

THE STANISLAUS RIVER

THE STANISLAUS RIVER:
Mile by Mile
Researched by Carol Nelson

Exploration of the Stanislaus

A Spanish frontiersman by the name of Gabriel Moraga, exploring the interior of "Alta California" for possible mission sites was the first white man to see the Stanislaus River. The date was October 2, 1802 and the event was described by the expedition scribe, Fray Pedro Munoz:

We came across another river, similar in size and clarity of water to the former ones, but running in a much deeper canyon. It is bordered by an abundance of wild grapes, a bit of torote and many ash trees. Here we pitched camp, and from our base proceeded to explore. We named this river "Our Lady of Guadalupe".

Moraga and his men camped by their new discovery for four days, exploring its upper reaches. On the second day they came across an Indian village which Moraga called "Tualamne" and which modern historians guess to have been located not far upstream of present-day Knights Ferry. According to Fray Munoz, the natives were dwelling in caves in the rocky cliffs, inaccessible except with the aid of ladders. Despite efforts made by the expedition missionaries, the Indians showed little willingness to come down and receive conversion. As a consequence, the group soon moved on, north, apparently as far as the Calaveras River, having made little impact on religious beliefs along the "Rio Guadalupe".

Moraga returned to the "Guadalupe" six years later, this time with the purpose of recapturing "neophytes", coastal Indians who had fled Spanish missions. Again, the area was to prove frustrating, and the explorer confirmed his earlier, somewhat negative, impression of its suitability as a mission site. His journal entries are models of brevity:

"29th day of September. About ½ league we hit the Guadalupe River. This is all for today."

The following day he expanded a bit more.

“30th day of September. Today I set out exploring toward the sierra. I reached the foot of it, but nothing desirable was found except a few meadows. This is all for today.”

While this 1808 expedition may have done little for Moraga's literary reputation, it did help to establish him as the foremost Spanish explorer of the Sierra Nevada, dubbed by at least one historian “the Christopher Columbus of the California Wilderness.”

After Gabriel Moraga, official Spanish interest in the Guadalupe waned; and it wasn't until after Mexican independence in 1821 that another group ventured into the area. Antonio Soto, a military officer led the expedition whose purpose was to recapture a particularly wily neophyte from the Santa Clara mission with the Christianized name of “Estanislao”, after a Polish saint.

Sherbourne Cook, a noted scholar of the period, has described Estanislao in this way: “In type, although possibly not in stature, Estanislao belongs with King Phillip, Tecumseh, Pontiac and Geronimo, as an outstanding Indian chief who fought the white man with persistence and daring.”

Soto discovered the escaped chief camped along the “Guadalupe”, and attacked with his force of ten men. He was, according to reports, “forced to retreat with losses”.

Upon hearing of this, Governor Jose Maria de Eschandia decided to take more drastic measures, and on May 4, 1829, dispatched Jose Sanchez with 25 cavalrymen, 1 corporal, and 70 Indian auxiliaries. Once again the renegade's river camp was discovered and a second battle ensued — with, evidently, similar results for the attackers.

At this point the honor of Mexican arms was at stake. The third expedition left the San Francisco Presidio in the charge of Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. It included 107 Mexican soldiers, a field piece and was under instructions to “administer a total defeat to the Christian rebels and the wild Indians who are aiding them, leaving them completely crushed.”

The results of this third campaign were more positive from the Governor's point of view. Although neither Estanislao nor his followers were captured, Vallejo managed to disperse the group by setting fire to the riverbank. It was, apparently, enough. Commandant Martinez wrote to Vallejo: "I rejoice exceedingly that this scum has been chastized and I congratulate you, your second in command, and all your troops, that you have upheld the honor of our nation's arms."

Thus subdued, the area around the river held little additional interest for the Mexican government and it is necessary to turn to the accounts of American explorers for the next chapter.

Jedediah Strong Smith is perhaps the best remembered of the American mountain men; and although his career throughout the West was filled with well-chronicled exploits, certainly one of the most famous was his crossing of the Sierra mountains in 1827 — the first trans-Sierra passage ever accomplished by a white man.

The exact location of this historic event has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly debate. Both Smith's journal and maps have been lost and secondary references are fragmentary. However, in recent years, four of the most "definitive" works on the explorer have reached a consensus: Smith apparently established a camp in the foothills along the Stanislaus in May of 1827 and, after several attempts, finally succeeded in ascending the river via its north fork and passing the crest in the vicinity of Ebber's Pass.

In light of our current knowledge of the Sierras, it would seem that Jedediah picked one of the more difficult routes. But the mountain man was traveling light, in a small group, and exploring. In contrast, John Bidwell, who crossed the same way in October of 1841, was traveling with a large group of settlers, very slowly, and he picked the Ebber's Pass route because his was the first emigrant party to attempt the Sierras, and he was lost.

After having struggled over the pass and inadvertently into the steep canyon of the Clark Fork (a major tributary of the Stanislaus) the group managed to finally "extricate" themselves and continue laboriously down the mountain. On

Jedediah Strong Smith

Born in 1799, Jedediah Smith was the archetypal mountainman - and at the same time the most extraordinary of all of them. Educated in his home state of Pennsylvania by a country doctor in Latin and mathematics, he arrived in St. Louis at the age of 23 with two books in his baggage - a Bible and The Journals of Lewis and Clark.



He soon hired on with William H. Ashley, an early entrepreneur who was putting together a band of trappers to exploit the seemingly endless supply of beaver pelts in the Rocky Mountains. The men who joined up were almost all young, most of them untested, but Ashley's band produced some of the most legendary names on the American frontier. Men like James Bridger, "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick, David Jackson, Mike Fink, and of course, Jedediah Smith.

From the beginning Smith stood apart from the rest, both for his prowess as a woodsman, as well as for his personal habits, which, in the context of the time and place, seemed quite refined.

His career as a trapper and explorer occupied the next decade and was filled with the stuff of legend: a grizzly mangled an ear; the Great Salt Plain nearly parched him to death. He was jailed in California as a spy — escaping, he traveled north to the Columbia, trapping a fortune in furs as he went.

Throughout it all, there was a contemplative side to Jedediah Smith that surfaced most clearly in the year 1829 when he wintered in the Wind River Range. "I entangle myself too much in the things of time," he wrote his brother.

The following year he shocked his partners by selling his shares and settling down in St. Louis to begin writing a book. But in 1831, an opportunity to see one of the few places he'd never visited in his trapping years arose, and he joined on as a scout for a wagon train bound for Santa Fe.

A month later, the train was halted south of the Arkansas River while the scouts explored for water. Smith rode away, disappeared over a small rise, and was never seen again. Later it was said he'd been killed by a band of Comanches at a spring.

In his career of only ten years, the Pennsylvanian Jedediah Strong Smith managed to become the most Western of all the Westerners, having seen and done more in those territories than any man before him.

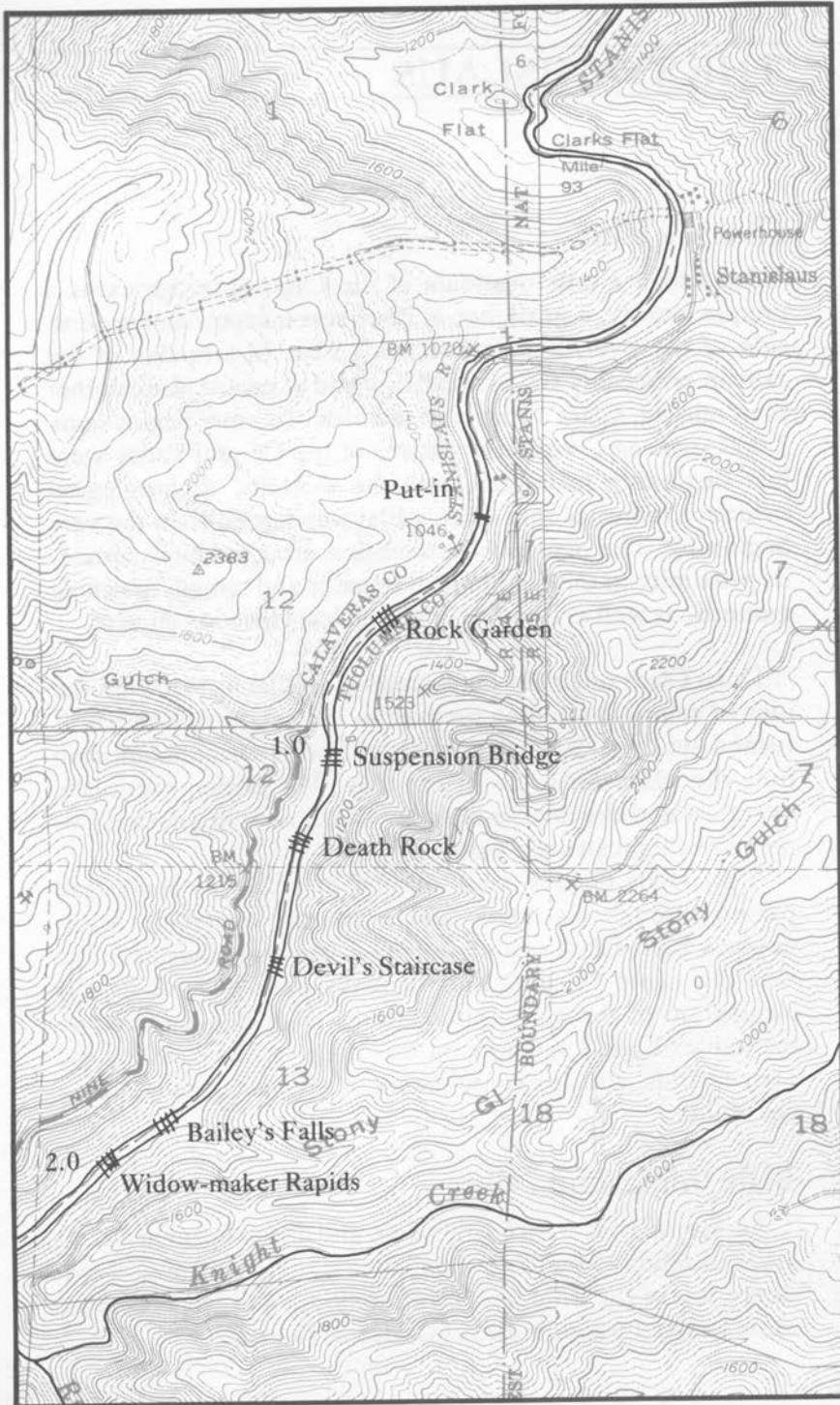
October 31st, 1841, they sighted the main river in its lower reaches.

From Bidwell's journal on that date:

Bore off in a N.W. direction to the nearest timber; plain dry and dusty, reached timber which was white oak (very low and shrubby) and finally, the river which we had left in the Mts., joyful sight to us poor famished wretches!!!

The route the Bidwell party pioneered never became an emigrant trail, but it did succeed in giving the Stanislaus canyon the distinction of having borne witness to two historic "firsts".

The final naming of the river fell to the lot of John C. Fremont, probably the most famous California pioneer of them all. In February of 1844, on his Second Expedition, Fremont made a dramatic, mid-winter crossing over Carson Pass. After having recuperated for several months at John Sutter's fort near present-day Sacramento, Fremont and his men continued south. On March 27, they struck the river which Fremont called, in his *Memoirs of My Life*, the "Stanislaus," an anglicization of the old Indian chief's Christianized name. Fremont's writings were widely read at the time and it is no surprise that his choice would stick.



THE STANISLAUS

Clark's Flat

Less than a mile upstream of the Camp 9 bridge exists a unique locality, a small, two or three acre meadow on the north side of the river, known as Clark's Flat. In a section of the canyon noticeably shy of meadows, and of recent history other than mining, Clark's Flat is an anomaly. Its story begins some 2,000 years ago, when the natives of the Central Valley were just beginning to migrate into the foothills. Archaeological evidence indicates that Clark's Flat was settled from the very beginning. The natives were doubtless attracted by its terrain, its proximity to the deer migration paths and salmon spawning grounds, as well as its mild, relatively low elevation climate.

Dona Clark originally homesteaded the flat in 1910 with the idea of selling his garden produce to the people of Camp 9. It turned out to be "a tough proposition" however and Clark soon quit the place for a job in the City. His garden eventually overgrew and the townspeople across the river began using his meadow for picnics and baseball.

After Dona Clark's death in 1919 or 1920, his homestead passed through his family and eventually ended up in his nephew Elgin Clark's hands in 1964. Elgin raises the possibility that the name "Clark's Flat" actually pre-dated his uncle's occupation of the place, although the coincidence seems remarkable. Elgin's memory on this point is vague, as are the early records, and as a consequence, it remains no more than a possibility.

Mile 0.0 Camp Nine

Across the river from Clark's Flat, and downstream just a bit, are a number of building foundations, the only physical evidence left of the little town of Camp 9, for 56 years one of the more isolated communities of Calaveras County.

The story of how the town came to be starts with a man named Beach Thompson, who, together with his partner Winsor Keefer, had a claim in Altaville in 1897. But in order to work their mine effectively, the two needed access to reliable water; and the only water rights they held were on the upper Stanislaus, 11 miles and a 2700 foot ridge away. In addition to their mine, the two held important water rights to the upper Stanislaus. But bringing Stanislaus water over a 2700 foot ridge and a distance of 11 miles to Altaville, was an extremely expensive proposition. Mr. Thompson, however, was apparently a man of many resources.

To begin with, his partner, Mr. Keefer, drops out of the picture, "under mysterious circumstances," according to contemporary reports, and Mr. Thompson is left alone to negotiate with several San Francisco businessmen, eventually striking a deal. In exchange for Thompson's water rights, and their valuable hydro-electric potential, the men from San Francisco agreed to build the siphons, flumes and tunnels necessary to move Stanislaus water over Table Mountain into Thompson's claim in Altaville.

As a result of these agreements, two companies were organized: the Union Construction Co. to build the proposed power plant, and the Stanislaus Electric Power Company to operate it. The power, incidentally, was intended to operate the City's new electric trolley system.

The first order of business was the building of a road down to the plant site, for which task a group of one hundred Slavonians were hired. Although Slavonia has never been in the forefront of highway construction technology, the Camp 9 road is a remarkable piece of engineering for the time, modern critics notwithstanding.

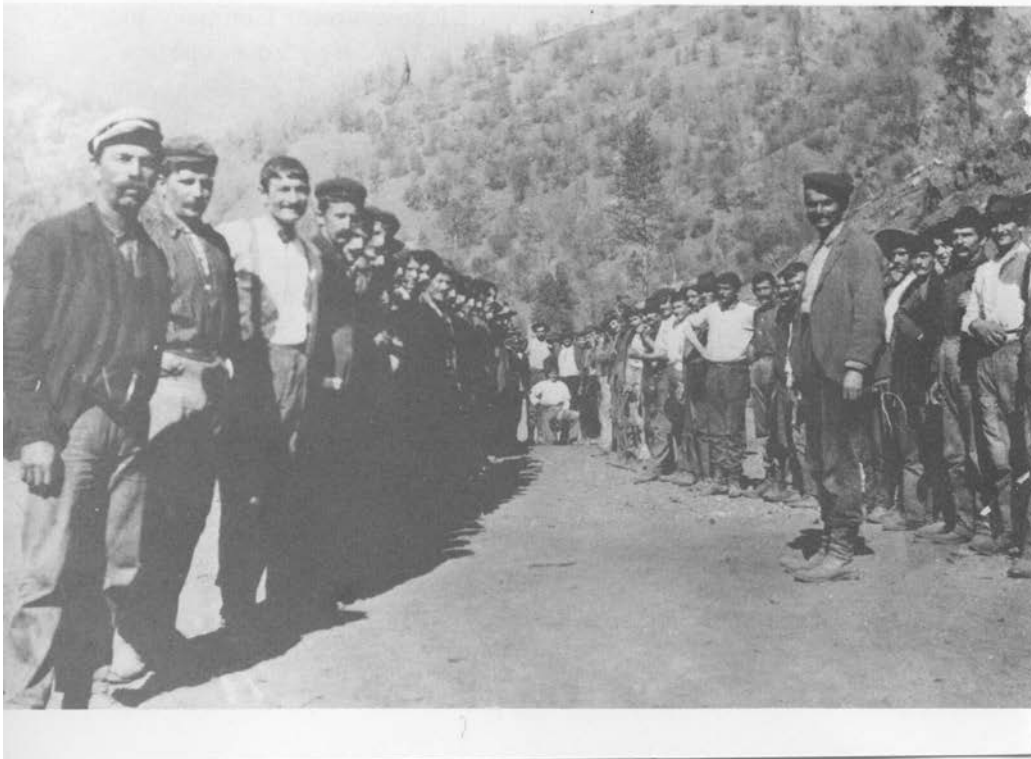
Victor Solari was a young man when he worked on the Camp 9 road, and he remembers three or four base camps were established so that the work could go forward at several points simultaneously. He also remembers the food and wages, which were both, he reports, "terrible".

At about the same time, work was progressing on Relief Creek dam, which would be the main storage reservoir for the project. Water would be stored at Relief, dropped downstream 6 miles to a small dam at Sand Bar Flat, and then diverted by redwood flume 16 cliffhanging miles to a holding reservoir just above the Camp 9 powerhouse site. Although the project has been augmented and modified in the years since, it still uses this same essential scheme, originated in 1904-7.

As the work was nearing completion, Beach Thompson discovered his Altaville claim didn't have the values to justify bringing in his water, so that aspect of the project was dropped. The footbridge just above the powerhosue today was built to carry Thompson's siphon pipe and is the only physical reminder of the whole scheme.

Meanwhile, the two companies formed to build and operate the Camp 9 road and powerhouse found themselves out of money, and thus became the property of the Sierra and San Francisco Co. The new owners proceeded to finish and operate

The One Hundred Slavonians. Led by their foreman Vulasinovich, these are the men that built the Camp 9 Road for the Union Construction Company in 1904-06.



the plant, and, simultaneously, begin the town of Camp 9. The name, incidentally, comes from the fact that it was the Union Construction Company's 9th camp on the project. It was changed, officially at least, in the 1930's when a post office was opened, to "Stanislaus".

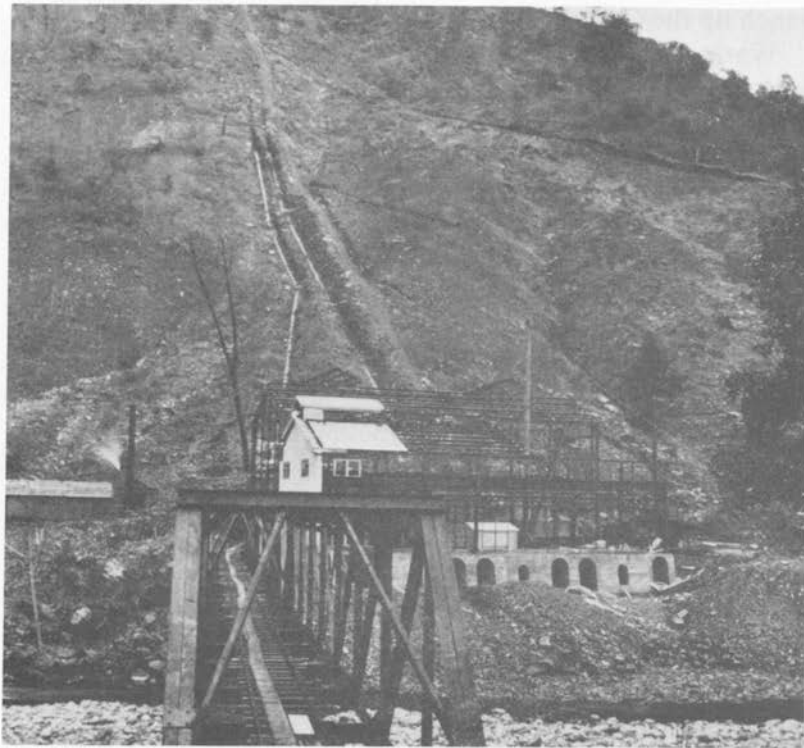
The company built homes for the families and a bunkhouse for "the single boys". There were two storage bins for machinery and maintenance materials, a guesthouse for visitors and a clubhouse that doubled as a cookhouse. In addition there was a little store and, at least until it burned down, a dance hall.

The population at Camp 9 hovered at around 6 or 7 families in those early days, perhaps 40 people in all. Groceries and necessities were delivered from Angels Camp, but townspeople still found occasion to venture over the hill — perhaps to the lodge in Murphys, the Eastern Star, or to all-night dances in Angels Camp. For a while, even, there was square dancing at their nearest neighbors, the Adams' place, a "showpiece" ranch up the Camp 9 road.

Work, meanwhile, was provided in ample quantity by the powerhouse and the 16 mile flume from Sand Bar. In the 20's, the men worked 6-day weeks, maintaining the machinery and patching the flume, which would inevitably break during winter storms. The problem was so chronic that every year 750,000 board feet of lumber would be hauled in by an 18 mule team and winched to the forebay at the base of the flume. In 1939, the system was finally put underground.

Helen McNamara arrived in Camp 9 in 1915 with her husband Matthew. They moved in just after their honeymoon and they did it in style — riding in a brand new Model T. Matthew McNamara became the hydro superintendant and Helen ran the little store and, later, the post office.

Bemis Grant recalls in particular one of the men, Charlie Avery, who, over the years, acquired a reputation as a "man-about-town", something not easily done by a family man in a place the size of Camp 9.





▲ **The Sand Bar Flume.** This sixteen mile stretch of open flume on the upper Stanislaus was a major maintenance headache to the crew based at Camp 9. A set of tracks was laid on top of the redwood trough and a small trolley was used to move men and equipment around. The flume was made obsolete when in 1939 a tunnel was finally drilled through the ridge for 11 miles.

◀ **Hydro-electric Plant of Stanislaus Electric Power Company.** The upper photograph was taken by M. Azevedo, a Sonora photographer in 1914 and shows the plant in operation. The lower photo was taken six years previously during its construction. Note Beach Thompson's siphon pipe branching off to cross the river on the footbridge.

The story goes that the actress Clara Bow, for reasons no one can remember, happened to be in town and that she was desirous of a ride on the little trolley car that ran on top of the flume. Charlie volunteered to be her driver, providing him with an experience that Mrs. Avery apparently never forgot.

Another Charlie Avery story concerns the time he stopped in at Vallecito for a bit of refreshment before driving down to Camp 9. There was apparently some concern about his general level of driver awareness at the time of his departure and a precautionary call was made down to the Camp. Their concern, it turned out, was well-advised. When a couple of hours had passed, with no Charlie, a search party was organized. They found evidence of his car's speedy passage through the trees beside the road and later that evening they found Charlie himself, wandering around down by the river. They got him out with ropes and he was back at work the next day.

In 1920 PG&E began leasing the facilities from Sierra and San Francisco and in 1927, acquired them outright. They replaced the existing powerhouse in 1963, then 56 years old, with a new turbine plant. At the same time, they installed the "check" or "crest-control" dam just above the bridge. Its purpose was to mitigate sudden surges of water which could possibly endanger lives downstream.

The new plant had nine times the generating capacity of the old one and as a consequence the water flow pattern below Camp 9 changed. Springtime "highs" were lowered while later summer "lows" were increased.

In addition, the new plant was almost entirely automated; the sixteen operators and the master mechanic had become obsolete. As a consequence, the little company town was abandoned and dismantled, both a product and victim of progress.

Today operations are controlled remotely and maintenance is performed in the course of a daily visit from a PG&E worker out of Angels Camp.

Mile 0.4 Bureau of Land Management Put-in Site*

The small, exploratory shaft on the wall behind the parking area was sunk by Charles Pierce as part of his Deer Lodge Claim in 1880.

The put-in rapid is formed by a resistant ledge of hard chert which has stranded a collection of flood-swept boulders.

Mile 0.6 Rock Garden Rapids

Mile 1.0 Suspension Bridge

The swaying bridge that crosses the river at this point was originally a cable crossing built by Jesse Welch to provide access to his Bear Foot Lode claim on the left bank. Welch was a prospector who came into the area in 1938. The cabin he lived in was located just above the left side footing of the bridge and was built with whole logs and copper nails — material commonly used before the turn of the century.

In 1948 Welch sold his claim to Warren Boone, a self-declared “Okie” who had just recently arrived from West Texas. Warren, and later his brother Arthur, improved Welch’s crossing into a footbridge and prospected on both sides of the river, particularly at the mouth of Yea Hoo Gulch, just downstream on the Calaveras side.

The rapid here is called Suspension Bridge Rapids.

The New Camp Nine Bridge

The new Camp Nine bridge was constructed for PG&E by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1978. The project, which cost 10.5 million (tax paid) dollars, was built to enable the private

*Mileages will be figured on United States Geological Survey quad maps. By convention, Mile 0.0 is the original Camp 9 bridge. Also by convention, left and righthand refer to those directions as viewed looking downstream. Consequently, since the river serves as the county line, the left side will always be Tuolumne County, and the right will always be Calaveras.

utility to truck a new turbine into place if two events should ever coincide in time: (a) the existing Camp Nine bridge become inundated by maximum storage of the New Melones Reservoir, a possibility itself dependent on the outcome of Friends of the River's efforts to halt filling as well as the state Attorney General's pending suits. Even neglecting these uncertainties, the old Camp Nine bridge would still be unserviceable for a maximum of three months on occasional years. (b) The existing turbine should fail without warning.

The likelihood of these two events ever occurring simultaneously was an issue in a legal battle waged by Friends of the River and the State Attorney General's office at the time of construction. Among the more cost effective alternatives proposed were: reimbursement to the utility for the period of lost generation; or, preventative replacement of turbines on a predetermined schedule — twenty years is their estimated service life.

However, by the time these issues were brought to light, construction had progressed to the point where Secretary of Defense Harold Brown — after some apparent second thoughts — gave his approval to finish the project.

As a consequence, it appears the bridge will be used for its "design purpose" possibly four or five times over the next century.

Mile 1.3 Death Rock Rapids

Mile 1.5 Devil's Staircase

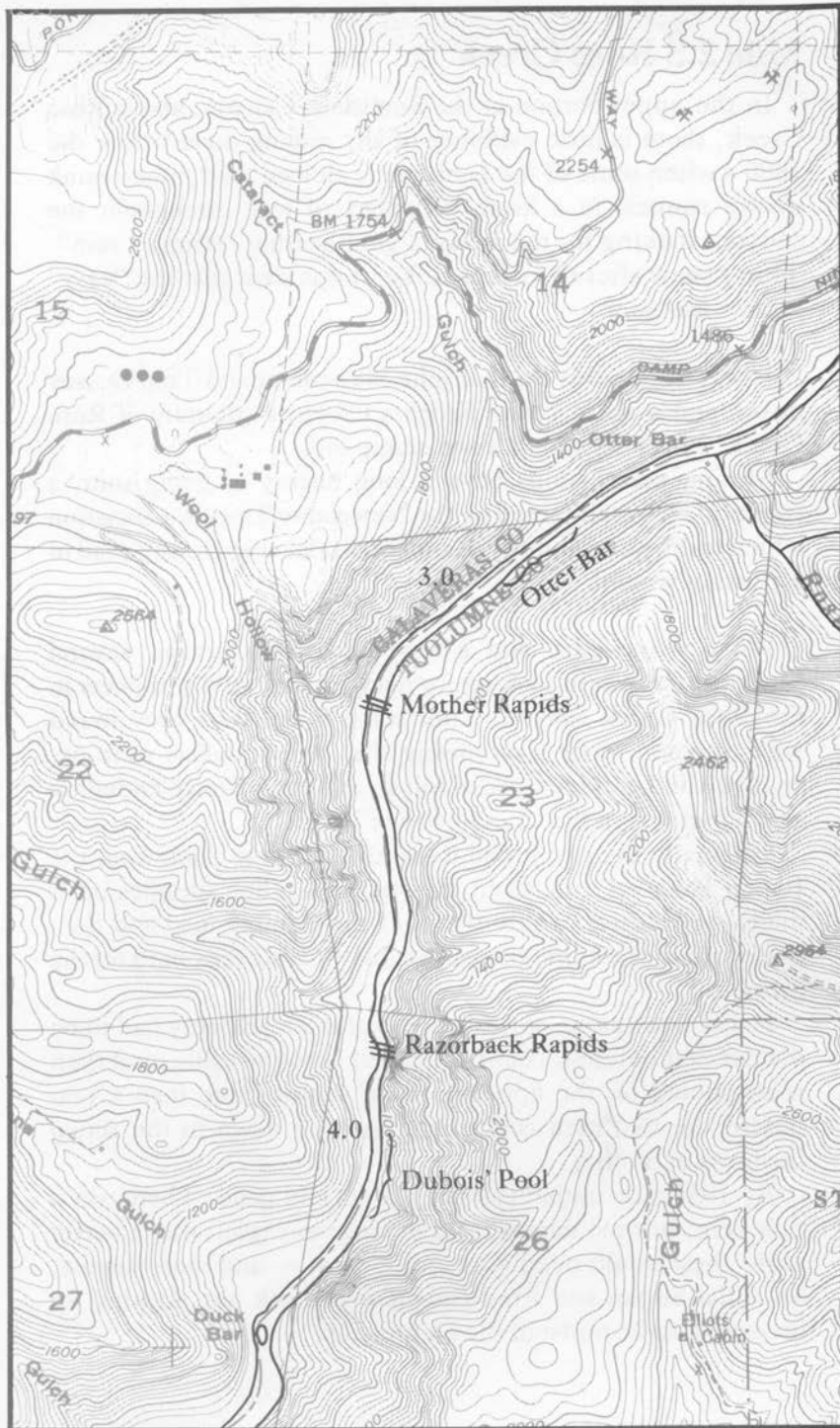
The narrow, vertical ("dike") slab of rock cut into "steps" is made of diorite.

Mile 1.8 Bailey's Falls

Elsa Bailey, one of the earliest female kayakers in the state, left her name and a portion of her boat here in 1961.

Stony Gulch enters from left.

Mile 1.9 Widowmaker Rapids



Mile 2.5 Rose Creek

In the upper portion of the Stanislaus Canyon, above Rose Creek, there is little evidence of any mining done before the 1880's when some of the banks were sluiced, and miners sunk quartz tunnels in a kind of haphazard way throughout the canyon, looking for the isolated gold bearing "stringer vein". Thirty years after the initial strike, it was clear that the "easy" money was gone.

It was during this era that John Newcomer and Tom Dorsey developed a claim up on Knights Creek, a tributary of Rose Creek, where they built a two-stamp mill.

Mining partnerships have a long history of going sour, a tradition well maintained by the Newcomer/Dorsey association which terminated abruptly in a shootout, leaving Dorsey dead of a gunshot wound.

Forty years later, and a few miles downstream, several Modesto men were looking for likely quartz gold prospects in the Rose Creek canyon. After some initial tests they found what seemed to be a promising site. A few dollars were exchanged and two men, Adlai Supan and Fred Brown ended up equal partners in the "Lucky Strike" claim.

Originally the two hiked down to their new claim from the Italian Bar road, but when they began hauling supplies in, it made more sense to skid them off the Camp 9 road and then pulley them across the river on a cable crossing they built for the purpose.

It was an arduous process. Some of the machinery had to be dismantled before it could be loaded onto the cable, and then reassembled on the opposite bank. It was more than a year before the two men could begin getting down to the actual business of mining.

By 1931, the initial drillings had looked good. There was a rich vein, but too narrow, and in order to exploit it at a better point they would need more equipment — and more money. So Adlai Supan and Fred Brown went back out, looking for investors in the midst of the Depression.



Supan's Cable Crossing. Rex Alexander, a co-worker on Ad Supan's "Lucky Strike" "Hillside" claims, is shown in the trolley at Rose Creek. From 1931.

They were back within a year, this time with two gas engines, an air compressor, forge, drill, steel, piping and an assortment of miscellaneous hardware. Thus equipped, they began pushing a tunnel down from above the vein, hoping to intercept it deep where it would be broad and solid. After a season of blasting and timbering they found it—narrow and fragmented.

For a time, they quit. But gold mining thrives on frustration, and over the next five or six years Ad Supan and his partner returned for additional dosages. They brought with them a jackhammer and a compressor and they sank the shaft another two hundred feet. Again they struck the vein, and again it was worthlessly thin.

When they came back the next time, the tunnel had filled with water, and so they left.

Mile 2.7 Cataract Gulch



Rose Creek Cabin. Located downstream at the main river, Supan, and later his brother and sons, would hike up the creek to their claims. This photo of their cabin, taken not long after its construction, helps resolve the mystery of why mining cabins always look as ancient as they do: they're built that way.

Mile 2.8 Crystal Stanislaus

A "significant cave" located on the north wall about 120 feet above the water, Crystal Stanislaus was once known as Mobley's Cave after the man who had hoped to guide tourists into it. The trail he cut is still visible, heading upstream from the higher of the two entrances and winding up into Cataract Gulch where it intersects the Camp 9 road just below the limestone quarry. Mobley never completed his scheme, but died shortly before he finished his trail.

Although the cave has been heavily vandalized, it is still a "maternity cave" supporting a substantial bat population.

Mile 2.8 Otter Bar

Some of the clearest evidence of sluice mining on the river is apparent on the slope behind this bar on the left bank. The water was flumed out of Rose Creek, held in a small pool above the slope, and then released in surges. The resulting slurry of dirt and water was then sluiced in boxes.

The operation almost certainly dates from the 1880's, some twenty years before hydraulic mining was made illegal.

A cabin foundation on the lower end of Otter Bar belonged to a place probably built by Jack Richmond around the turn of the century, who also built a cable crossing nearby. During the depression, a man called Tremain — described by James Supan as being something of a loner — occupied the claim.

The steam engine still in place at the bottom end of Otter Bar, below Richmond's cabin, dates from the late 1800's, when it was probably used to operate either an overhead crane for shifting boulders, or a dragline dredge. In either case, the goal was to obtain deeper river gravels for sluicing.



Otter Bar Steam Engine

The miners were able to move steam engines such as this one around by mounting the entire apparatus on a sled base, connecting one end of a cable to a tree and the other to the engine's drum. Then, with a judicious application of steam, the engine could be made to pull itself along. This particular steam rig was probably moved in this self-propelled fashion from Vallecito to the rim, then skidded on a cable and sled down the hillside, and finally a log barge ride over the calm stretch just upstream.

Mile 3.1 Cataract Quarry

At the top of the ridge just above Wool Hollow is the Cataract Quarry overlook, part of the Flintkote Company operation located on the Camp Nine Road.

Occupying some 1,200 acres, the quarry and plant opened in June 1971 at a cost of approximately \$18 million.

The material being quarried is limestone, part of the Calaveras Formation; and it is crushed at the millsite at the rate of approximately 600 tons per hour. The granulated material is then combined with water and a wood fibre by-product into a 70% solution which is then piped 14.7 miles to a processing plant in San Andreas. The slurry line is an insulated 7" diameter pipe, the first one of its kind in the U.S.

The entire plant is run by computer and requires a crew of about 21 during the day, and 2 during the night. At the current rate of depletion, the limestone deposit has an estimated life-span of 80 to 90 years.

Mile 3.3 Wool Hollow

Rocks and debris washed out of Wool Hollow on the right helped to form Mother Rapids (named by Bryce Whitmore, a dutiful son, on Mothers' Day in 1963).

Mile 3.4

On the left bank, the limestone has been sculpted and fluted into fantastic forms by the dissolving action of river and ground run-off.

Mile 3.8 Grapevine Gulch

The water from Grapevine was used to ground sluice the banks behind Razorback Camp, located just downstream.

Mile 3.9 Razorback Camp and Rapids

The gravel bar on the right has forced the water against the steep cliff on the opposite side, undercutting it very sharply. The nodules in the cliff and in the mid-stream rock are chert embedded in limestone.

The hanging garden springs here run year-round and support a beautiful growth of maidenhair fern, quite rare at these elevations.

Mile 4.0 - 4.3 Dubois' Pool

An especially peaceful stretch of river. Along the banks are incense cedars, yellow pines, big leaf maples, willows, white alders, Oregon ash, live oak, digger pines, and one well hidden fig tree.

Mile 4.4 Mariana Gulch

Mile 4.5 Duck Bar

The large flat on the right is known as Duck Bar, between Clark's Flat and Parrotts Ferry, probably the most habitable spot on the river.

Duck Bar has a mining record going back to the 1890's and certainly knew prospecting before that; however, it isn't until 1908 that a claim was filed of which we know much about today. The Duck Bar Placer Mine of 1880 was filed by Frank Cooper and Al Gianelli, a pair of ambitious prospectors whose first order of business at their new claim was to provide access. Accordingly, they, and a crew of four others, cut the upper portion of the present-day Duck Bar road and proceeded to skid equipment and supplies down to their camp on the flat. They planned to construct a wing-dam and work the exposed gravel with a tub and hoist apparatus known as a "skip and stiff-leg". During the months they were able to excavate, they only got a

fair return, although they did uncover a 3 pound axhead nugget.

In 1909 their wing-dam was washed out when the new Camp 9 powerhouse ran its first turbine test and the six decided to abandon the claim. The rapid at the head of Duck Bar today is all that remains of their labor.

It wasn't until twenty years later, in the early 30's that another claim was filed at Duck Bar. This one by an ex-Navy diver who installed a pair of waterwheels on a 3" steel axle that he supported for the width of the river. He used the power these wheels generated to help operate a pump and barge rig. High water eventually washed him out, but for years afterward the axle lay partially exposed in the old wing dam, and, in fact, inspired the name "Pipeline Rapid". The rest of his equipment was hauled out during the war and sold as scrap.

In the early 60's partners Charles Baldwin and Bill Armstrong worked the Duck Bar claim and had quite an operation. The road had been cut down to the bar by that time (Frank Cooper's son, Horace, did the work) and Baldwin and Armstrong cleared it the rest of the way to the water's edge. With the road in place, they were able to bring in a back hoe, dredge, welder, drag line and all the paraphenalia for a "first-class operation". For a time, they lived in tents, but they eventually got around to building a cabin (which stood, incidentally, until 1975 when the Bureau of Land Management took it out).

The limestone bedrock out in front of Duck Bar lay underneath 3 to 4 feet of gravel and was perforated with caves — one of which the divers followed for 40 feet.

Although the 3 years they spent working the claim were never very profitable, Baldwin remembers Duck Bar as "the most peaceful place I ever lived in my life."

Charles Baldwin was not the only one to feel a special attraction for this spot on the river. Even before Frank Cooper and crew set up shop there in 1908, it was home to a man by the name of Indian Walker who lived, some say, to the age of 110 and became a legendary figure within both the white and Indian communities.

The stories surrounding Indian Walker are various, and frequently conflicting. He was said to have been 17 when the first white man came to Vallecito in 1850, and that he was a "captain" among his tribespeople, although he appears to have lived much of his life apart from them.

His home, in fact, was down at Duck Bar where he lived with his wife Suzanna in a small cabin. They had an orchard, and Walker caught salmon in fish traps to sell to the white community.

He was a familiar sight to the people of Vallecito and Douglas Flat, and was sought out for his advice and knowledge of herb medicine.

Rose Schowerer of Murphys relates a story told her by her mother, in which Walker bathed Rosie (then only a week old) in specially prepared bath water in order to cure her of a colic temper. The treatment was a great success, judging by Mrs. Schowerer, who was a serene 86 when she told of it.



Indian Walker.
A Miwok Indian who watched the Americanization of his native land, Walker lived for a time at Duck Bar. When he died, in 1943, he was said to have been more than 100 years old. The photo is pre-1920.

Indian Walker and his wife had one daughter, Sara, who married an Englishman, John Long. They in turn, had another daughter Sara with whom it is said Indian Walker lived out his final years after the death of his wife.

He died in 1943, and was buried in Murphys. He was mourned by members of both races and received both a Protestant as well as a traditional Miwok funeral.

Mile 4.6 Coral Cave

Coral Cave, between Duck Bar and Chinese Camp, is one of the very few places in the foothills where any suggestion has been found of an occupation previous to the Miwoks of 2,000 years ago.

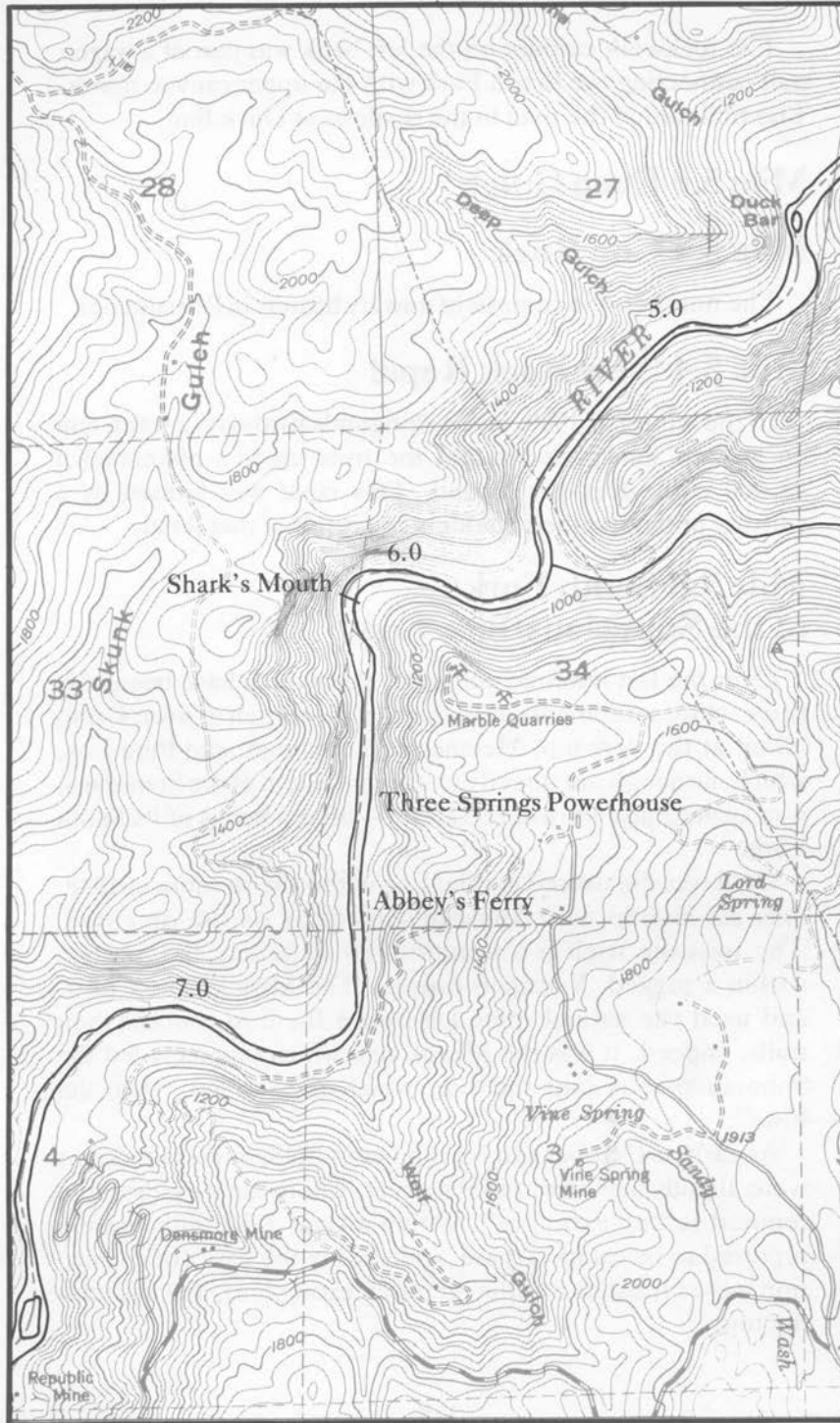
The evidence is ambiguous and consists of a single bone implement very similar to one found in a Shasta area cave and positively identified as being more than 2,000 years old.

Whether the implement is native to the spot, or brought in at a later date, is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it raises an intriguing possibility concerning aboriginal occupation of the area.

Other evidence of more recent Miwok occupation has been clearly documented. The calcite deposits were mined and shaped into "charmstones", examples of which have been found among tribes of the Central Valley, testifying to their value as a trade good. In addition, mortar holes can be found near the entrance.

Mile 4.8 Chinese Camp

The name is of recent origin and probably derives from the belief that much of the sluicing work done at this site was of Chinese origin. Mining records indicate that Duck Bar claims frequently went far enough downstream to include this lower bar, as well as the beach upstream on the Tuolumne side (sometimes called Duncan's Camp). The extensive wall work and channeling done here directed a slurry of mud and water into sluice boxes. The water was flumed out of the main river above Camp Nine.



The rockwork evident on the left bank was part of a wagon trail connecting the South Fork with the upper canyon mines. The trail forded the river in the shallows at Duck Bar.

Mile 5.0 Deep Gulch

Mile 5.1 Cop Rock

The number-one nemesis of unwary boaters in late summer.

Mile 5.4 New Rock Rapid

In the winter of 1980, on Washington's Birthday, a warm rain on a deep snowpack brought the river up to a phenomenal 48,000 cubic feet per second. This rapid was formed by a shifting of the riverbed boulders as a result of that flood.

Mile 5.6 South Fork of the Stanislaus/Pine Log

Over the last hundred and thirty years there have been only three white settlements of any size on this stretch of river: Camp Nine, at the very top; Melones at the bottom; and Pine Log, which, although not directly on the main stem of the Stanislaus, was located just a few miles away — on the banks of its South Fork.

Gold was discovered at Pine Log in the late summer of 1848, only six months after Marshall's discovery on the American. The townsite itself is a beautiful, 20 to 30 acre flat, nestled within a rugged, V-shaped canyon. The Miwoks knew of it, and used the natural, pine log bridge there to connect their trails. Indeed, it was the Miwok trail which originally led the Sonoran miners into the site, which they called "Paso del Pino".

As early as October and November of 1848, numerous claims were already staked out at Pine Flat, where the diggings were reputed to be "excellent". Within a year, 1,500 miners were reported to be camped there, and already the basics of civilization were on hand: a trading tent, an eating tent, and a gambling tent.

By far the most productive mines at Pine Log were the riverbed placer claims. Although the men would doubtless work back from the banks during high water months, their real interest lay in turning the river out of its course, an activity that could only be pursued during the late summer.

In October of 1850 a traveller to the camp gives this account of it:

The most successful point on the Stanislaus river has been the "Pine Crossing", a beautiful deep dell, surrounded by the most majestic mountains. Here the sun is visible for only a small portion of the day, and then his fervid rays are neutralized by the cooling influence of the bright waters fresh from their snowy sources in the Sierra Nevada. In this delightful spot, the river has been turned from its bed; and a rich and golden harvest has rewarded the miners' toil.

That same year, 1850, a Mrs. Patch, thought to be the first white woman resident of Tuolumne County, gave birth to the county's first white child in Pine Log.

By 1855, the Tuolumne County Water Company had solved the Pine Loggers perennial problem of too much water by erecting a diversion dam upstream with ditches supplying claims in the Columbia area. In fact, they solved it so efficiently that the downstream miners were camped by an empty river bed — with nothing to wash the gravel. A letter was soon sent to the water company pointing out the problem and ending with the note: ". . . if yous Dont Comply presently — we will find Means in supplying our wants." It was signed by 126 miners.

What sort of response the men of Pine Log expected is not known, although they were almost certainly caught by surprise when the offending dam failed completely in 1857, sending a wall of water rushing downstream that virtually washed Pine Log away, drowning four of its residents in the process.

Over the next few years, the little settlement rebuilt itself and indeed recorded some of its richest strikes. One claim, the Blacksmith, yielded fifteen pounds of "pure gold dust" in the course of one week's sluicing. Nearby, according to newspaper

accounts, three miners were able to wash out thirty ounces in three days.

Five years after the dam disaster, the town consisted of a “store, saloon, blacksmith shop, eight or ten private residences, and a good deal of mining property.” Unfortunately, Pine Log’s continuing water problems re-surfaced again in the winter of 1862 in the form of the most disastrous flood of all — one that apparently cleared off every building in the flat.

It was a blow from which the townspeople never fully recovered. Although reports of Pine Log activity persist into the 1880’s, gold values were declining and by the turn of the century the little town, whose claims had reputedly yielded several millions in gold, was all but abandoned.

Mile 5.9 Shark’s Mouth

Much of the cliff face here is flowstone or travertine. Mark and Gar Dubois once hiked and climbed up to the large cave opening about 300 feet off the water here, only to discover that, at its deepest, it extends no more than 25 feet.

Mile 6.1 Columbia Marble Quarry

The oldest operating marble quarry in the state is located above the left bank of the river. Originally opened in 1860 by the McNamee Family, the quarry produced construction grade marble. A report published in 1868 described the operation:

Machinery was erected for working the marble, and a mill built for cutting the blocks into slabs and polishing them. The works consisted of a revolving derrick with a boom 60 feet in length, by means of which two men could take blocks weighing 10 to 15 tons from any part of the quarry and place them on cars which ran on a track laid around it and connected with the mill. This mill had 100 saws and four polishing machines, moved by water power. Many thousands of tons of marble were cut here between 1862 and 1866.

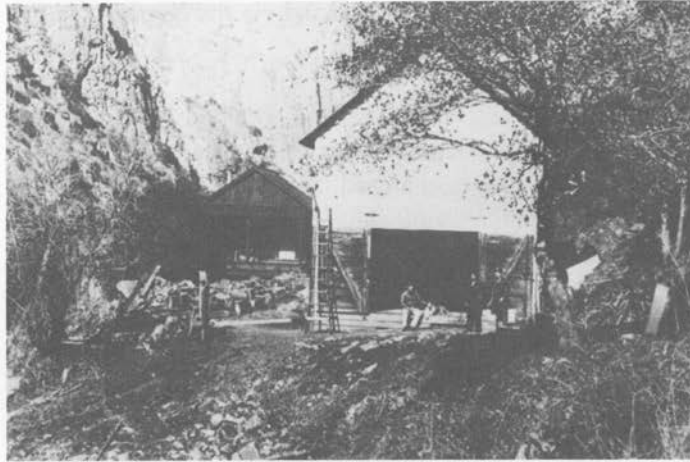
Production slowly declined over the years, partly as a result of foreign competition, partly as a result of changing fashions.

The last blocks of marble were hauled out in 1968 and used as flooring in the San Francisco International Airport terminal.

The present day owner is the Merck Company of New Jersey, who operate the quarry intermittently. The marble, incidentally, is no longer sawn but blasted out and the resultant material is used in the manufacture of, among other things, milk of magnesia.

Mile 6.5 Three Springs Powerhouse

Less than half a mile below the Marble Quarry, on the left, is the site of the Three Springs Powerhouse constructed in 1898 by the Tuolumne County Electric Power Co. Built by Sydney Sprout and Harris Coffill Sr., it relied on spring water from Lord, Vine and Gold springs to power its pelton wheel and was, in fact, the first "high-head" powerhouse in the state. Coffill, who designed it, had also been involved in designing the city of Boston's first trolley car system and had helped with the lighting at the Chicago's World Fair in 1895.



Three Springs Powerhouse. the first high-head powerhouse in the state was supplied with water from springs more than 1000 feet above the brass bucket Pelton wheel that drove the single generator. Wade Coffill reports that the water hit the buckets with sufficient strength to bend the ½" thick material and that pebbles would occasionally shoot through the brass like bullets.

When in operation, the plant required two operators for two twelve hour shifts per day. A total of four buildings existed at the site, including two residences, the powerhouse itself, and a barn.

In 1920 PG&E purchased the plant and shortly thereafter dismantled it.

Mile 6.7 Abbey's Ferry

Before the first bridge at Melones was completed in 1907, travel between the southern mines of the Sonora area and the diggings on the Calaveras side depended almost totally on the Stanislaus ferries. Between Melones and Camp 9 there were four, the highest of which was Abbey's Ferry, located at this calm, wide stretch just below the marble quarry.

Today, the clearest evidence of the operation are the old roads which come down from both sides to face each other on opposite banks. On the Calaveras side, the road connects to the Camp 9 road via Skunk Gulch. Over on the Tuolumne side, the route joins with the Parrotts Ferry Road via the Marble Quarry drive.

George W. Abbey started the ferry in 1851, some nine years before Thomas Parrott began his operation just downstream. Over the next ten years it changed hands at least half a dozen times — in one instance being sold for \$7,500. The last record of operation is in 1863.

Among the thousands of passengers who must have ridden the ferry, only two are known to have been too heavy for the barge to accommodate. Their story is related in the following item which appeared in the San Francisco *Herald*, dated July 3, 1860.

THE DAN RICE SHOW — DEATH OF VICTORIA

The highly trained elephant Victoria, of the great Dan Rice show, died lately from injuries received while swimming the Stanislaus river on her way from Columbia to Murphys. The river was running with immense velocity, and as the ferry boat could not take the ele-

phants, an attempt was made to swim them across. Albert went over safely, but Victoria put back to the same side from which she started, and she was so terribly bruised by being rolled over the rocks by the swift and powerful current, that she died two or three days afterward. Had the accident occurred earlier in the season, the loss would have been much heavier upon the proprietors than it is now likely to prove. Albert will continue to perform as heretofore.

The Dan Rice show will be in Placerville tonight and tomorrow night.

A follow-up article over a month later gave this information:
San Francisco Herald — August 23, 1860.

VICTORIA — It will be remembered that the celebrated trick elephant, Victoria, died from injuries received while swimming the Stanislaus River. Her hide was sent as a present to the proprietor of Biggs and Kibbe's old stand, on the corner of Montgomery and Commercial Streets, and by him offered to be stuffed.

The work was confided to Mr. F. Gruber, naturalist, and performed in a style most creditable to the artist and to California. Victoria now looks as natural as if she were still in the flesh, and ornaments the saloon above referred to. If Albert could get a glimpse of the stuffed figure of Victoria he would certainly tear the side of the room down to meet his former companion in the belief that she was still alive.

Mile 6.9 Wolf Gulch

Sierra Club Rapids begins at this small left-side tributary.

Mile 7.0 Steiner's Cabin Site

Walter Steiner built a sturdy yellow pine log cabin here on the left around 1930 to work his 270 acre claim. Steiner was a "proto-type of the American individualist" and did the work almost entirely by hand.

A fire destroyed the building in 1978.

Mile 7.5 The Densmore Claim

Some two hundred yards back from the water, on the Tuolumne side of the river, is the old Densmore claim, site of some of the best preserved mining relics in the canyon.

The original claim was filed in April of 1900 when the names associated with it were the Densmore Quartz Mine, the Young America Quartz Mine, and various extensions of each. Over time, however, the name "Young America" was dropped, and as far back as anyone can remember, the claim has simply been known as "the Densmore".

Up until the late 1890's, little more than assessment work was done at the mine, but the next few years saw a succession of new owners and, according to one source, at least \$600,000 was taken out of the granite vein being worked. By 1909, though, the values had apparently diminished significantly; and in 1920, the Densmore was on the block for back taxes. It was sold at auction for \$491.49. Included on the deed were not only the mines and mill sites, but a ten-stamp mill, concentrators, cyanide plant, and a bunk house.

Power to the Densmore was originally supplied by water from Vine Springs Gulch, although in later years it was electrically driven.

Unlike most of the canyon quartz mines that were filed around the turn of the century, the Densmore was re-opened again in 1939 when George Raye, an Alaskan, put his \$125,000 stake into it. Among the many improvements Raye added to the property was the road that extends from the original mine down to the river.

The old mill had been destroyed by fire and Raye's second order of business was to replace it with a new ball mill, this one closer to the river. It is this mill whose foundation and machinery can still be inspected today.

Both mills were built after a fashion that became very popular after the turn of the century. The mechanism used to crush the ore was a huge rotating drum in which iron balls were placed. By rotating the drum, the quartz was ground sufficiently to be



The Duchess Mine.
The Emery family gathered around
the mine site, around 1904.

sent to the classifiers where it was separated by density. The “riddlings”, waste ore, was either recycled back through the drum or thrown out onto the tailings heap.

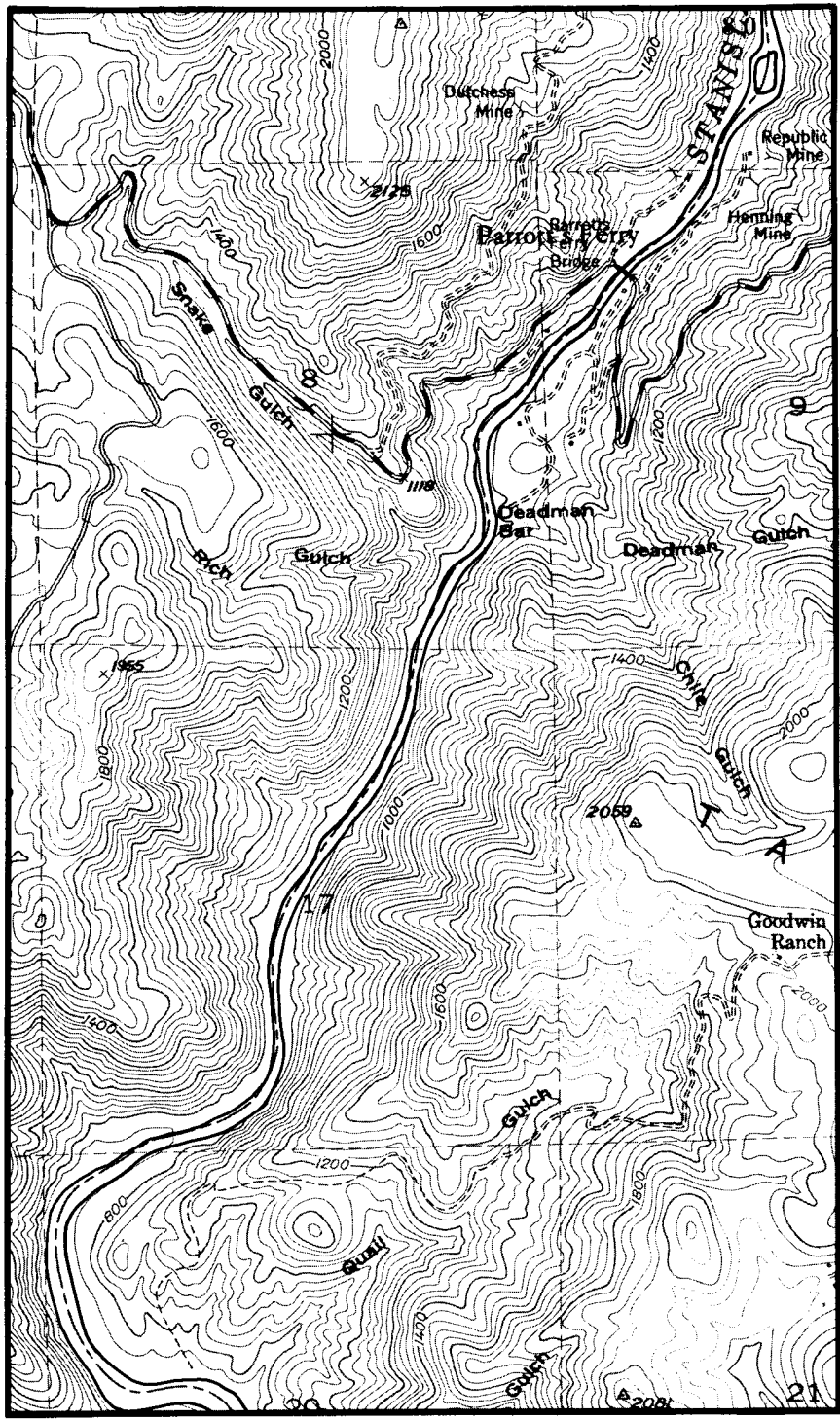
Contrary to popular myth, gold mines can very frequently be anything but profitable. George Raye sank not only his original \$125,000 into the Densmore, but an additional \$50,000 loan as well before finally giving it up.

Zeke Goodwin reports having seen George Raye some years afterwards working on the San Francisco wharves, many miles from the nearest gold mine.

Mile 8.4 Duchess Mine

About 600 feet up on the Calaveras side of the river, is the old Duchess mine.

The first name associated with this claim is that of John



Drussel who apparently did some preliminary prospecting there in the 1890's but soon quit the claim and returned to his home in the midwest. He took with him some ore samples, though, which he showed to William and Eliza Emery who became sufficiently excited to sell their Indiana limestone business and move with their three children to California. As it turned out, the samples hadn't come from the Duchess, but that was a lot of time, money and effort later.

The family arrived in Vallecito during its mini-boom of new quartz mining activity on September 18, 1898. They took up residence on the Bishop property and the children soon began to attend the one room school house. From all accounts, the Emery's were "a devoted couple, sure they were going to make it".

At all events, they soon plunged into the gold mining business "in a big way". They and their partner Charles Lilly built access from the Parrott's Ferry road to their claim, blasting it out of the hillside. With a five man crew they put up an assay office, a ten stamp mill, a bunkhouse, a mess hall — and they dug. One shaft extended 1,824 feet into the hillside. Green Lewis, uncle of Ruth Solari, was their foreman and he reports it was quite a little operation.

Unfortunately, it didn't pay. It took several years, but eventually their money was gone and the Emery's quit. George died in 1907, a "frustrated man", it was said, and the rest of the family moved to San Jose.

Mile 8.5 Republic Mine

Just downstream of the Densmore, on the same side of the river, is the Republic mine. Like most of the claims in this section of the canyon — the Henning, Manzanit and Breece, for example — it was worked intermittently between 1900 and 1930, with indifferent results.

At its peak the mine was worked by a crew of five or six who sank 1500 feet of tunnel into a 6 foot vein. They processed the ore with a 9 stamp mill and shipped it to Jackson for cyanadization and the final steps of extraction.

Zeke Goodwin reports the place had a relatively short lifetime and never really was a good producer.

As for the Duchess, a couple of other outfits tried sporadically, the last one in the 30's, but it never had the values to make the effort worthwhile. Since then, the claim has lain idle, the equipment rusting away, a California pot of gold that never materialized.

Mile 8.5 Parrot's Ferry

Thomas Parrott and A.G. Bradbury first began operating this ferry crossing in 1860. It quickly became the most important crossing upstream of Robinson's, serving pedestrians at 25¢ each, loose stock, 20¢ a head, and mounted travellers, 50¢ apiece.

Between the years 1861 and 1871, the ferry changed hands nine times, eventually coming back to Parrott who continued to operate it until his death of "paralysis of the brain" in 1894.

His daughter, Celia, then took over the business and ran it until 1895 and then again from 1897 until 1903 when the Tuolumne and Calaveras counties collaborated on the construction of a bridge. The crews from the two counties apparently operated somewhat independently of one another and when the two halves of the bridge were joined in the middle it was discovered that the Tuolumne end was five feet higher than the Calaveras end. At the time, the counties regarded each other a bit competitively and the discrepancy was felt to have symbolic meaning.

In December of 1937, however, during a massive flood, the bridge and the Tuolumne-side abutment washed away. John Solari, an Italian immigrant who had supervised the construction of the Calaveras side of the project, is reported to have been so excited by the results of this ultimate test that he took his whole family down to see the evidence. "My side," he exclaimed, "he no go."

The following years the counties again collaborated on a bridge, this one about a quarter of a mile upstream of the old site. Built by Nelson and Wallace of Escalon, it cost \$26,662.

During the 1860's and '70's, the area around Parrott's Ferry was quite popular with Chinese placer miners. It was also, according to legend, quite popular with the notorious bandit



The Opening of the First Parrott's Ferry Bridge, 1903. The heartless march of progress is well captured in this scene showing both the old ferry barge in the background as well as the new trestle bridge on its ceremonial opening day. The project had been a joint venture between Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties, with the two crews working separately, and at times even a bit competitively, towards its completion. From the photo it would seem the two county delegations were still trying to keep their distance.

Joaquin Murieta and his partner in crime, Three-fingered Jack.

The story has it that Joaquin so terrorized the Chinese community at Parrott's Ferry that they collected a reward for his capture from among themselves and when they heard he had been caught and killed, they declared a holiday.

The Tuolumne side of the crossing, the broad flat where the Bureau of Land Management now maintains a campground, has a history of miners and settlers going back at least to 1860. For a time, the area was called Walker's bar, after one Daniel Walker who worked a hydraulic claim there. He was killed on it in July of 1873 when a bank of earth collapsed on him.

Since then his claim, never patented, passed through many hands, most recently Ron Sperry in the 40's, George and Mildred Boggs in the 50's, and Dan Schmira in the 60's and early 70's.



Mile 11.8 - 12.0 Horseshoe Bend

The river makes a sweeping right—hand turn at this point, completing three-quarters of a circle in an ox-bow known as Horseshoe Bend.

The Miwok tribespeople knew of this turn in the river, and probably dwelt upon its shores for a period of almost two thousand years, making it, along with Clark's Flat the most ancient of the river settlements. Although the archaeological evidence has been seriously disturbed by gold mining activities, a collection of over 300 mortar holes exists at the site — the largest on the river.

In more recent times, Horseshoe Bend has been the scene of two waves of gold miners: the first group arrived in the 1850's and were on the fringe of the fabulous placer strikes 2 miles downstream at Melones. The second group began arriving around the turn of the century, bringing with them the new equipment and technology of hard rock mining.

Among this second group, probably the most prominent was the Horseshoe Bend Mining Co., funded by Eastern capital and operated by a man named Heath. At its peak, around 1903-1906, the mine supported a settlement of twelve residences and a boarding house, all on the Tuolumne side.

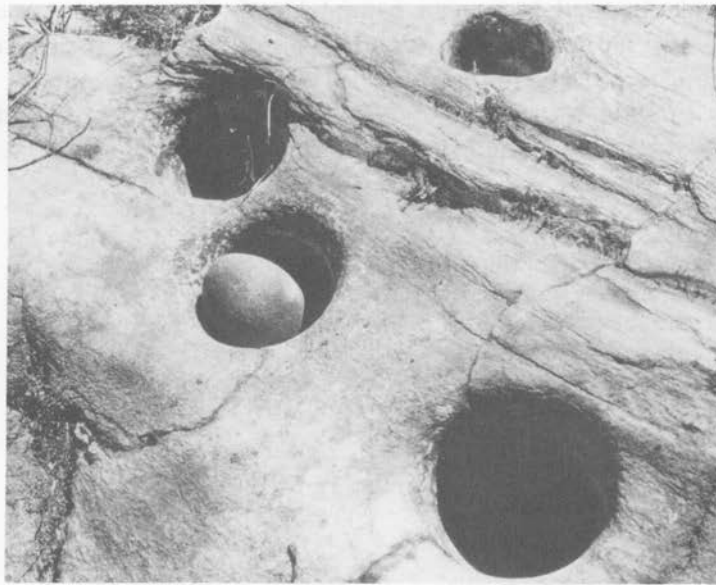
In 1904, a stamp mill was hauled down the steep road and a foundation prepared. But the poor ore values forced the aban-

◀ **The Infamous
Joaquin.** Attempting to
separate fact from fiction
in the Joaquin Murieta
myth would be a frustrat-
ing — and probably mis-
directed — task,
something like
wondering where
Joaquin's galloping steed
was going to put his flying
hooves down next in this
rendering of the famous
Motherlode outlaw by
Charles Nahl.

The acorn was the Miwok staff-of-life. They made from it biscuits, soup, mush and bread — both leavened and not. Harvest time was fall, when whole villages would gather the year's crop in burden baskets and make loaves upon loaves of bread for storage. A good crop was cause for feast and ceremony; a poor one, tightened belts and growling bellies.

The Miwok graded the oaks for the value of their acorns. The Black oak was their mainstay: good acorns, easy to husk, generally plentiful. Next came the Valley oak: excellent acorns but hard to husk. Afterwards, the Interior live oak, Blue oak, scrub oak and tan oak.

Preparation began with shelling, mashing and then a leaching process since all acorns contain bitter tasting tannin. Crushing was done by pestle and mortar ("uluwe" and "lupu"). Granite outcroppings along the foothill rivers are frequently pocked with these acorn mill sites where Miwok women would gather and chat while mashing the shelled acorns.



The meal was leached of tannin generally in small sandy depressions by the water's edge. The women would pour water through the meal slowly, beginning first with one or two applications of cold and finally working up to quite hot.

Afterwards, the meal could be cooked in a couple of ways, either in an earthen oven, or boiled in a cooking basket. Heat was applied with white hot rocks and the basket was prevented from burning by constant stirring.

Today the preparation of Native American food threatens to become a lost art. Particularly in the case of Black oak acorn bread, though, such a loss would be more than merely cultural. Acorn bread makes a hearty, nutritious loaf with a dark, nutty flavor; spread with blackberry preserves, it makes for a meal far more American than hot dogs.

What follows is a modern-day recipe provided by Roxanne Maloney.

*2 cups acorn meal (Black oak 2 cups milk
are easiest to hull;
Valley oak, 1 tsp. salt
the best tasting) ½ cup honey
2 cups corn meal (or brown sugar)
1 cup flour (rye is good) 1 tsp. baking powder
3 eggs*

Cover the shelled acorns with boiling water and let sit for 24 hours. Drain and repeat, either once or twice more, depending on your patience and taste. Afterwards, either in a food mill or blender, grind the resulting mixture to a meal-like consistency.

Combine the acorn meal, corn meal, salt, flour and baking powder. Mix in the eggs, milk and honey. Bake at 375 for 30 minutes or until done. (One variation is to use 3 cups acorn meal to 1 cup corn meal. Much more acorny.)

donment of the project, and indeed the closure of the whole mine, around 1913.

Since then, the area has been used as summer range, most recently by the Pedro and Airola families of Columbia and Angels Camp respectively.

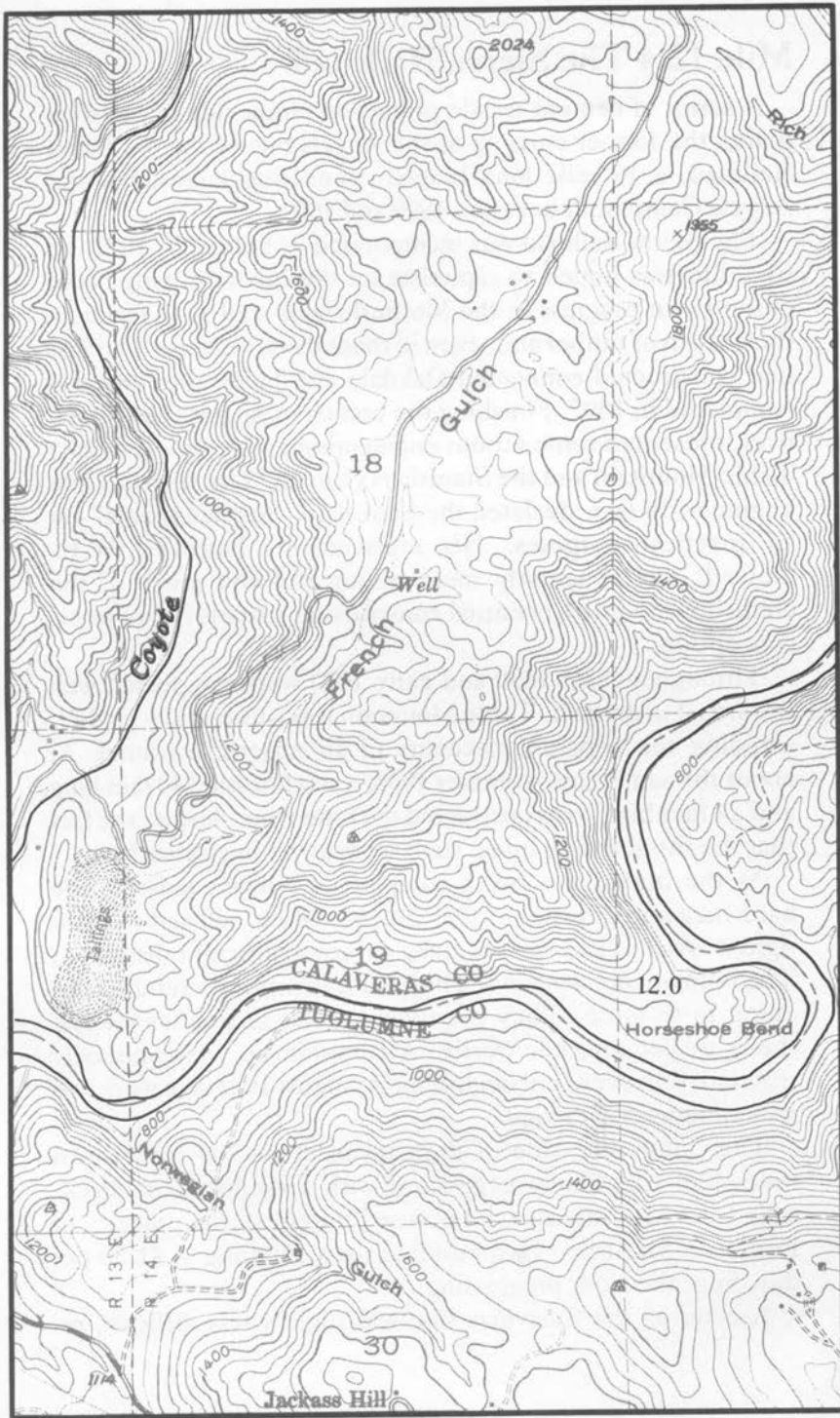
Mile 12.4 McLean's Ferry

Among the four ferries operating between Abbey's and Melones, the earliest was started by George McLean, an Englishman from Hawaii, in 1849. McLean apparently had a swift sense of tradition and within a year he was publicly referring to his operation as "the old, established ferry on the river Stanislaus." He also, according to reports, had upon his premises "no less than two respectable women" at a time when such a thing was quite uncommon.

Indications are that the ferry closed operations when Harvey Wood, the owner of the prosperous Robinson's Ferry downstream, bought McLean out in 1858.



McLean's Ferry. "The old established ferry on the Stanislaus River". *Charles Nahl painting.*



Mile 12.4 The Sierra Railroad

A series of cement trestle pilings on either side of the river marks the former crossing of the Angels line of the old Sierra Railroad, a 19 mile long branch connecting Jamestown and Angels Camp built between 1899 and 1902.

The Sierra Railroad was incorporated in February, 1897. Its five directors hoped to capitalize on the quartz mining boom currently in progress in the Motherlode as well as to facilitate the growth of timber and, even in those days, tourism. The first line constructed connected Oakdale and Jamestown and was completed in 1897. Finishing the branch to Angels Camp however, presented some serious engineering problems — namely, Table Mountain and the Stanislaus Canyon. The railway's first engineer, in fact, declared the Stanislaus "unmanageable" for all practical purposes. His replacement, however, W.H. Newell, was apparently more resourceful and much of the credit for the line's eventual construction success is due to his conception.

Throughout late 1899 and early 1900 work progressed well towards Tuttletown. Table Mountain was successfully graded, avoiding the apparent necessity of an expensive tunnel. At about the same time, summer 1900, a steel trestle 140 feet long and 24 feet high was constructed over the river, despite the fact that the formidable canyon walls were as yet unapproached.

As the bridge was being completed, William Ralston, the hard bargaining owner of the Melones Mine, refused to grant right-of-way unless he was given substantial freight discounts. The railroad men responded by halting construction and threatening to re-route. They even went so far as to offer for sale their, as yet unused, trestle. A compromise was eventually reached, however, and beginning in August 1901, the work was recommenced with vigor.

The Tuolumne side of the canyon drops 700 feet in two miles and was finally negotiated with a double switchback, called the McArdle switch because it began on the property of Ferguson McArdle. Two hundred men, laboring at \$1.50 per day, kept the work progressing.

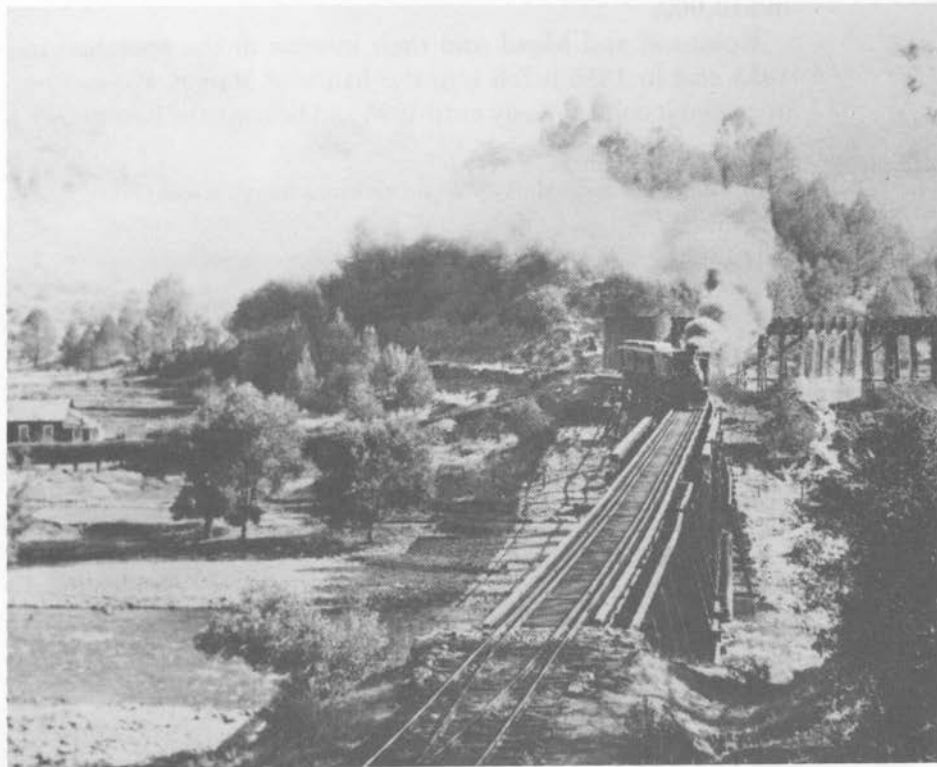
Ascending the Calaveras side was slightly less difficult, re-

quiring only one major switchback, the top of which was called "Gee Whiz Point". By late August 1902, the grading crew had mastered Carson Hill and most of the relatively easy stretch between the Hill and Angels Camp. On Monday, September 15, the first train rolled between the two towns.

Angels Camp held a parade for the event that the San Francisco *Chronicle* called "the largest celebration in the little town's history." Two brass bands played, a hot-air balloon went aloft with a parachutist aboard, and there were games, picnics, and square dancing all day long.

Archie Stevenot, a lifetime resident of Carson Hill, recalls one day in particular in the history of the railroad — June 26, 1906. A boxcar loaded with dynamite jumped the track near Gee Whiz Point and exploded. The brakeman managed to survive by jumping clear, but one — and possibly two — passengers were not so lucky. It was never exactly clear how many had died; the only evidence was a gaping hole where the tracks had been.

The Sierra Railroad Trestle.



Unfortunately for the railroad promoters, the mineral, timber and tourism business on their new line failed to materialize as hoped for. Meanwhile, the new trucking industry was becoming more and more competitive. Service was gradually cut back over the period 1917 to 1936, until finally, in 1939, it was officially discontinued. Shortly afterwards, the tracks and trestle were taken up, marking the end of the canyon's brief railroad era.

Mile 12.7 Robinson's Ferry

Probably the most important of the four ferries established on the Stanislaus between Melones and Abbey's was the one begun at the base of Carson's Hill by John Robinson and Stephen Mead in 1849.

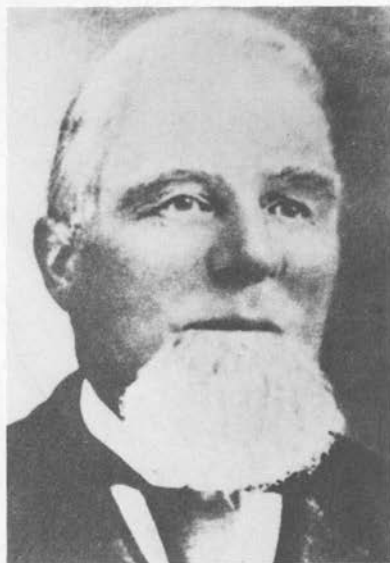
Robinson's Ferry, as it came to be known, linked the settlements of Angels Camp and Sonora along a road that followed the present Highway 49 route quite closely.

As prosperity hit the Southern mines, and in particular the Carson Hill claims, business on the new ferry boomed. During one six week period in 1849, the two ferrymen reportedly took in \$10,000.

Robinson and Mead sold their interest in the operation in 1853 and in 1856 it fell into the hands of Harvey Wood who operated it continuously until 1895 and became the best known ferryman on the river.

Robinson's Ferry. Harvey Wood escorts a buggy across the Stanislaus.





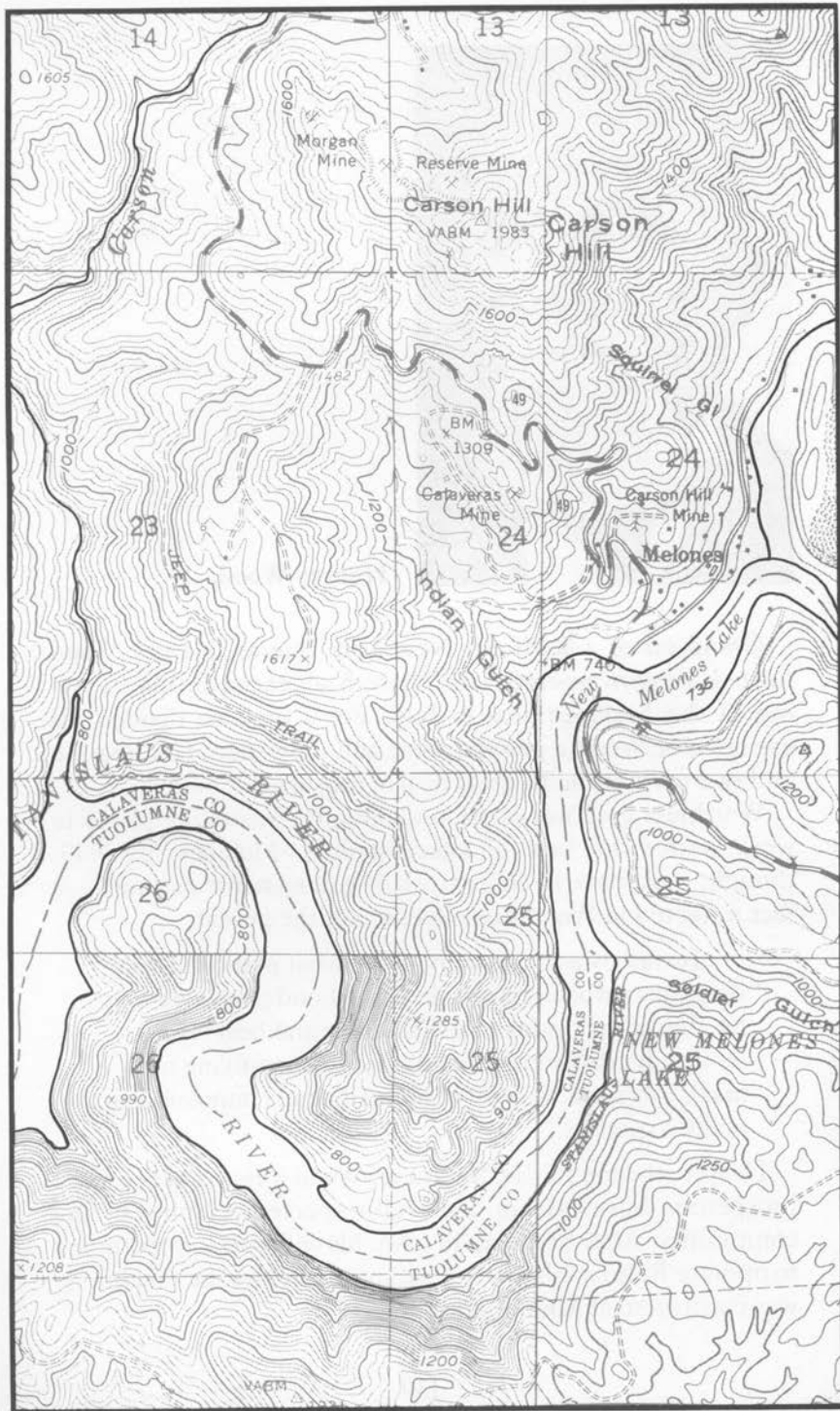
Harvey Wood.

Grandson of a Bedford, New York Squire, Harvey Wood forsook Eastern amenities for Western adventure in 1849, arriving in the Melones area in July. For a time he divided his energies between a general store and a prospect hole that he and two partners had a great deal of (misplaced) faith in.

Worthless gold mines are undoubtedly frustrating places to work under the best of circumstances. Melones, in 1849, though, must have been particularly galling to the partners — a fact reflected in Wood's recollections of the period:

“It was always a mystery to me what particular qualifications a worthless drunken vagabond possessed that he almost inevitably had the richest and best claims, while a hard-working, industrious man, striving to make a fortune, very often found it nearly impossible to make expenses.”

Despite the inequities of fortune, Wood went on to become a prosperous businessman and well-respected member of the community. After his death in 1895, his wife and son continued to operate Robinson's Ferry until shortly before the first bridge was constructed at Melones in 1907.



Mile 12.8 Carson's Hill/Melones

The river makes a riffled turn to the right bringing into view Carson's Hill, a small flattened peak that for a time appeared to be the fabled "mother mountain of gold" beside which every other strike in history was destined to pale into insignificance. These were Carson's Diggings, and the hill was known originally as "the crater"; and for a very few lucky Forty-Niners, this is where their rainbow finally came to rest.

During the first few months of the Gold Rush, when the territory was still wide open, a few enterprising whites enticed the Miwoks with beads and other trade goods to bring back the "shiny stones" from the creeks and river bottoms of the backwoods. Charles M. Weber was one of these early entrepreneurs and it was to his camp, on a creek near the American river, that a group of Indians brought back samples of "nugget gold" that galvanized the American miners of "Weberville" and brought them hurriedly south to the Stanislaus.

Arriving separately, and a few months beforehand, was a group of men discharged from Colonel J.D. Stevenson's New York Volunteers, part of the defunct California invasion force of the War with Mexico. Among them was one James H. Carson, a former Second Lieutenant who gave his name to the creek which watered their camp.

For those first few miners at the new diggings, the placer values were phenomenal. Carson and a few of his men, over a period of ten days, were reported to have taken out 180 ounces each.

The news of these discoveries had a predictable effect on the hordes of gold seekers already crowding the northern diggings and the resultant rush made Carson's the biggest camp in the Motherlode by the fall of 1850.

It was at about this time, or a little later, that accounts of the diggings began to refer to them by the name Melones, rather than Carson's. The new name was the Spanish word for "melons" and derived from the fact that the creek bottom nuggets from the area had been washed smooth into the shape of watermelon seeds.

Up until the end of 1850, the focus of the activities had been on Carson and Coyote Creeks, as well as the main river. As extraordinary as these finds had been, they were quickly overshadowed by a discovery made by William Hance on October 20, 1850 when he uncovered a quartz gold vein on the top of the "crater" that was eventually described as "the largest mass of vein gold ever found in the world, allowing all reasonable latitude for exaggeration."

Among the six partners that Hance took in to exploit the vein was one by the name of Colonel Alfred Morgan, and together the seven staked out a claim that eventually became the basis for the world-famous Morgan mine.

A mining report filed in the year 1868 described the find and the first efforts at mining it: ". . . the rock was extremely rich; indeed, if the statements of those who lived at the place are to be taken, the gold was abundant beyond any parallel. On one occasion gold to the amount of \$110,000 was thrown down at one blast."

Understandably, the discovery electrified the little camp as indeed it did the entire state, creating a second rush of "chaotic" proportions. Thousands of miners staked claims on the "crater" recently digging within just a few feet of one another in a feverish rush to get to the best ore first. It was the height of the California Gold Rush, and Melones became the archetypal camp.

Hance made his discovery on October 20, 1850, and his Carson Creek Consolidated Mining Co. filed their claim on November 15. Little noticed at the time though was the fact that Hance, Morgan, et al were attempting to monopolize the entire find by laying claim to the full 1700 feet of vein. On the basis of the accepted "laws" of the camps that limited each miner to a spot no larger than 25 feet square, this was an outrageous excess; and when Morgan and company began efforts to enforce the self-proclaimed limits of their claim, the ensuing uproar effectively stopped all activity on the hill for a period of almost a year while the "People's Mining Co." battled with the seven partners in the courts, in the pages of local newspapers, and occasionally in the streets.

As an outgrowth of this conflict, Melones became the scene of heightening racial tension between the Anglos and Mexican miners — many of whom were working on shares for the Morgan Company. Captain Leonard Noyes, who, together with some partners, went in on a claim not far from Melones and described the early days in his diary:

Soon after we bought the Block and Tackle claim, a crowd from San Francisco came up, and pitched all the Mexicans from the Morgan Claim and took possession of it. Before this the whole hill was worked by Mexicans hired on shares and a Town called Melone was started on the opposit side of the Hill from Carsons. This place called Melones was built of Brush streets say 10 feet wide lined on each side with these Brush houses where Gambling was carried on at an enormous extent, all the Mexicans having money. It was supposed that they stole more gold than they accounted for to Morgan & Co. I dont think there was ever in the Mines so wicked a crowd. Some are killed every night, shooting and cutting all the time. Our Cabbin was the opposite side of the hill some 2 miles from Melones. We would usually go there Sunday nights in a bodey keeping together so as to be able to protect each other. I always felt in those narrow streets that I was liable to have a knife shoved into me at any moment . . .

Eventually the bickering and legal squabbles took their toll on the Morgan Company and by 1853 they were soliciting buyers for their operation. After some negotiations it ended up in the hands of James G. Fair, a businessman with investments in the area. Fair, incidentally, went on to become one of the Comstock silver barons and the founder of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

It was under Fair's ownership, in 1854, that the famous "Calaveras Nugget" was discovered. Richard Coke Wood gives this description of the nugget, generally acknowledged to be the largest ever found in the United States.

“The nugget was fifteen inches long, nearly six inches wide and of irregular thickness, averaging four inches. Attached to one side were pieces of quartz, but over eighty per cent of the lump was gold. It was weighed on Adam Express Company’s scales in Stockton and balanced at 2576 ounces, or 214 pounds and 8 ounces, Troy. The gold was valued at seventeen dollars an ounce and the worth estimated at \$38,000, making allowances for the quartz attached to it.”

The speed with which the camp at Carson’s sprang up was only equalled by the speed at which it was abandoned. By 1858 a visitor to the camp describes “crumbling remains of stone chimneys and adobe ovens” and “ancient cabin remains.” Rarely has history been on a faster track than among the goldfields of California.

Melones Around 1900. Looking across Coyote Creek. The Carson Hill stamp mill is visible in the center back.



A second era opened for the town of Melones in 1898 when William Devereaux, a wealthy investor from New York City, constructed a 60 stamp mill and began driving a new shaft into the base of Carson's Hill. Power to the mill was provided by flume water taken out of the Stanislaus with the help of a diversion dam installed approximately one mile below Parrott's Ferry.

Following Devereaux's lead, four other companies soon began operations at Melones, injecting new life into the old camp. In 1920 all five were consolidated into one corporation — The Carson Hill and Melones — which between 1920 and 1926 produced \$6,000,000.

Operations continued on a reduced scale until 1942 when the War Order L-202 shut down non-essential industries for the war effort. It was the final blow, as it turned out, for the remarkable Carson Hill claims; they were never re-opened.



BLACK BART

Charles E. Boles, alias Black Bart, was a gentlemen's highwayman — possibly the original of his kind in the West. Beginning in July of 1875 he successfully held up twenty-eight stages before his luck finally turned on November 3, 1883, and cruel fate delivered him into the hands of the law.

Bart was a man of some sensibilities and he built his reputation in crime and not only for his success, but also for his style. He was blunt with the drivers but unfailingly chivalrous with the ladies. And he left behind poetry. Bad poetry, to be sure — Bart considered it a major part of his crime — but, nevertheless, it was a classy touch.

Black Bart's final hold-up occurred in the Stanislaus canyon, downstream by a few miles from Melones and is a story worth retelling:

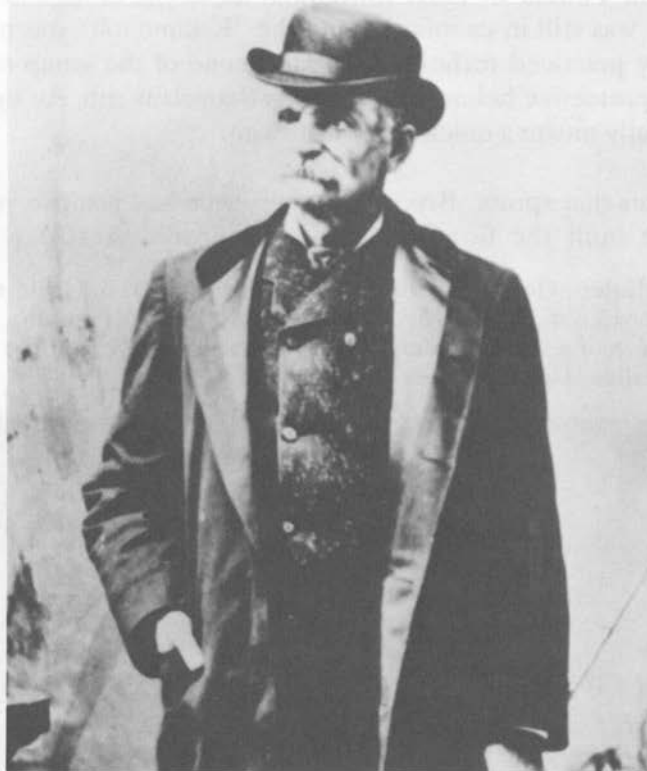
Reason E. McConnell, driver for the Nevada Stage Company, pulled out of Sonora at four o'clock in the morning Saturday, November 3, 1883. He stopped in Tuttletown and picked up a strongbox containing several hundreds of dollars in gold dust and coin. His next stop was Reynold's Ferry, the crossing downstream of Robinson's where Jimmy Roller asked to hitch a ride up to Funk Hill. He had recently acquired a new rifle and intended to do some hunting with it.

At the foot of the hill, Roller hopped off to continue on foot and McConnell's stage began inching up the steep incline. It was near the top when Bart made his move. Leaping out of the underbrush, brandishing a shotgun and wearing a flour sack over his head, he must have been an arresting sight. McConnell instantly recognized the thief and his intentions and reined his team in. The next few minutes were spent wrestling with the strongbox and forcing its latch. Meanwhile, Young Roller happened on the scene. There was a quick exchange of shots and Bart, wounded in the hand, scurried off down the slope. Unfortunately for the bandit, he left behind a number of articles —

his brown derby, a bag of crackers, a handkerchief, a pair of field glasses, a belt, a magnifying glass, a razor and two flour sacks. The handkerchief proved to be Bart's undoing for it was stamped with a San Francisco laundry mark which soon led the authorities to Charles E. Boles.

Boles was convicted and sentenced to six years at San Quentin, during which time he took the opportunity to write to his sentencing judge expressing no hard feelings. Upon his release he took his leave of California and was heard from no more.

Jimmy Rolleri, for his part, was presented by the stage line with a new rifle inlaid with silver scrollwork — a generous gesture lessened somewhat when the gun exploded with the first shot. Jimmy was uninjured, however, and soon received a replacement — without the scrollwork.



Boats on the Stanislaus

Although written descriptions are lacking, it seems probable that various, isolated individuals floated the stretch between Camp Nine and Melones in rubber boats commencing soon after the Second World War. When, how many, and with what success, though, would be hard questions to answer accurately.

The first well documented trip took place in April, 1961, when a group of eleven Sierra Club kayakers put in at Camp Nine. Included among the group were: Elsa Bailey, Ray Cochran, John Bombay, Ray DeSaussure, Bob Elliott, Ted Fostiac, Glen Gaumer, Monte Rowell, Charley Smith, and Barbara Tilden. In 1961, whitewater kayaking, at least in the West, was still in its infancy, and the "Eskimo roll" was not a widely practiced technique. In fact, none of the group even wore protective helmets for this first Stanislaus trip. An upset generally meant a quick exit and a swim.

Later that spring, Bryce Whitmore, who had just two years before built the first fibreglass kayak in the West, ran the

Elsa Bailey. One of the very first female kayakers in California, Elsa boated the Rogue River in Oregon in 1959, the first time it had been done with modern-style kayaks. Shown here at the 1961 Salida, Colorado races.



same stretch with Peter Whitney and Maynard Munger. Within a few weeks of this trip, Bryce was back with rubber boats and the first paying passengers.

In 1962 and 1963, Bryce's was the only outfit rowing passengers down the river. His brochure could guarantee the participants complete solitude. But in the summer of 1963, the old Camp Nine powerhouse was replaced with a larger, more modern plant which re-distributed springtime high water to late in the season. The Stanislaus suddenly became runnable throughout the summer. Shortly thereafter, Lou Elliott, Henry Felaney and a few others began offering trips on the Stanislaus.

By 1980, the number of outfitters on the Stanislaus has grown to more than 30, and the total number of annual visitors to the river now exceeds 60,000 — making the Stanislaus the third most popular whitewater river in the country.

Ray DeSaussure. A spelunker as well as a white water boater, DeSaussure first became familiar with the Stanislaus out of his interest in caves. It was his suggestion that brought the Sierra Club boaters to Camp 9 in April 1961.



Modern Development on the Stanislaus:

There exist fourteen dams on the Stanislaus and its principal forks. They range in size from 147 feet at Relief Creek to the 623 foot monolith at New Melones. Between them they generate 138,000 kilowatts of power and yield 1.7 million acre-feet of water. The Stanislaus resource, to borrow a term, has been exploited; it's a hard-working river.

The primary benefactors of the river's energy and water are the customers of PG&E and irrigators in Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties.

Water Flows Below Camp Nine:

At the onset of this section, a point should be made which occasionally becomes lost in the description of water releases from behind dams. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company, whose Camp Nine facility determines the timing of the water flow in the late summer, manufactures no water. They redistribute water. If an August afternoon sees a healthy flow of 1200 cubic feet per second of water, it is because a June morning has been depleted of a similar amount.

Bearing this fact in mind, what follows is a typical week's schedule of water flow in the Stanislaus after spring run-off has ceased to be an important factor, and before the onset of winter rain.

NOTE: Water in the Stanislaus travels at a speed of 2-4 miles per hour. The hours quoted below refer to Camp Nine. Downstream locations will experience a delay proportional to their distance from the powerhouse.

Monday — Friday: An average flow would be 900 cubic feet per second, more than enough to make the river navigable. Camp Nine releases for approximately twelve hours per day, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., although minor fluctuations during the middle of the day are not unknown.

Saturday — Sunday: Weekend flows do not differ dramatically for those released Monday through Friday on the Stanislaus. Exceptions are generally caused by holiday weekends which reduce power demand, or equipment malfunctions.



The New Melones Dam. Fourth largest earthfill dam in the world.
Completed in 1979 at a cost of \$341 million.