to pay them. Cleaned a small piece of red rock, found a few colors--all every fine. Am annoyed a good deal at the bad luck I meet with Everyday. Since getting the bread ready for baking I have been out to the diggings & found Every thing in a wretched state. One of the gudyums came out of the shaft. let the wheel fall into the flume. backed the water into the diggings & will in all probability hinder us from working all day tomorrow--So it is--

Tuesday Sept. 23rd 1856

Was up at daybreak. Went out to the diggings & repaired the damages of last Evening to the shaft, got the pump to going again before I went to the house. Was engaged thus about an hour and a half. The boys were just getting out of bed when I returned to the tent. Very discouraging for mining. An extensive hole excavated & all ready for cleaning the bed rock when the water is out, but when filled there is not a favorable prospect of getting a pile & to make my feelings worse on this subject, the same difficulty occurs nearly Everyday. Were all cold in the forenoon. Endeavored to make a bargain with my french neighbors for their share of the water or as much of it as I should need for sluicing. They wanted twenty dollars per week for the whole sluicehead half of which would go to

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them. The American Co. offered to let me have the water free of charge, but as I could not persuade myself to give the French Co. ten dollars for their part of the water we failed to make any arrangement Entirely. We fixed up our boxes & tried to get water out of the flum but it was no go--concluded to go to town for canvases, went down after supper & bought one hundred goods with the promise of having it sent up in the morning.

Wednesday Evening Sept. 24, 1856

As I have related in my journal for yesterday I started for town after supper. Was detained much longer than I expected. Arrived there a few minutes after seven, had a little money on deposit which I was unable to get when I first got in because Mr. Bramley was spending the Evening with some ladies.

Bought a couple of San Fransisco Newspapers, & had finished my little business by half past nine o'clock--when with a small tin bucket of butter & a lantern which Mr. Bramley Kindly loaned me, the Evening was very warm & still-- It must have been all most Half past ten when I reached home. Went out to see how the sheel was operating, found everything going right--came back--turned in & never woke up till daybreak. Couldn't set the men to work to good advantage but have kep them busy all day--

Frederick & I have been making hose since ten o'clock, have about half of it finished. Have brought it all in the house & intended to sew on it to night. The sun shone very hot this afternoon. This week is the poorest of any that I have had since I began to mine this summer.

Two loads of goods arrived here this afternoon. A meeting of the Democracy in town tomorrow night. Peter was sent for this Evening to go down tomorrow to play--George Macy is up here this Evening, returned a Vol. of Harpers novels & borrowed the last number of Harper.



Thursday Eve. Sept. 25th 1856

Peter & Fredrick each sewed about five yards a piece before going to bed. I then began at the remainder & worked until it was just approaching daybreak. Did not quite finish it. Was cold & sleepy, turned in and soon fell asleep. Awoke a little after sunrise & found Peter up before me and a good fire blazing-- Finished sewing the hose & got to its place by ten o'clock. Made the grade for it yesterday. We have it run in boxes & on boards to make the grade easier & to save the canvass-- When I first let the water on there was not a full sluice head but would carry off very fine gravel down the line without any difficulty. Placed some boards in the mouth of the flum to raise the water in the Dam there by making a greater head for the sluice water. Peter went to town after dinner to attend the Democratic Meeting to night. About middle of afternoon the water in the river began to fall so that very soon both pumps stopped. Sluice head failed & the diggings rapidly filled with water. To make very bad a great deal worse half a dozen boxes fell down at the upper End of the line. Our old one recd a mortal wound. Several others were dangerously hurt but with my hammer & nail & saw medicine have succeeded in restoring them to convalescence. No gold to day--bad luck to will have to quit pretty soon--

Friday Eve September 26th 1856

Began work this morning with a fairer prospect of getting along smoothly than had been our lot for nearly the whole of this week--

The new hose does not afford a large sluice head of water. One man is kept busy at the lower End of the riffle shoveling tailings back. In the afternoon the river was higher than in the morning caused I suppose by water coming from the Middle Fork. Cleaned off some bed rock, but did not find much gold. We are working on the wrongside of the river for much of a deposit-- Baked a loaf of Bread in the forenoon & in the afternoon boiled a kettle of beans.

Peter returned from town about Eleven Oclock last night. He reported a large meeting in town which Ended just before he left. There is to be another meeting tomorrow Evening. The weather still continues warm but as it is getting late in the season we must Expect to have storms before long--

This week we will not make expenses--& will hardly be able to do so for the next 2 weeks.

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Saturday Sept. 27th 1856

Got along too pleasantly yesterday to have our transient good luck continue to day--The pumps had the water out in the morning and Everything appeared to work well, but so soon as the sluice head of water was let on the wheels slackened their speed and of course the leakage from above and below began to trouble us. The water gained rapidly on the lower pump that I concluded to put another wheel about midway of the flume. Carried the old wheel up to the spot, fastened it in its proper place, dug a hole in the gravel & put the pump on. Had it working by two oclock. It went very good at first & kept the leakage out of the way without any apparent trouble. Just before night however the wheel slackened its speed and the water began to raise. In spite of all I could do I could not get a full sluice head. The gravel will not go down with the present supply of water. Things do look most wonderfully discouraging to me for ten weeks now. I have done little else but fix up things about the confounded flume. if it keeps on this waymuch longer I will certainly be damned very Emphatically. If I am compelled to quite the flum before I have worked it out I think now go off to the valley of Wyoming & see my wife & child if they are still living.

Sunday Sept. 28th 1856

Was out at an early hour, some time before the sun first appeared on the tops of the mountains.

First went out and washed out the riffle to ascertain the result of yesterday's washing. Only found a few dollars so few that I did not weigh it.

Got breakfast--shaved--washed & dressed and went to town. Went off of my way on the way down to see some people on the Middle Fork to try to collect some road tax from two or three who had not paid but I found them as poor as they well could be & have to take their own stories as par.

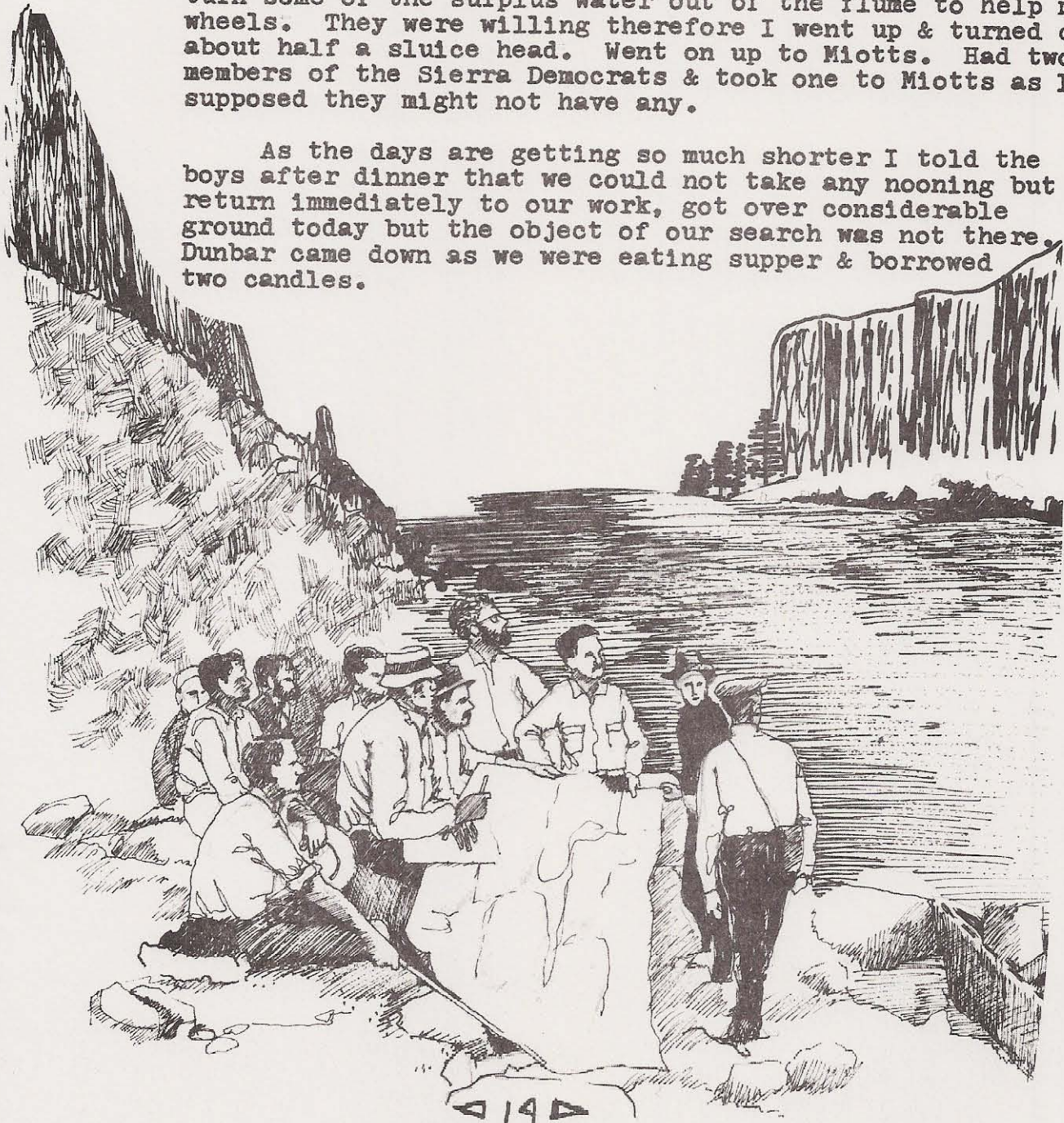
Turned off of the trail again & called on two companies on the East Fork. Saw Mr Jones he is doing verywell, has one man with him. Only washed the bottom dirt, wheels that to the sluices. The bedrock which he is working is so high that his pumps need not run, a great advantage and for which I almost Envy him. Arrived in town too late to get anything from the P.O. before afternoon, therefore had to wait. When the hour of two oclock arrived called at the P.O. & recd five papers which the P.M. was too surly to give out. Took dinner at the Riis House. Of course had one dollar to pay. Saw Thomas Driver who used to live & mine on the East Fork. He has been down in Los Angelos nearly two years. Has come back again to make more money--

Monday September 29, 1856

I was so late in going to bed last night that I could not sleep for a long time after lying down.

The water was as low as usual this morning the pumps had great difficulty in keeping the water out. I greased the bearings of the shafts and lowered the wheels as much as possible without having them touch the bottom. I observed a sensible improvement in the speed of the wheels occasioned by the water coming from the Middle Fork. Was down to Davis & Co. Only two men at work there Davis & Andrew. George had not arrived from town. he complained I understood of a lame foot. I wanted their permission to turn some of the surplus water out of the flume to help my wheels. They were willing therefore I went up & turned out about half a sluice head. Went on up to Miotts. Had two members of the Sierra Democrats & took one to Miotts as I supposed they might not have any.

As the days are getting so much shorter I told the boys after dinner that we could not take any nooning but return immediately to our work, got over considerable ground today but the object of our search was not there. Dunbar came down as we were eating supper & borrowed two candles.



THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMMENDS TO OUR READERS
AND MEMBERS THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS WHO ARE HELPING THE WORK
OF THE SOCIETY BY THEIR GENEROUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT---AND WE
WOULD HOPE THAT MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY WOULD REPAY OUR
SPONSORS BY PATRONIZING THEM WHEN THEY ARE IN SIERRA COUNTY:

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Don and Virginia Weaver
Downieville---California

DOWNIEVILLE MOTORS

Frank G. Tabor
Downieville, Calif.

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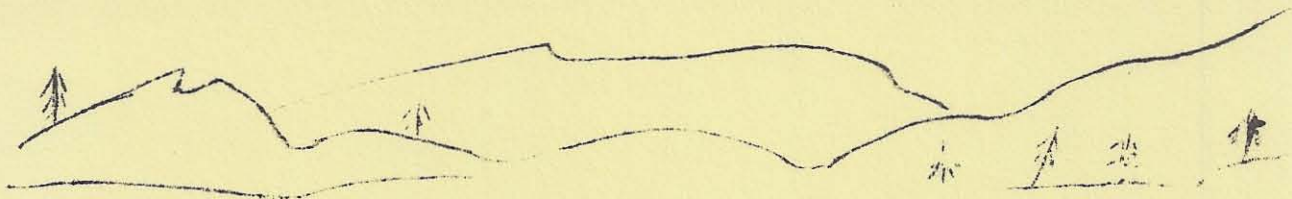
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POP'S TRADING POST

Al and Elsie Potter
Jean Oliver
Sierraville, California



Part VI

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE STAMPEDE AREA

This is the fourth and final installment of the Historical Survey of the Stampede Reservoir Area in the Little Truckee River Drainage District by Prof. W. Turrentine Jackson, Prof. of History at the University of California at Davis. We are publishing this work through the permission of Prof. Jackson and the Department of the Interior, U.S. Government. This installment is Logging and Timber Operations; Railroads. We wish to thank Prof. Jackson and the U.S. Government for allowing us to reprint this interesting history of part of Sierra County.

IV. Logging and Timber Operations; Railroads

When the Central Pacific Railroad Company of California laid its tracks across the crest of the Sierras and down the Truckee River in the late 1860's, the upper canyon of that stream that had proved such an obstacle to immigrants and to wagon road builders was just another hurdle to be overcome. Some men paused long enough to observe that the hills along the Truckee and Little Truckee Rivers were heavily forested. The railroad was going to need thousands of ties and each new settlement opened up along the route would need lumber for building, nearby pines must have timber, and wood was needed for fuel both in towns and the mines. A vast market for forest products had been created. An industry was made to order.

1. Nathan and Jay Parsons, Pioneer Lumbermen:

Among those pioneers were two men by the name of Parsons cutting and milling timber in Sardine and Stampede valleys. Nathan Parsons, 49, lumberman, and Jay Francis Parsons, 37, engineer and lumberman, were listed in the Great Register for Sierra County in 1872. Both men had first been registered on July 26, 1866. We have already noted that Jay Parsons had built Sardine House and just a few yards west of this building and down the hill on the level was his small sawmill.¹ He apparently spent the rest of his life in the area for informants report that a grave on a little bluff on the east side of the Little Truckee, just opposite the Old Mansion, is that of Jay Parsons.²

2. Lewis and Peck: The Lewis Mill:

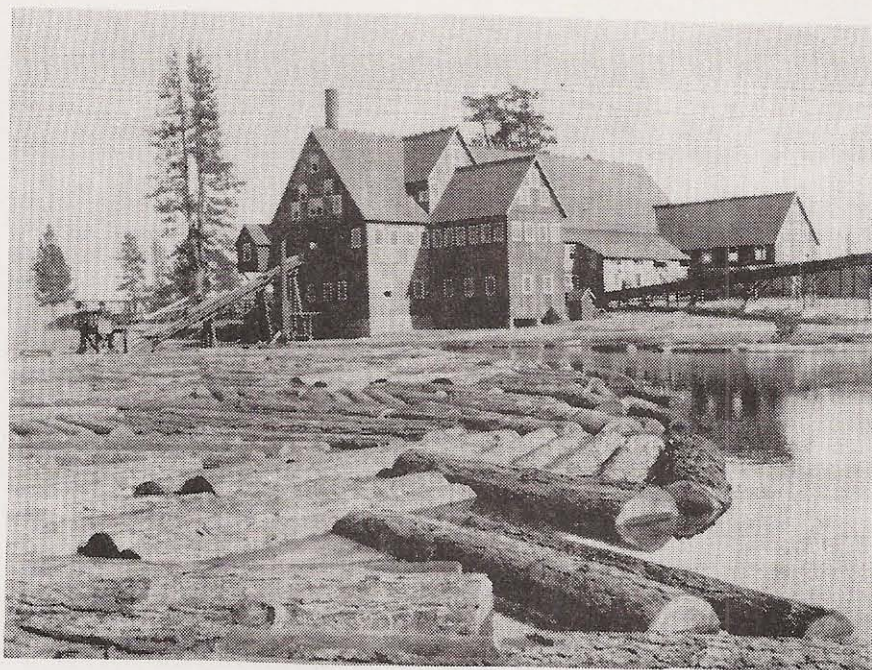
Later pioneer lumbermen were the three Lewis brothers who, around 1886, joined forces with two Peck brothers to build the Lewis Mill, 17 miles north of the railroad town of Boca in the wilds of Smithneck Canyon.³ (See map of "Lumbering Roads of the Truckee River Area" for the location of Smithneck Canyon.) Long time residents have stated that the Lewis Mill was the first one to be built after that of Parsons. They describe the location of the mill as "on the road to Loyalton in Tucker Valley about four miles out of Sardine Valley to the north." There is a Ranger Station now located on the site of the old Lewis Mill and the pile of sawdust left behind is still visible.⁴ To reach the Lewis Mill there were two possible routes. One could ascend the valley of the Little Truckee River northward to a point where the direction of its headwaters abruptly changed toward the west, skirt along the eastern side of Stampede Valley, on up Sardine Valley to the 6,370-foot summit, and thence down Smithneck Canyon, or Tucker Valley, to the camp. The alternative, shorter, but more circuitous route climbed the reaches of Dog Valley down to the site of Merrill, where the trail coming up from Boca was joined, on to the mill site. This latter route was the more favored. In 1867, the Lewis Brothers established a box factory in Verdi; in that same year the Pecks left the firm. Thus, one of the earliest routes between the railroad towns and the Lewis Mill ran through Stampede Valley.

3. John H. Roberts and the use of Steamwagons:

John H. Roberts joined the Lewis brothers in 1888. He had been a Sacramento River steamboat captain, and he brought with him into the timber country a fleet of "steamwagons," or traction engines, that he had formerly used in connection with his river boat business. These were ponderous machines, weighing as much as 29 tons, resting on huge, six-foot rear wheels with a single center-front driving wheel. Mounted on this running gear was a large boiler that generated steam for power and attached to the rear were a series of flat cars for hauling the tallest of trees out of the forest. In operation, these steamwagons puffed and clanked along the forest roads belching forth great clouds of black smoke from the stack on the engine firing the boiler.⁵ Pulling long trains of flat cars carrying lumber these steamwagons often traveled the road between Lewis Mill and the Lox factory at Verdi. A lesser number of them also went from the mill down to Boca, passing through Stampede Valley.

Stories are told how ranchers' horses along the routes were terrified, and the dairy farmers objected to the fire-

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Hobart Mills

breathing demons. When a proposal to build new roads, for example, on the opposite side of Smithneck Canyon failed to placate the ranchers, W. S. Lewis arranged for a big picnic to which all interested parties were invited. Lewis explained how his milling operation provided year 'round employment for many people in the area and expressed a desire to help the ranchers get their hay and dairy products to market. An amicable, temporary solution to the problem was worked out whereby the horse-drawn wagons would use the roads of the area during the day-time and the steam-driven wagons would roam only at night. This arrangement must have been temporary because Mrs. Alice Trentman recalls that each of these steamwagons was accompanied by a flagman who went ahead on a horse to tell all the freighters with teams on the road that the steamwagon was coming. The mules were so afraid that the teamsters got them off the thoroughfare. All of the teams drawing freight wagons wore bells on their harnesses so the steamwagons traveled very slowly. She recalled, as a child, that she could spot the steamwagon down

the road and before its arrival her mother had time to prepare dinner for the crew at Sardine House. She remembered the name of many of steamwagon drivers who were active in the area during the late 1880's and 1890's including Tom Hannigan, Art Doan and his father, Lee Beechman, and Fred Tong.⁶

4. The Development of Boca and the Boca and Loyalton Railroad:

The Boca Mill had been established in 1867 by L. E. Doan to cut ties for the Central Pacific Railroad. By 1888 his business had expanded into the Boca Mill & Ice Company. He had built a dam to form a large pond to make natural ice near Boca and two miles up the Little Truckee he had constructed a second ice pond and the two were connected with a railroad. Boca was an ice center and freighters picked up ice here to deliver northward to Loyalton and Sierra Valley. Another major business of the town was the Boca Brewing Company.

In 1900 Messrs. Lewis and Roberts decided to replace their huge and troublesome steamwagons with a railroad that would provide more efficient and speedier transportation. Moreover, to avoid the costly construction over the Dog Valley grade on the route to Verdi, their railroad line was to run north from Boca up the valley of the Little Truckee. The tracks were laid on the eastern side of the stream to the point where its direction turned toward the west, here the tracks crossed the Little Truckee to its western bank and headed along its tributaries flowing from the north across the eastern side of Stampede Valley. Thence the railroad followed along Davies Creek in Sardine Valley to Davies Mill, on to the Lewis Mill in Smithneck Canyon, and down that canyon to Loyalton on the southern edge of the vast Sierra Valley. This had been, in general, the route followed by earlier wagon roads. See the map, "Lumbering Roads of the Truckee River Area."⁷

The Boca and Loyalton Railroad was incorporated on September 25, 1900 and work on the line commenced that same fall and continued until bad weather in January forced suspension of the work and the laying off of 116 workers on the line. However, by March 1901, the line had been completed to the Lewis Mill and several cars of lumber for boxes were being shipped daily to Boca, 17 miles away. Some 50 men were still employed on completing the final section of the road to Loyalton, nine miles farther. The railroad was completed by the summer of 1901. Loyalton, a town of 50, was soon overrun with men who had arrived on the train seeking work. The town became a center of lumber mills. The Roberts Lumber Company purchased two ranches as a site for a new mill and began to scour the country for available timber lands that could be purchased at \$1.25 an acre.⁸ Among the other mills moving into Loyalton were the Horton Brothers,

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Turner Brothers, the Reno Mill & Lumber Company and the California White Pine Lumber Company. The Boca and Loyalton Railroad established its engine house and shops in Loyalton and as the need arose extended its line on northward to Beckwourth and to Portola.

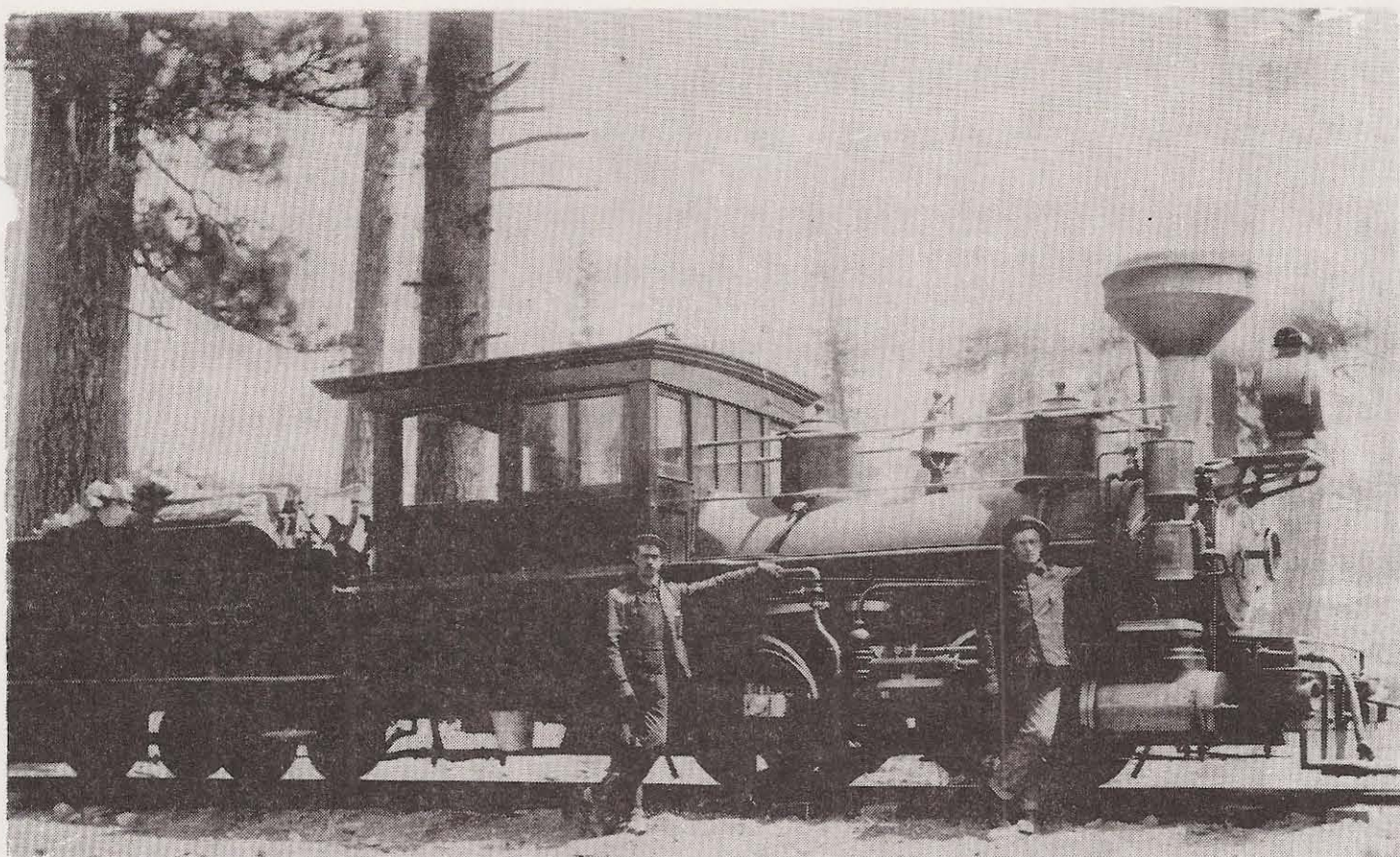
David F. Myrick had described the problems of railroad-ing in the area between 1904 and 1907:

Fire, snow and floods plagued the B&L's short line. In April, 1904 Boca had the worst fire since 1885; the SP's fire train from Truckee was called to help out; the hotel burned; the B&L depot caught fire several times, the blaze being extinguished in each instance.⁹ Three years later, another fire destroyed the B&L roundhouse, a locomotive and several freight and passenger cars. In January, 1906 a blizzard dropped 12 feet of snow on Boca and four feet on the Lewis Mill; the subsequent thaw and freezing deposited nine miles of ice on the rails which had to be chopped away before the road could be operated. Floods at Merrill, Merrill Creek and in the canyons often disrupted operations. A general storm in April, 1907 badly washed out the line. On another occasion the bridge at Grizzley Creek was washed away and subsequently found in the middle of the stream; in other places high water floated the ties and rails right off the roadbed leaving them hanging in the trees when the waters subsided.¹⁰

In 1907 the Boca and Loyalton Railroad had built at least fifteen short, spur lines into the trees where lumber camps had been located. Other spurs ran to the various mills. Loyalton now had four sawmills and three box factories and was able to compete with both Boca and Verdi as a lumbering center.

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad that was sponsoring the construction of the Western Pacific had acquired 51% of the B&L in September, 1905 to keep rival interests out of the WP's territory. By 1907-08, the timber lands south of Loyalton had largely been cut over and the B&L had to find new channels of business. These were found, at least temporarily, in supplying materials and supplies for the construction of the Western Pacific in the Feather River area. Soon thereafter, the WP took over that short section of the B&L between Portola and Beckwith (Beckwourth), with the sanction of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. From this time forward, the B&L began to decline. Annual losses running between \$41,000 and \$52,000 were recorded for each of the years, 1909-1912. The line defaulted on its bonds and in June, 1915 a receiver was appointed for the road. With the permission of the California Railroad Corporation the line suspended all operation between January and May, 1916 to save the cost of winter hauling. After hearings, a limited service was continued northward from Loyalton to

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Beckwith, but no one objected to the discontinuance of all service south of Loyalton toward Boca. Thus, the route through Stampede Valley that had been used for fifteen years, 1901-1916, no longer existed, but for the period 1901-1907, at least, trains had frequently traversed it from north to south, carrying logs or finished lumber. In September, 1916, the attorney for the Western Pacific topped a bid by the junk dealers for the line at \$35,100.00; the abandonment of the Loyalton-Boca section was officially approved and the title to the rest of the line transferred to the Western Pacific in December, 1916.

5. The Development of Verdi and the Verdi Lumber Company Railroad:

Verdi became an active lumbering and railroad center when the Central Pacific was built along the Truckee River. Its primary purpose for the period 1867-1869 was supplying ties to the railroad builders. When the nearby lumber was cut in the early 1880's, the loggers began to work in the

hills to the west of Verdi and entered the Dog Valley country. There immediately developed a major problem of supplying the timbermen and transporting the fallen timbers to the Verdi mills. In 1900 the Verdi Lumber Company planned the construction of a 12-mile standard gauge railroad into the timber and with the work of two crews at each end of the line five miles of railroad had been constructed up the steep slopes of Dog Valley by August. For the next few years Verdi was considered a "lumberman's paradise." By 1905 the timber in Dog Valley was exhausted and the Verdi Lumber Company made surveys for a 12-mile extension of the railroad to a point near Lazy Station in Dog Valley, over Dog Valley Second Summit and on to Merrill in Sardine Valley where connection was made with the Boca and Loyalton Railroad. Construction along this survey was not commenced, however, until 1908 when the rails were pushed across the Second Summit, and in subsequent years, according to plan, on to Merrill where they crossed the trackage of the B&L without stopping and pushed on west along Davies Creek into the mountains. (See map of "The Verdi Lumber Company's Railroad.")¹²

In 1917 after the north side of Davies Creek had been logged, the railroad built a spur into the hills above Bear Valley. Cutting proceeded there for the next year, after which the railroad branched out again westward from the Davies Creek area into the hills on the south side of Lemon Canyon. Logging continued here for another five years, and then a switch was made to the north side of the canyon where enough timber was found to keep the railroad in business for several years longer. (See map of "The Verdi Lumber Company's Railroad.")

In 1926 the sawmill, storage yard, and roundhouse in Verdi burned, and the scrapping of the railroad began shortly after the mill was abandoned. By May, 1927 nearly all of the rails had been removed from the road. The abandoned roadbed of the Verdi Lumber Company's railroad can still be observed today. Although this railroad line did not traverse Stampede Valley at any point, its westward route along Davies Creek was just over the divide into Stampede Valley.¹³

6. Construction of Narrow Gauge Rail Lines by the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company and the Hobart Estate:

The Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company (the Hobart interests) had been actively engaged in cutting timber in the Lake Tahoe region during the 1880's and early 1890's. As the timber along the north shore was depleted, the company began to look for forests elsewhere. They found available timber in the vicinity of Independence Lake, around the headwaters of Prosser Creek, the Little Truckee and Onion Creek. Following the close of the cutting season in 1894 at Lake Tahoe, the buildings were dismantled and moved, with the equipment, to a new headquarters at Overton (subsequently known as Hobart Mills) 6 1/2 miles north of Truckee on the upper reaches of Prosser Creek. The narrow gauge railroad

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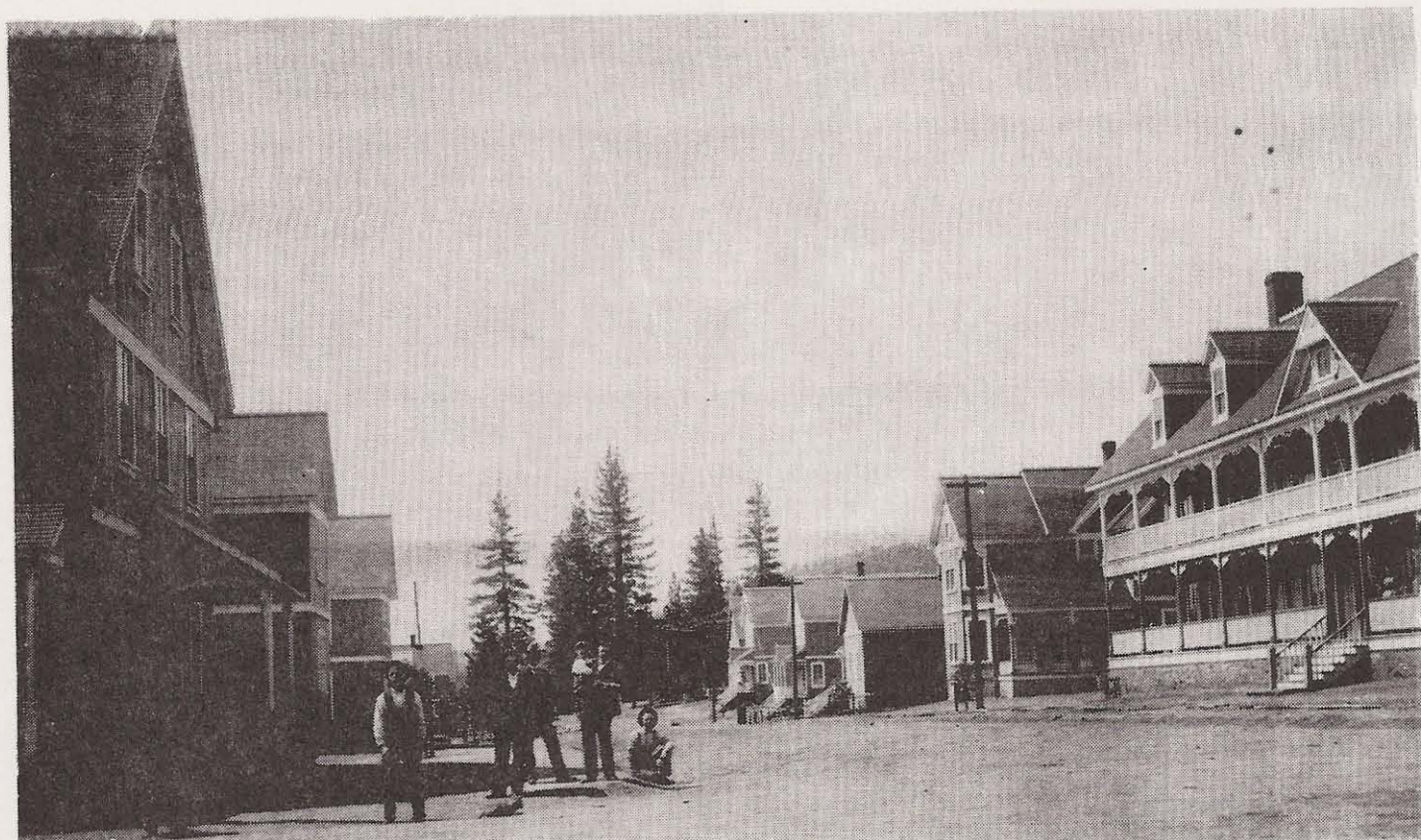
that had been run to lumber camps on the Tahoe region was salvaged and stockpiled for future use. At Overton the Hobart Mills were reconstructed and in 1896 a standard gauge road was built between Overton and Truckee. (See Historic Photograph II, 5, for view of the Hobart Mills.)

Hobart Mills was recognized as an office post office in 1900, a status it retained until 1958. Once the standard gauge line from Overton to Truckee was completed, the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company began the construction of a network of narrow gauge lines that penetrated the woods to logging camps. The first of these ran east and north to the banks of Sagehen Creek which it crossed and followed to that stream's junction with the Little Truckee River. (See map of "Lumbering Roads of the Truckee River Area" for the location of all these narrow gauge lines.) This first narrow gauge construction penetrated the Stampede Valley area. A second line headed west up Prosser Creek and followed its North Fork into Carpenter Valley. As lumbering operations expanded, this "Carpenter Valley Line" became a major rail line by extending it northward to the upper reaches of Sagehen Creek, Independence Creek, the Little Truckee River and on into Onion Valley. Some years later a number of branches were extended farther into Cold Stream Canyon and another to the north of the Little Truckee, but farther east. This last branch ran from a point known as Sierraville Summit. All these branches went into cutting areas that were only a few miles from the tracks of the Verdi Lumber Company's railroad. The logging roads, particularly the feeder lines into the more remote camps, were lightly constructed and subject to sudden change as dictated by the timber supply. Because of their temporary existence, as little earthen work was engaged in as possible. Few scars were left on the landscape with their passing and their routes are currently difficult, if not impossible, to find.

In 1917, the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company ceased to exist as a corporate organization and all its properties were transferred to the Hobart Estate Company, the principal stockholder. Operations were expanded. The narrow gauge line from Hobart to the confluence of Sagehen Creek and the Little Truckee was rebuilt to sturdier specifications and during the 1920's and 1930's construction was extended to the northeast to Merrill, at Davies Creek, and on north into Sardine Valley, with branches extending in all directions to new timber areas. The bulk of these narrow gauge extensions were located in Stampede Valley. Since the Boca and Loyalton Railroad had abandoned its line in 1916 and the Verdi Lumber Company its road in 1927, many of the roadbeds of these two earlier standard gauge lines were used once again by the narrow gauge. (See map of "Lumbering Roads of the Truckee River Area.")¹⁴

Because of the unprotected right of way common to most logging roads, those of the Hobart Estate ran into difficulty with the cattle and sheep of ranchers. One flock of sheep,

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Hobart Mills

being herded by a Basque, crossed the tracks just as a loaded logging train rounded the curve on a downhill grade and 30 or more sheep were slaughtered by the train.

For almost forty years the Hobart Mills was one of the principal lumber operations in the Truckee River area of California. By 1936 the timber had all been cut over and the lumber mill was closed and plans made for dismantling. All activity along the narrow gauge was stilled. Meanwhile, Stampede Valley forests had twice provided timber for this company in sizable quantities, first around the turn of the century for the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company and secondly in the 1920's and 1930's for its successor, the Hobart Estate.¹⁵

7. Smaller Sawmills of the Twentieth Century:

In 1907, Arthur Davies was cutting timber in the Stampede Valley area. He had built a sawmill, known as Davies Mill, on Davies Creek just over the divide into Sardine Valley. His mill was close enough so his men were able to use Sardine House, by this time an old building, as a boarding house. The Boca and Loyalton Railroad had run a branch

line up Davies Creek to the Davies Mill. (See Historic photograph II, 3, for a view of Davies Mill.)

The Warren Mill was located just north of the bend in the Little Truckee River where its water flow changed directions from east to south. According to informants, it was located just below the present site of the dam. The Warren Mill was owned by George Warren and he was active in the lumber business in 1907. He also used the Boca and Loyalton Railroad to transport his mill products.

A third lumberman, Winnie Smith, had been active for a number of years in Russell Valley before he moved up to the Little Truckee.¹⁶ He operated mills at two different sites on the north bank of the Little Truckee just above its junction with Sagehen Creek. These can be seen a short distance from the bridge on the county road. Winnie Smith was operating here as late as 1913-1915. Informants state that he was a rugged individualist who did not deal with the Sierra Nevada Wood and Lumber Company, but that he hauled his lumber to the market by means of ox teams.¹⁷

¹Great Register for Sierra County, 1872

²Information from Mrs. Jessie Payen.

³David F. Myrick, Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California, (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1962) I, p. 398. This detailed and authoritative study is the source of most of the information in this chapter. Only page citations will be given hereafter.

⁴Information from Mrs. Jessie Payen.

⁵See Historic photographs I, 4 and II, 2, for pictures of the steamwagons. See photograph I, 9, for route of steamwagons across Stampede Valley.

⁶Information from Mrs. Alice Trentman.

⁷See Historic Photograph, No. II, 3, for Davies Mill.

⁸An indication of the business methods of the Roberts Lumber Company can be read in articles in The Mountain Messenger of Downieville, quoting the Reno Gazette, April 11, 1903, 2/4; May 2, 1903, 2/5.

⁹For a historic photograph of the station in Boca, see II, 4.

¹⁰Myrick, I, p. 406.

¹¹For a complete discussion of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad, accompanied by numerous illustrations, see Myrick, I, pp. 339-409. For a detailed statement on the status of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad, as a part of the Denver and Rio Grande System, see Poor's Manual of Railroads, 1914, p. 1214. The Downieville Mountain Messenger contains numerous articles, some copied from the Plumas Independent, the Plumas National-Bulletin, and other regional newspapers relative to the trials and tribulations of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad. For example, see the issues of March 28, 1903, 3/4; May 16, 1903, 3/5; June 6, 1903, 2/2. Of particular interest was the war with the Sierra Valley Line for control of the approaches to Bechwith. A very important case between the Boca and Loyalton Railroad and George R. Worn of the Worn Mill before the Interstate Commerce Commission can be read in The Timberman, XVI, (November, 1914), p. 48.

¹²See Photograph II, 4, of Verdi Lumber Company Railroad Bed.

¹³Myrick; I, pp. 410-411.

¹⁴See Photographs, I, 10, and II, 5, for Railroad Beds of the Hobart Estate.

¹⁵This summary is based upon Myrick, I, pp. 439-442.

¹⁶See Photograph II, 6, for a view of Winnie Smith Sawmill Site in Russell Valley.

¹⁷Information provided by Mrs. Jessie Payen. The Winnie Smith Mill in S ampede Valley is indicated as Site No. 3 in the Inventory. See Photographs, I, 5.



THE SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMMENDS TO OUR READERS AND MEMBERS THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS WHO ARE HELPING THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY BY THEIR GENEROUS FINANCIAL SUPPORT---AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY WOULD REPAY OUR SPONSORS BY PATRONIZING THEM WHEN THEY ARE IN SIERRA COUNTY:

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LETTERS WRITTEN BY A MINER IN DOWNIEVILLE
IN THE 1850's TO HIS MOTHER IN
MUNICH, GERMANY

The following letters (and pictures) were written during the 1850's by a miner who was an immigrant from Munich, Germany. The letters somehow managed to survive over the years and were returned to the U.S. when they were sent to Mrs. TR. V. Puterbaugh, granddaughter of the miner. Mrs. Puterbaugh, who lives in Walnut Creek, California, donated the letters to the museum in Downieville, California. Mrs. Ruth Drury, manager of the museum, brought them to the attention of the Historical Society which is pleased to publish them. Since our staff is somewhat lacking in German speaking translators, we are accepting the translations done years ago by an unknown person. The original letters are in the Downieville Museum and may be seen or translated by any interested person. The pictures included with the letters were sent by the miner so his mother could get some idea of the strange new lands of the western United States.

Downieville, California
November 2, 1850

Dear Mother:

I received your last letter, from which I can see that you all are well, which makes me very happy.

I could not fulfill your wish because I left New York on April 17, 1849, to sail for California (Goldland) by se around Cape Horn or the south tip of America to San Francisco where I arrived after 8 months. I had no money for the trip and took the job as a steward on the ship. I had to sign a 2 year contract and got \$18.00 or 45 florin per month.

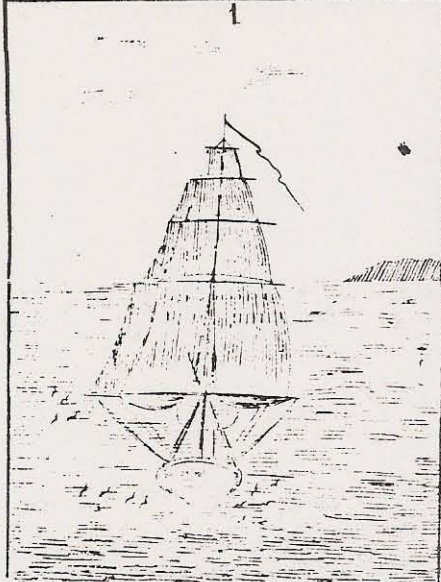
I could write to you more about the ship but it is so cold, that I hardly can hold my pen.

Here at the gold mines one lives just as you can see on the pictures in a little tent we have rain and snow and snow can get through. You live on flour, bacon, coffee or tea and sleep on the ground with one blanket under you and one over you. This would not have been so bad if you could find more gold.

The first six months were hard for me. I never could find a nice place. Just since the last six weeks I have earned 1,000 florin but most of this would go for food for the winter, because one can not get anything here during the winter and the nearest town is 100 miles away.

Everything happens just as you can see on these pictures. The wild animals are terrible, especially the grizzly bear, the strongest animal of them all, is abundant here.

26



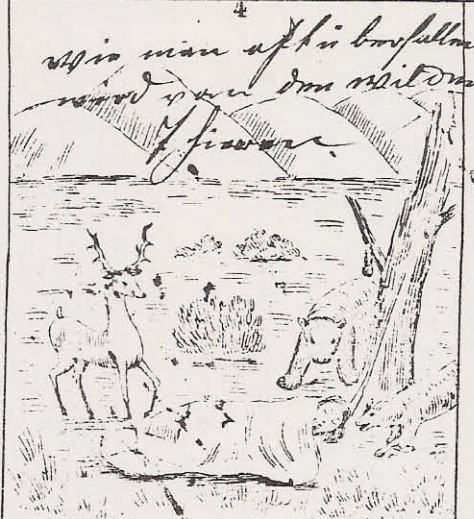
The Eliza Ship for California.



Arrival at S.F. A Monte Bank.



Travelling about the Mines.



Camping Out.



Alien of the



Miners preparing their Powder.



Washing Gold in a Cradle.



One of the few that return.



The End of the Run.



Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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Der Boot ist ein Fahrzeug
das auf dem Wasser schwimmt

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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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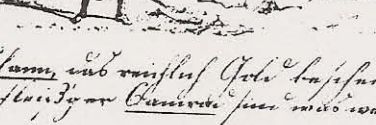
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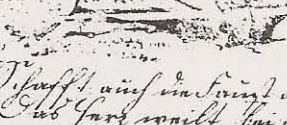
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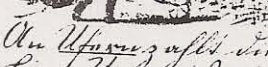
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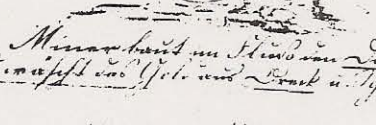
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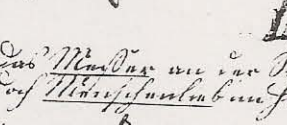
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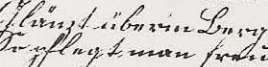
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der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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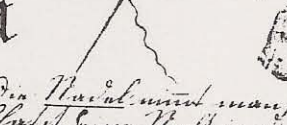
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der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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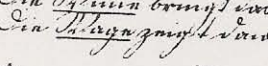
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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
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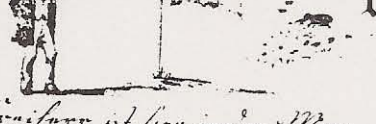
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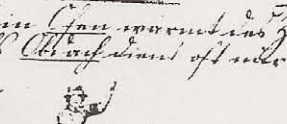
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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

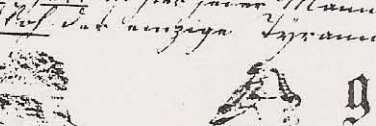
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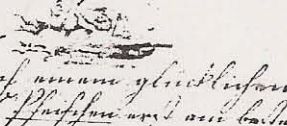
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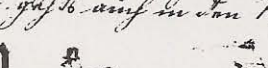
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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

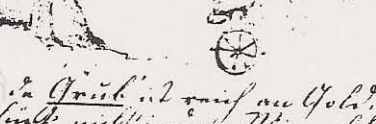
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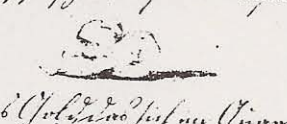
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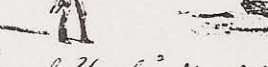
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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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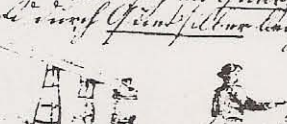
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der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

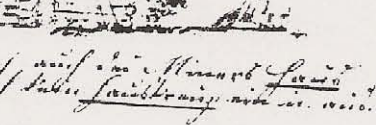
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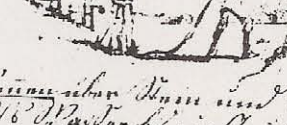
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der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

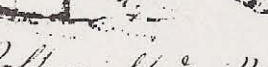
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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

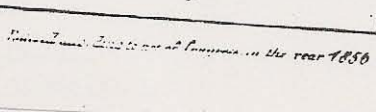
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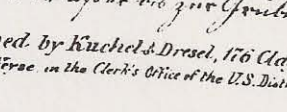
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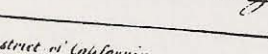
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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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Der Arbeiter bringt sein Geld
der sein Geld zum Kauf von Waren

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Der Mann ist ein Arbeiter
der sein Werk (Arbeiten) verrichtet

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I found a piece of gold which is worth \$126.00 or 315 fl. Most of the gold is very fine but it requires the hardest work which I ever have done; standing in water up to my knees. I would like to send you a few hundred gulden but it is not allowed to send any gold out of the country so I have to wait until there is a possibility.

My plans are not to leave this country until I can have a good business. But I don't think that Germany will be a place for me to live. But I will visit you there as soon as I am able to, and if possible to get myself a wife there. I am not afraid about this country because I am an American citizen now and I have my citizenship papers.

I am well, weigh 190 pounds and I am six foot 4 inches tall.

I am your devoted son,
F. Wm. von Gerichten

Downieville, California
January 1, 1851

Dear Mother:

You have to excuse me for not writing sooner but I could not help it.

When the story about California (Gold land) came out I made up my mind to go there too and try my luck in digging gold. I did not have any money to go there so I got myself a job as steward on a ship. I was very lucky to get one but I had to work there for two years for 18 dollars per month. They signed a contract.

We left in April 17th, 1849, and after 61 days arrived at Rio de Janerio, Brazil, where we stayed three weeks to get fresh water and food.

About three weeks after we left New York our cook took sick and so I had to do his work and mine as well. The work was not hard, but I was not used to it which made it hard for the first few weeks.

Rio is the capital of Brazil but the city is very dirty. The streets very narrow, the houses not very high and very uncomfortable inside. The countryside as well as the harbor are beautiful. In the hills you can find oranges, lemons, bananas, sugar, coffee, tea, pepper and tapioca plants. There are also many birds, monkeys and other wild animals as lions.

In the cities one seems however how terrible the slaves are treated and it is also terrible to see how they treat the negroes. To recognize them they cut figures into their faces as well as on their whole bodies. They have no clothes, except for an old cloth around the lower parts of their bodies. Women as well as men.

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The climate is warm and there is never any snow, not even on the highest mountains. The language is Portuguese. On July 9th we left this place and were on our way around the Cape Horn to Valpariso in the republic of Chili on the west side of America (Pacific Ocean). This trip was very hard because when it is summer on the north side of the earth it is winter in the south. August and September are the worst. Often the ship has to turn into the wind and all sails came down. The wind was so strong that the waves were sometimes as high as mountains. It was terrible to look at. Three times we passed Cape Horn but every time we had to sail back, otherwise we would have been driven on to the shore.

The ship was small, two masts, but a good ship. We had no accidents except that one of the poles from the main sails broke and one of the waves hit on one side of the ship and hit the upper structure and broke it. Quite often we had four or five feet of snow on deck in the morning. After 98 days of the day of our departure we arrived all well and happy except the cook at Valpariso.

This city is a little nicer then the first one, but the view is not so nice, though you could find there also very nice fruit. The inhabitants are copper colored and speak Spanish. But they don't keep slaves. Otherwise there is nothing of importance there. A lot of French and Englishmen live there.

At last after 63 days we arrived in San Francisco, Calif. on December 9, 1849. When I went on the shore the first time I had already heard a lot about the miners and the wages in San Francisco. It made me very astonished so I thought why shall I work on the ship for \$18.00 when I can get about \$200.00 when I work on the shore. I did not see why not so I made up my mind to run away from the ship one of those nice Sundays in January 1850. I could not stay in San Francisco because the captain would have found me and put me in a ship or put me some place until the ship was ready. So I went to Sacramento and from there to Marysville to try my luck in the mines.

I went from one place to the other till Sept. but could not find anything till I came here to Downieville.

I met three Americans who had just as little luck as I had. We found a place and it really paid good. We got between \$100.00 and \$200.00 a week per man. We worked until New Years. Now we cannot work because the days are too short and the weather too cold and in rain and snow it is impossible to work.

Living in the mountains is very bad to describe but I will give you an idea of it. In summer we sleep outside under the open sky or in a tent on the ground. We have one or two blankets which make our bed. Our food is flour, bacon, tea and coffee and is very expensive.

For example Flour-----\$1.50 per lb--3 fl. 45
Bacon the same as flour also rice
Beans-----\$1.25 per lb.
Coffee-----\$4.00 per lb.
Boots-----\$30.00, pants \$18.00

I would like to send you a small present but out here in the mountains are no possibilities and the next post office is about 103 miles away and that is not safe.

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When you write to me please tell me all about your life and the changes in the family.

Tell my brothers that there is no better land than America but they should not think that the fried pigeons fly into their mouth and that they shall not depend upon other people but learn a business good and if possible the English language.

I am your devoted son,
F. Wm. von Gerichten

Downieville, California,
August 8, 1851

Dear Mother:

It is already six months since I sent three letters to you to uncle Willmann and to uncle Louis in Offenback, but no answer to any of them, as yet.

In another letter to you I wrote about my 8 months long voyage around Cape Horn to California in which I also mentioned that I did not travel as a passenger but worked as a steward and a cook on board.

This is now already 19 months that I work in the gold mines, but I did not earn much, but some are here who have still less and some who made lots more.

If I am lucky I can make between two and 3 thousand dollars till next winter. It is seldom that our speculations are going wrong, but my partner and I lost close to \$4,000 in four months of hard labor. Our speculations is this. We have built a channel 300 ft. long 12 inches wide and 2 feet high. We divert the water of the river through the channel to be able to work in the dry river bed benches. I am interested in two more channels which need to be built late this year.

It is impossible to describe how the men are living and working here. Always standing in the water. I really feel in spite of the fact that I am perfectly healthy at present, that one grows old here very quickly, one also gets wild like the Indians. This place even if it is far into the mountains is lately visited by many people. Lately we also receive mail delivery. Also several recreational facilities were established as bowling alleys, etc.

On the 5th of July a Spanish girl was lynched after she stabbed a man. This woman was a bad one of the worst kind. Her loss is replenished 10 fold.

Last year there was not a single girl around here, but now they swarm all over the place, but rarely is a good one among them.

I and my partner are living about one fourth hour away from town at the North Fork of the North Yuba River.

I would like to send you some money but it is not safe to

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so so from here.

The largest piece of gold which I possess and also found myself is worth \$130.00. The most money I made in a single day was \$124.00.

I could write to you so much more but I am getting all confused. I also think that I might visit you next year. I would like to advise Louis and Carl to come to America, but I am afraid they would blame me if they would not like it here.

One can always get salaries of \$100.00 per month here at any time in any business of a young man is a steady worker. If he is thrifty he can always save \$1,000.00 in a year.

I hope that none of the boys is so foolish to join the army. If Louis has not enough money for the trip let me know it.

America has still plenty room and it is a beautiful country. I consider it one of the greatest foolishness to stay home and be a soldier. Let his friends be soldiers if they like it. If it is up to me not a single one of my brothers should serve under a Baron and as long as a free country is still able to receive him.

I hope to be able pretty soon to read something from you, and I also hope that these lines find you in good health.

I am your devoted son,
F. Wm. von Gerichten from
Post Office in Yuba City, Calif.
America

Pardon my badhandwriting because to write is the hardest job for me. Many greetings to all relatives and friends and to all nice girls.

Downieville, Calif.
October 1, 1851

Dear Mother:

I cannot understand that I don't receive a letter from you in spite of the fact that I already have sent you six of them.

Your last one was dated February 18, 1849. I would write to you about so many things but my bad luck keeps me from doing so. My companion and I had good chances last spring to earn something but everything went bad and instead of making 3 or 4 thousand dollars we even lost 3 thousand.

We did build three channels for \$2,500 for the river to run through so we could work the dried up river bed. We worked the whole summer almost for nothing because we had 2 to 6 men working for us for \$150.00 per month and found very little gold.

At present we only have one left which is worth something. It pays \$100 to 200 dollars per week per man. Well we don't make much as we still owe, but we hope to pay off our debts as pretty soon then we have good chances to make something.

Many other fellows around here are just as bad off as we, some even worse but there are also some who made good money.

I intend to give up digging for gold pretty soon, because I think standing in the water constantly is not good for the

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health.

I probably will open some business here for myself as soon as I again have some means to do so in my hands.

I am not completely broke, I still am worth \$600 to 700 dollars. However, at present I possess very little money. In one previous letter I told you about a piece of gold-I still have it. It is worth \$126.00 and I hope to keep it as long as I live.

I also would send you some money, however, to go down to San Francisco for mailing it would cost me about \$200.00 beside the time I have to lose and for all that my money is not sufficient.

I hope the family will help you lighten up your burden as much as possible. My last thought at night and my first in the morning is what to do to make some money so I could free you from sorrow and need.

I would like to be able to send the six little ones to a good school, and especially have Binche learn to speak several languages.

Heaven may send me some luck and make my wishes come true. For my own person I don't want anything but good health so long as I have that I can make my living.

But you and the little ones are closer and dearer to my heart as anything else.

I believe if Ludwig and Carl would be here in California they would also make a living here. Every business house here pays \$100 to \$150 dollars for month.

Conditions here are so that if one thing doesn't go the other will and nobody is ashamed to work. During the week I work with pick and shovel and on Sunday's I help at a bar in one of the first houses for which I receive \$6.00 per Sunday, all the eats and drunks and free cigars.

However, I would not like to see the boys depend on my support. I will gladly do all in my power to help them along. It would help them considerable to be able to speak a few words in English. I am now perfect in English and learn also a few words in Spanish.

Probably you have heard already about the last fire here in San Francisco. When I arrived in San Francisco I left my suitcase and my garments for which I paid in New York \$120.00 also my pocket watch which I brought along from home and my pin in a warehouse. I had to pay \$1.00 a month. All this burned up in the last fire.

I could write lots more but will save some for next time when as I hope I can give you a better report.

Write soon and much also have Ludwig write to me.

Many heartfelt greetings to all our relatives and acquaintances. Hoping that this letter finds you and all in the best of health

I remain your son
F. W. Von Gerichten
Downieville Post Office-
Yuba City, California

Pardon my bad and faulty writing. Also Jacob von Offenback could write to me. Something we don't have here to bother us,

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that is women. This is for Budwig. He should not join the Army. If he doesn't want to come to California or America he should go some place else. That the little one is in school in Offenback I don't like at all. I am sure school is not as good there as it is in Mannheim.

Camptonville, Calif.
October 31, 1856

Dear Mother:

One month ago I sent a check drawn on Rotchild Frankfort for 500 Gilden to you in a letter. I hope you have received it by now.

When I wrote this letter I was in San Francisco to buy provisions for the winter. I live about 200 miles from San Francisco here in the mountains but not quite as far away as Louis, Carl, and Phillipp.

I run here a bakery and a coffee saloon. It is already 12 months since I started here. I have a partner who is married. His wife has, however, nothing to do with the business and doesn't live in the house.

At present our business is slow as everything here because last winter we had very little snow consequently very little water and water is most important in the mines. But we earned since we are here about \$1,000.00 per man and we expect to do better this year.

Last year we bought all our goods through second hand but this year we will buy first hand. We are also better acquainted.

In San Francisco I spent \$5,000.00 guilder on goods and till they reach us here it will cost us \$2,000.00 more.

My health is at present not very good. I suffer a kind of rheumatism in my limbs. This might have been caused by so much exposure to the weather and too much working in the water inside the mines.

Regarding my brothers Louis, Carl and Phillipp I hardly can write you anything because I have not seen Louis the last 13 months, Carl 8 months and Phillipp since 20 months.

They only write to me when they want something. Since I don't give them anything anymore I don't hear from them. We live only about 8 or 10 hours traveling apart.

I hope the dear Lord will let you live for many more years and give you health and if God will we will see each other one more time in this world.

I don't want to forget to mention that I sent a snapshot of myself and the house. I hope they reach you undamaged and soon.

I have to finish this letter because I don't feel good and the mail leaves today.

Many hearty greetings for brother-in-law and sister also to the little ones and relatives who are interested in me.

Pretty soon I will write to all of them. I beg their

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pardon for not writing since.

Many thousands of kisses for you, dear mother. I hope
when these lines reach you, you will be in the best of health.
Please write soon.

Your stalwart son,
F. W. Gerichten

My address:

Camptonville Bakery,
Camptonville
Yuba County,
California



SIERRA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The Society held its Fall meeting in Goodyears Bar on Sunday, September 17. We met in the old Goodyears Bar Schoolhouse which was built in 1862. The meeting was organized and hosted by Mrs. Ruth Drury of Goodyears Bar. After a delicious "pot-luck" lunch attended by members from all over the County, the Business Meeting was held. Several reports were given. There was much discussion concerning the proposed "Museum Chain" which the Historical Society is planning to build. The next meeting was scheduled for January 21, 1973, at the Sierraville School.

Mrs. Georgene Copren, Treasurer, reports that the Historical Society has (or can order) the following four books, at a sizeable reduction in cost to members:

1. "Life and Adventures of James H. Beckwourth"
(from his own diary)
2. "Hunting for Gold" by Major William Downie
3. "La Porte Scrapbook" by Helen Weaver Gould
4. "The History of Lassen, Plumas and Sierra Counties"
by Farris and Smith.

Anyone who is a member wishing to order any of these books please contact Mrs. Copren.

