

THE SIERRAN

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Brandy City Sawmill near the Junction of Little and Big Canyon Creeks, 1890's thru early 1900's.

MOUNTAIN MEMORIES

by Lurene H. McKeown
as told to Ann Austin

[Editor's note: This article is excerpted from a much longer story, detailing Mrs. McKeown's life in Sierra County, Hollister and Oakland. Only the portions of the story taking place in Brandy City, along with appropriate background and transitional material, is included. Interested readers may contact the Sierra County Historical Society about obtaining the entire document on paper or computer disk. Special thanks to Jack Hawkins for bringing this article to our attention.]

THE LAST TIME I SAW BRANDY CITY, even the word "townsite" hardly seemed to fit. The buildings, their foundations, even the clearings they sat in were completely gone, reclaimed by the forest. Even at the time we lived there, young trees had been growing in the old race track where we used to ride the company horses. Now there was no trace of it, or of the schoolhouse, or the schoolyard. Our houses must have been dismantled and hauled away for lumber. It was a shock to see full-grown pine trees growing up through what had been our parlors and kitchens.

Minnesota Flat, the town south of Alleghany where my mother was born, is also deserted, hard to find even following the directions of present residents of the area, hard to recognize even if you should find it. It was a thriving mining community when my mother was born, April 26, 1868, the eldest child of Frederick and Catherine Mazer Kufeld.

Sierra County Historical Society

The Sierra County Historical Society is an organization of people interested in preserving and promoting an appreciation of Sierra County's rich history. The Society operates a Museum at the Kentucky Mine in Sierra City, holds quarterly meetings, publishes a semi-annual newsletter and conducts historical research. Members are sent notices of Society activities, receive *The Sierran* and are admitted free of charge to the museum and stamp mill tour.

If you would like to become involved in these activities or would just like to give your support, please join!

1994 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS and STAFF

President.....	Speranza Avram
Vice President.....	Arnold Gutman
Treasurer.....	Renetta Hayes
Secretary.....	William Copren
Directors.....	Rita Bradley, Robert Canby, William Long
Membership Chair.....	Maren Scholberg
Museum Curator.....	Karen Donaldson
<i>Sierran</i> Production Staff.....	Dave Bloch, Karen Donaldson

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Sierra County Historical Society is open to any interested person, business or organization. Members need not be residents of Sierra County. Dues are due and payable each January for the calendar year.

Membership categories are as follows:

INDIVIDUAL	\$10.00
FAMILY & INSTITUTION	\$15.00
BUSINESS & SUPPORTING	\$25.00
SUSTAINING	\$50.00
LIFE (per individual)	\$250.00

Please send dues to the Membership Chair:

Mrs. Maren Scholberg
P.O. Box 141
Sierraville, CA 96126

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Speranza Avram

First of all, let me add my thanks (to those expressed by Karen Donaldson on the next page) to all the volunteers who worked so tirelessly this past summer. It was another great season for the Kentucky Mine Museum, and the most successful summer ever for the Concert Series! Maren Scholberg continues to work behind the scenes keeping the membership list up to date so that you get your meeting notices and *The Sierran* on time. We also got help from several area businesses which we greatly appreciate. And once again the Sierra County Arts Council provided us with layout and typesetting services to produce the Concert Series mailer and weekly flyers. Thanks one and all!

Our "experimental" joint Annual Membership Meeting with the Arts Council worked out just fine. The Arts Council paid for an Italian main course at the Sierra Buttes Inn in Sierra City, and members of both organizations brought potluck salads, bread and desserts. It was a wonderful Sunday dinner!

About fifteen members participated in the discussions of the past achievements and future goals of Sierra County's two leading cultural organizations. It was generally agreed that the opportunity for sharing between our members was so valuable that we should continue holding the annual meeting jointly whenever possible.

An important part of the membership meeting was the election of Directors who will take office in January. I am especially pleased to welcome Maren Scholberg back to the Board. Special thanks to departing Director and Treasurer Renetta Hayes, who played a key role in managing our finances this year. Judy Miller, our bookkeeper, is also retiring this year. Thanks, Judy, for your hard work and donation of time. Liz Fisher of Sierra City is taking Judy's place.

It looks like another exciting year ahead! I hope to see you at the Museum and at our concerts and events.

CURATOR'S REPORT

By Karen Donaldson

Early snows and very cold temperatures have made this Fall season an early Winter. Several school groups scheduled to visit the Museum after the close of the official season have postponed until Spring due to the depth of snow on the Park grounds.

In general, tourism was down this year in Sierra County. Evidence of this was seen primarily in gift shop sales at the museum. However, overall attendance increased from last year with over 7,500 people visiting the museum and taking the stamp mill tour.

As in recent years, there has been no one acting as Curator's Assistant which makes the help of volunteers especially necessary and appreciated. Fran Burgard did a great job of coordinating volunteers this year—no easy task! Special thanks to Fran and the following volunteers for helping things run smoothly over the summer months: Speranza Avram, Lorre Beever, Mary Bettencourt, Rita Bradley, Frances Brett, Bob and Carol Canby, Don and Arline Castleberry, Ed Connelly, Lisa Elliott, Liz Fisher, Lorraine Gamlen, Jack Hawkins, Renetta Hayes, JoAnn Gahagan Johnston, Lois Keller, Joe Kelly, Wanda Longsine, Helen Maddalena, Linc and Billie Madsen, Joy Malvitz, Carol Marshall, Barbara Martinetti, Judy Miller, Ruth Neubert, Denise Parodi, Gary and Lauren Ranz, Maren Scholberg and Howard Smith.

Bob and Carol Canby are still planning to organize a Docent Training Program this spring. This will include a general orientation for everyone greeting the public and a special tour supplement for those interested in conducting tours of the stamp mill.

We have continued hopes that the mine portal will be retimbered by opening day of 1995.

The Museum was featured in a color brochure printed by the Sierra County Economic Council to promote tourism locally, and a photograph of the stamp mill was displayed on the cover of the 1994-95 Grass Valley Area Pacific Bell telephone directory.

The Berger and Loeffler families each planned family reunions in Sierra City on the same day in September. It was a special occasion to have so many here whose ancestors were early pioneers of Sierra County and owned and operated businesses including the Kentucky Mine.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

Popularity is increasing and with weather cooperating the average attendance figures were higher than in previous years. The concerts are becoming the main financial support for the Museum. The following people provided wide ranging technical assistance: Speranza Avram, Dave Bloch, Grant and Travis Cunningham, Lee Dougherty of Bassett's Station, Downieville Grocery, Cheryl Durrett, Feather's Flowers, Gail Frazier, Bob Gershenow, Carroll and Renetta Hayes, Mike Heuer, Susan Lamela, Hank Meals, Dennis Messa, Kevin Long of 49'er Stage, Gary, Lauren, Audrienne and Ezra Ranz, C.K. Smith, David Unterman, and all the great folks at KVMR Radio in Nevada City.

We began a Capital Campaign Fund this year to help raise funds

to replace the amphitheater seating with aluminum stadium benches (with backs!) by 1996. To date we have received \$708.50. Thanks, everyone!

MUSEUM DONATIONS

The following items have been received as donations:

Two pairs of **wooden children's "snow shoes"** (now called "skis") from J.C. Mack of Sierra City.

An extensive collection of **letters, postcards, photographs, mining stock certificates, business invoices, and mining company correspondence** all related to Sierra County and dating from 1875 to 1920; and also a **ceremonical pin from the Downieville IOUW** from Gregg Millar of Mineral Enterprises in Weimar, CA.

Two **postal registers** from Sierra City, 1890-1895 from Brian Hendrickson, formerly of Sierra City.

Two **cookbooks** used by Thelma Berger in 1918 by Edwin Nickels of Oregon House.

An assortment of **color photographs of the stamp mill and park** from Tim Keough of Ojai, CA, taken this summer.

A collection of eight **carbide lamps** including a railroad inspector's lamp from Kenneth M. Turner of Sacramento.

Clothing and memorabilia from the family of Carol Canby dating to the early 1800's and including a **beaver coat and matching hat, large embroidered pillow shams, children's undergarments, satin gloves, a mending bag and a snood** (a tie or net worn around the hair, especially by unmarried women).

Charles K. Smith and sons donated a **3-ton Yale hoist and chains**, and installed these in the stamp mill. A similar setup was originally used in the section over the stems with an overhead trolley to raise and lower them for repairs. Another piece of the picture is back in place!

MEMORIAL FUND

- From Arch and LaVerne Monico in memory of I.J. "Curly" Wright.
- From George F. Fournier in memory of the Felix Fournier family.
- In memory of George F. Fournier who passed away at the age of 104 years, Harry A. Browning, Lucille V. Brandt, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Rood, Dollie Childers, and Charles K. and Winabeth Smith.
- From Mrs. David White in memory of the Theo Berger family.
- From Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Ponta in memory of the Emil Loeffler family.
- From Andra Berger Carter we received some interesting photographs and information on the Berger and Seitz families which have been added to the Memoriam Book.
- From George Baker, a photograph and tribute to his father-in-law, Hiram F. Deaner.

Articles and photographs in memory of someone special are welcomed. These are included in the Memoriam Book and need not be accompanied by a financial donation. Some rich personal histories are being compiled in this volume.

Thank you to everyone for making these endeavors of the Sierra County Historical Society a continued success. Hope your holidays were happy ones, and best wishes for this New Year!

Minnie, my mother, was a tiny thing at birth, only three pounds. Her first crib was a shoe box on top of the piano where she could be kept warm. She was followed by three sisters and a brother. In order they were Grace, Adelphine, Frederick and Mary Alwilda, the youngest, born May 8, 1878.

My father John Hayes was born in New Orleans. His parents had recently arrived from County Wicklow, Ireland, on their way to Wisconsin. They settled on a farm near Portage, Wisconsin where they raised their family. John emigrated to California on a wagon train from Illinois.

Of John Hayes' several brothers and sisters, two also came to California; Henry (called Hank) and Phillip, as did a cousin, Mae Dugan. Hank married a sister of Arthur Pride and returned to Wisconsin to run the family farm.

My brother Francis William Hayes was born November 30, 1889 in Sierra City. Two years later, on January 9, 1892, my sister Eugenia Catherine Hayes ("Gene" for short) was born at Bassett's.

Uncle Phil married Alice Bassett, whose father owned Bassett's Station. Uncle Phil was partners with an older man, Mr. Steelman, in a mine near Gold Lake from which many large nuggets were taken. The largest and most famous of these was the Nigger Head Nugget, a photograph of which is on display at the Downieville Museum. This nugget was almost 500 ounces in the rough shape of a braincase. It was almost pure gold, worth \$27,000 at the time of its smelting.

There was fruit for the picking in the mountains; elderberries in the open spots, thorny wild gooseberries that we rolled between stones and turned inside out to avoid the prickles. Mother's favorites were the wild plums. Every year she would pick a supply to make wild plum jam, orange and tart with a faintly woody taste. In fact, for years after we left the mountains her friend, Mrs. Godfrey, would send Mother a box of wild plums each year from her ranch near Camptonville.

In August of 1900 Mother picked her wild plums as usual, but she must have been a little late getting her jam put up that year. I was born on August 16, Alice Lurene Hayes. I must not have been the prettiest baby on record. In the opinion of one of our neighbors, "Anyone could have a thing like that."

Most of the time we lived in Sierra City, in a house on Church Street. It was called Church Street for the Catholic Church that at one time had stood on the opposite side of the street and a little up the hill. The church had been knocked down by the concussion of a snowslide that had come down the mountain, demolishing another house and killing its residents. A new church had been built on the other side of town using lumber that Papa had donated from his mill at Bassetts. Gene had been confirmed at that church and all her life was a devout Catholic. Francis, on the other hand, was something of an agnostic.

The Move to Brandy City

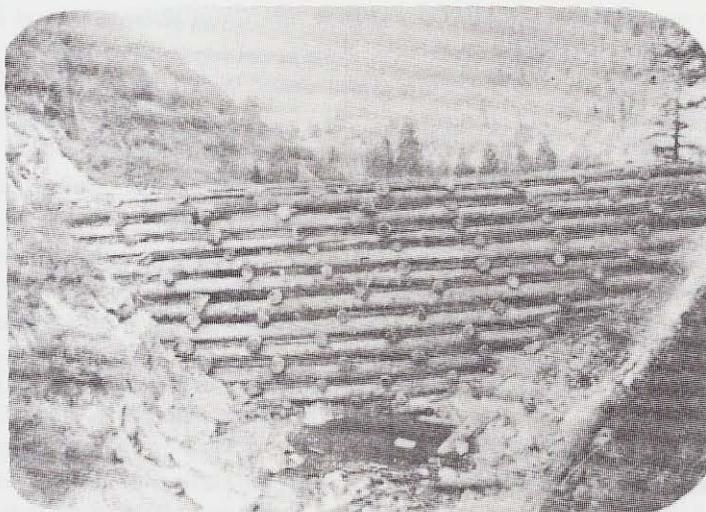
The summer I turned eight we went up to the Head Dam on Canyon Creek, where my father was running a saw mill

that had been set up to supply lumber for building a flume from there to Brandy City. The flume was to supply water for the hydraulic mine at Brandy City, ten miles away. Two crews were working on the project. One started at the Head Dam and worked down. The other, headquartered at Spring Branch, worked in both directions from there. It would take them two years to complete the flume.

A small settlement had grown up at the Head Dam—a blacksmith shop, a boarding house run by a woman from Poverty Hill, a house for us with tent frames next to it for the youngsters to sleep in.

Supplies were freighted in by wagon from La Porte. The Head Dam was down in a canyon. When I heard the harness bells of the freight team, I would find an open spot where I could watch as the wagon was drawn down the steep, switchbacked wagon road.

I was the only child at the Head Dam. It was lonely for me, but Gene did what she could to entertain me. My mother



Head Dam on Big Canyon Creek. (This and other photos from James Sinnott's "'Over North' in Sierra County.")

never worried about me when I was with Gene. (If she had known the things we were up to, she might have.)

We used to explore the lake behind the Head Dam in a small row boat. Neither of us could swim. In our heavy skirts and petticoats it is doubtful if we could have saved ourselves had we run into trouble.

I longed to swim. There were ads in the magazines for water wings, and I could picture myself paddling gracefully about magically supported by my water wings. But it was hopeless! I would never have been allowed to swim. Boys, who were allowed to teach themselves to swim, bathed in the nude. Swimming holes were strictly off-limits for girls.

Gene and I took walks, too. We would go down the plank walkway set on the crossbars of the newly-constructed flume. Once we went far enough to find a trestle that was being built to carry the flume across a steep canyon. We explored that, too, crossing the trestle on a path of loose planks.

There were a lot of rattlesnakes at the Head Dam. The first year we were there one of the men gave me a long string threaded through the rattles of the snakes he had killed. It really was quite long. I treasured that necklace for years.

After the first season at the Head Dam, Mother and I returned to Sierra City to close up the house. Then we took the stage down to Camptonville to wait until a house became available for us in Brandy City. The trip from Camptonville to Brandy City was exciting. We rode horses, but our belongings were taken up by mule train, mules being more surefooted on the steep trail than horses. The trail crossed the North Yuba on a suspension bridge. We had to dismount and lead our horses across the loosely-swinging span.

In Brandy City, I met my lifelong best friend, Grace Taylor. I hadn't gone to school that year until we were settled in Brandy City. As that school closed in April, it was not surprising that I had to repeat the third grade. Grace had skipped a grade so, though she was two years younger than I, we were in the same class.

Grace was a better student than I. My mind was always on recess. One of our favorite recess activities was horse-shoes. I considered myself quite a good horseshoe player.

Most of my schoolmates were boys. Besides Grace and I there was only one other girl. The boys included Grace's brothers Bob and Vernon, and Don Stranberg.

The first winter we were in Brandy City Papa managed a sawmill there. As soon as school closed that April, we

returned to the Head Dam. This year I brought along a yellow kitten, Sandy McPherson, who rode placidly in my saddlebag. Sandy grew to be an enormous tomcat—sixteen pounds! Papa, who was good with animals, taught him to jump through a hoop formed by his clasped hands.

Sandy was my inseparable companion for several years, until he was shot by a neighbor. The neighbor had been disturbed by a ruckus under his house in the night. He had no idea it was Sandy he had shot until the next morning. He felt so badly to have killed my pet that he offered to bring me an Angora kitten from Camptonville, but I knew no sissy Angora could ever take Sandy's place.

It was quite a while before I found out what had happened to Sandy. I used to call him and save good tidbits to feed him when he came home. All the time Grace knew he was dead, but she was afraid to tell me.

Lumber was easy to come by at the Head Dam. It was a simple matter to build whatever was needed for the summer. My parents' cabin had a kitchen and a sitting room besides their bedroom. Two extra bedrooms were added in the form of two tent frames, one for the boys (Francis and my cousin Phillip) and one for the girls (Gene and me and whichever of Gene's friends were visiting). Our beds were bunks made of 2x4's.

It was my job to haul all the water we used from a cold, cold spring a short distance from our house. For this task I was paid a nickel a week. The spring also served as an icebox. Mother would set the food she wanted to keep cool in jars in the spring and covered with burlap, dampened by a trickle of water.

Either Gene or Mother would ride to Scales once a week to pick up the mail. Mother always carried a box of cayenne pepper on these expeditions in case she should meet a bear. If the bear attacked her on the trail she planned to throw pepper in his face to give herself time to escape. Fortunately we never met a bear, so her plan was never tested.

Francis came home from Cupertino every summer, bringing with him our cousin Phil and another friend. They all worked to earn money for the next school year.

Gene was home, too, from her teaching job in Scales. Genevieve Taylor, Grace's sister, and a couple of girls from Oak Valley came up to visit her. They loved to play tricks on each other, boys against the girls, and I was kept busy as a go-between for the two groups.

One of their tricks was to saw the 2x4 supports on the bunks almost through, then to tie ropes to the bed legs. A good

jerk in the night could bring all the beds down at once.

This was such a success that Francis and Phillip expanded their operations. There was a privy by the flume as well as a shower rigged from a fifty-gallon kerosene drum that warmed all day in the sun. The men at the mill had to cross the flume to use these facilities; Papa had to cross it to get home. Francis and Phil sawed the flume boards almost through in order to dunk one of the mill workers. Instead, Papa came home that night dripping wet and furious. The boys hung up their saw for awhile.

Then they had a new idea. They wired the privy with a wire from the telephone line. To generate a shock, Gene had to ring up Brandy City on the phone. In order to do that, she had to think of something to say to Mr. Taylor when he answered. I don't know if it worked, or if they ever caught anyone, but Mr. Taylor got used to answering some pretty trivial questions.

Every evening we would build a campfire in front of our cabin, and everyone would come and sing songs and tell stories. Gene had two gentlemen callers among the loggers, Kelly and Gleason. They must have arranged it between themselves that they would show up on alternate evenings at the fire. It didn't take long to notice the pattern, and I kept track. Each evening I would announce, "Kelly's night tonight," or "Gleason's night."

Gene was to teach school in Brandy City the next year. When it came time for Gene and her friends to travel down to Brandy City, the boys built a raft for each girl so that they could ride down the flume.

There was one young logger who had a crush on Gene which she did not reciprocate. He turned up when the girls were about to embark with a huge bouquet of wild lilies. Somewhat apprehensive about the trip and not a little put off by the traditional funereal symbolism of lilies, Gene ditched the flowers as soon as she gracefully could. She had not seen the last of them. The boys quickly nailed together another raft and sent the flowers on down behind the girls. All the way down, as they clung to the swiftly moving rafts, afraid to move for fear of knocking their heads on the crossbars, the girls watched the lilies bobbing jauntily behind them as if reminding them to prepare for the end.

In the fall of that year the carpenters who had started at

the Head Dam had worked their way to the completed section at Spring Branch. Each carpenter then built himself a wheelbarrow with a single wooden wheel. Then, loading all his possessions in the barrow, he steered it up the plank walk to the Head Dam, where he took his leave.

School Days

Grace and I were overjoyed that year to know that Gene would be our teacher. We looked forward to basking in glory as teacher's pets. It came as a rude shock to me to find that I was to call my sister "Miss Hayes" during school hours. Worse yet, I was expected to be a model of deportment—a shining example for the other children—a role I had neither the talent nor the inclination to fulfill.

Grace was proud of her good grades and wanted to take home a gold star every day to show her father. Gene wasn't as generous with gold stars as Grace had been hoping. Grace's dramatic talents came to the fore. With tears in her eyes and barely controlled sobs in her voice, Grace explained to Gene how important it was for her to have a gold star, how absolutely necessary.

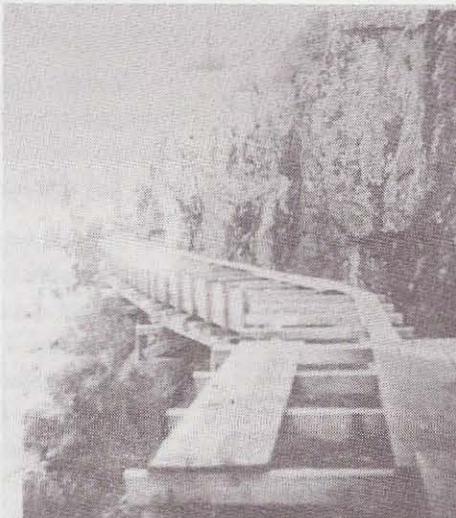
"Fine," said hard-hearted Miss Hayes. "If you want it, work for it."

Having made her point with both of us, Gene settled in to teach us through what we remember as the golden years of childhood.

Grace and I both had beautiful dolls, which we cherished. Mine was given to me by Aunt Grace (Mother's sister), who ran a nursing home in Petaluma. I also had a teddy bear. The lady from whom we rented the Brandy City house had been to Paris and brought back a beautiful, black-beaded chignon cap, which she gave to me.

I don't know what happened to any of these, my treasures. I suppose Mother gave them to another child when she left Brandy City. Grace doesn't know what happened to her doll, either.

It was Grace's mother who brought culture to Brandy City. She had Red Seal Victrola records that she played for us. The Victrola was a precursor of the modern hi-fi. It ran, not on electricity, but by winding up with a crank. As the spring ran down the tempo of the music would become slower and slower until it groaned to a stop.



*Brandy City flume at Mammoth Bluff
(showing walkway along the top).*

It was not an everyday thing in those days to hear the sound of a full professional orchestra, and the Strauss waltzes and Souza marches that we heard on Mrs. Taylor's Victrola were things of wonder.

Mrs. Taylor and Gene would take turns reading aloud to us. I particularly remember *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Mrs. Taylor also took charge of our school plays. My mother made the costumes for everyone from cheesecloth—knee breeches for the boys, hoop skirts for us girls. Our wigs were cotton batting dusted over with "diamond dust."

Our grand production was presented at the schoolhouse for the whole community, and was one of the year's big social events.



Men in Boat in log chute, which delivered logs to the sawmill near the Brandy City head dam. Photo about 1908.

The schoolhouse was also the site for our local dances. George Taylor played the fiddle for our waltzes, reels and square dances. He was actually a fine classical musician. With two men who played wind instruments, he had formed a chamber group that sometimes held informal concerts at the Taylor's house. Mother always maintained that George Taylor was the only person she ever knew who could get music out of a violin.

Grace was a wonderful dancer. I felt that I was just getting by.

Not all of our pastimes were as sedate as reading sessions and amateur theatricals. In winter we built snow forts. In summer we had forts, too. We would stake out "secret" forts among the trees. When we were attacked by the "other side," we would defend ourselves by throwing the pollen-laden catkins from the pine trees at the "enemy."

There were horses to ride at Brandy City. One was Old

Tom, reputed to be over thirty years old. Four or five of us would climb on his back at one time. He ambled along, giving us a pretty tame ride. We found we could add a little excitement to the routine by reining him into any water we could find. The cold water around his feet would make him buck, sliding us off in every direction.

When we were older Mr. Taylor would let Grace and me ride the company horses. There was an old race track built in the 1860's, when Brandy City was in its prime. It had not been used for years and trees had fallen over the track in several places. For us it made a first rate steeple chase. We spent many an afternoon jumping the horses over the fallen logs, until one day when Grace came down painfully hard on the saddle horn as she ended a jump. We never said a word to our parents, but it scared us enough that we never jumped the horses again.

In the winter, Grace and I skied. Until she got skis of her own we went double on mine, Grace hanging on behind me. One day Grace wore long red stockings over her longjohns when we skied. She went home that day with red underwear.

Grace used to say I was ahead of my time because I had ski pants. Mother had sent back East to Bellas Hess National Suit and Cloak Company for a pair of leggings. They went clear up to my waist under my skirt, forming pants.

One day we found an old pair of skis and nailed them to a box to make a sled. We named it "Esmerelda." Eat your heart out, Rosebud!

While we were at Brandy City Gene met Bill Pack. His father had invested in a black sand plant that had been promoted by a man from Denver. The idea was that a lot of gold was being lost in hydraulic mining, and that by reprocessing the black sand in the placer tailings, great amounts of gold could be recovered. The plant was worked for a whole year by Bill, the promoter's son, and one other man. It pretty much proved the efficiency of hydraulic operations. The only gold reclaimed in all that time, Bill sent to Shreve's in San Francisco to be made into Gene's wedding ring.

Bill had always wanted to own a farm. While he and Gene were engaged he asked Cousin Phil to be on the lookout for some good farm land. Phil heard of a ranch in Fairview, an area on the east side of Hollister that had been wheat land, but where some of the ranchers were putting in orchards.

Bill borrowed money from his father to buy the ranch and he and his new bride moved to Hollister. Bill

planted the front part of the ranch in apricots and kept the back half in alfalfa. The alfalfa was harvested by traveling crews. While they were at the ranch, Gene would cook for the whole crew.

To add to the income from the alfalfa during the seven years it would take for his orchard to come into bearing, Bill raised pigs.

With her marriage, Gene, of course, ceased to be our schoolteacher. She was replaced by Mrs. Bean, a remarried widow with two children. Her son Lonnie Starr was our age.

When I was in sixth or seventh grade, my father was injured in a mining accident. In the hydraulic mines there were two monitors, huge nozzles which directed powerful streams of water against the earth that was being mined. The muddy water was then drained off through a series of sluices lined with mercury, to which the gold adhered as it settled. Papa was working one of these monitors when the fellow working the other lost control of his monitor and the water shot directly at my father, breaking his leg. The doctor came up from Camptonville to set the leg, but he did not realign it properly. The result was that my father was still not able to walk. The only answer was for he and Mother to go below and stay with Aunt Allie and Uncle Phil while the leg was rebroken and reset.

Soon we learned that Gene was expecting a child. As soon as school let out in April, Mother and I went down to Hollister to be with her until the baby was born.

When we arrived, I found out that Gene had enrolled me in Fairview School, half a mile down the road from the ranch. Since I had completed seventh grade, I was placed in eighth grade. As an eighth grader, I was given the state examinations for grammar school

graduation. I passed, and was able to graduate that spring, thus making up for the year I had lost in third grade. I spent the next four years in high school in Hollister.

Another Mining Tragedy

If you picture a hydraulic mining operation you probably think of the monitors playing water against straight embankments, washing down mountains by the sheer force of the water. Actually, the dirt was not worked directly off

the embankment. It was first brought down by a dynamite blast that broke away a sheet of paydirt and lay it in handy range for the monitors. It was a festive occasion when one of these powder drifts, as they were called, was set off. The whole town would come out to watch the spectacle. It was such an occasion in Brandy City on December 23, 1915.



Hydraulic mining at Brandy City, about 1904.

As everyone stood watching the mountain break away, suddenly, the front rank of spectators (those active in the mining operations) collapsed to the ground. They had been overcome by poisonous gases released from the mountain, perhaps from an abandoned mine shaft.

Papa was killed instantly. Two others were to die within one day. Mr. Taylor also was overcome, but though he was very ill for a time he recovered.

It was a sad and empty Christmas for us. The decorations were up. The presents were under the tree, but we had no heart to open them.

In the spring Mother came down to Hollister. Bill built a little house behind the main house—one bedroom, a nice sunny sitting room, and a kitchen—for Mother and me.

In later years, Ms. Hayes lived and worked in Hollister and the San Francisco Bay area. She trained and worked as a telegrapher and bookkeeper. On June 5, 1928 she married Charles Scott "Mac" McKeown.