

Fresno Fillets



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Madera County
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Stella T. Brockman
Fresno School
1936 —

Recp. 1



THIS BOOK

IS

DEDICATED

TO

MORGAN NICHOLS

who is today the oldest native-born white citizen of

MADERA COUNTY.

FRESNO FLATS (OAKHURST)

The story of the "Fresno" is as old as the tales of the early Spanish riders who drove their cattle and sheep into the mountain pastures to fatten on the high grasses which grew in the summer in the little flats and meadows lying along the river, upon whose banks grew the tall and beautiful ash trees which gave to its waters their Spanish name of "Fresno".

At first, and for many years, these flat little valleys were called 'the flats along the Fresno', until the time came when white settlers began to replace, or drive back the Indians, and a name was needed for the little town which followed, and the natural result was "Fresno Flats".

No very important gold strikes were made in this section of the hills, although the old Enterprise Mine at one time employed forty men, and is said to have taken out \$80,000.00 worth of gold in one year.

Here the prosperity of the people rested in their cattle and hogs, and their range extended unfenced from the Merced River on the north, to the San Joaquin on the south and west, and to the summit of the Sierras on the east. All stock ran at large, and fences were built to keep cattle out of cultivated areas, and not to keep them in pastures. Hence, if a neighbors cattle destroyed your garden, it was considered your own fault for having built such a poor fence. Thus no damage suits for destruction of property from cattle or hogs ever arose.

Cattle and sheep passed through here on their way to and from the higher ranges, and bands of 10,000 sheep were not uncommon in the spring and fall passing through on their search for feed. The

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departure of the stock men from the mountains was heralded by the brightness of their fires as they burned the fallen timber and brush behind them in the fall. This method kept down the underbrush and destroyed the dead timber, and a man could ride on horseback anywhere he chose to go through the virgin forests of the hills without having his way barred, as it is today, by the thick growth of snowbrush and chaparral, which each year is eating into the grazing land of the stock man.

There was no beginning to this settlement. From time untold Indians have lived here, gathering the wild berries and acorns in the fall, fishing in the streams, weaving their baskets of the native willows and water grasses which grew along the rivers, killing their need of the wild deer, rabbits, bear, and birds when necessary. The skins of the deer furnished clothing, and what more could man desire in those days of plenty and contentment.

With the coming of Fremont's army into California, a few adventurers drifted into the hills, and some of the men took for their wives the more attractive of the Indian girls, and some of their half-breed children grew up as the natural step between the old natives and the coming whites. Many of these first children, and their sons and daughters still live in the hills, and have become the fathers and mothers of well established families, who are proud of the fact that their grandfathers and greatgrandfathers were among the first white settlers in the county.

Much of the history of that time has become legendary, but a few facts concerning the first settlers are authentic. Much, however, has been left to the imagination and recollection of the children and grandchildren of these first adventurous pioneers who came so far away from civilization to make their homes among the Indians of the hill

country.

To locate the first white settler seems difficult, because these men are now gone, and dates seem to have been forgotten. However, the names of John Beasore, George Sharpton, John Hunt, and Winkleman seem most commonly thought of as among the earliest.

John Beasore seems to have drifted into this country from the mining region near Mariposa, where he had a contract to furnish fresh meat to the miners at \$1.00 a pound. By the use of pack donkeys he was able to carry sufficient amounts to soon see for himself that the man who carried the supplies was more apt to make money than the man who carried the pick and shovel.

In some way he wandered into the country near the Fresno River and found a beautiful little valley which seemed to be the center of the water supply. This must have been about 1856, and here he decided to settle. He paid \$800.00 to an earlier prospector for his rudely built cabin of one room which was situated in the middle of the little valley. He was surrounded on all sides by Indians, and it is estimated, that as many as 2,600 warriors once camped on a hill near his house. Many a night John Beasore sat with his long rifle guarding the one window of the cabin against marauders. Finally he made friends with his neighbors, married one of their daughters, and lived among them for many years.

Another of the first men to come here was George Sharpton. He and John Beasore became life long friends. These two men lived neighbors and friends at the time of the trouble brewing between the North and the South over the slavery question, and many arguments arose between them as to the merits of the respective candidates in the presidential election of 1860. Finally, as election time grew near, a wager was made, Sharpton betting Beasore that Douglas would defeat Lincoln. Sharpton lost, and paid his bet by 'whipsawing' from Sugar Pine logs

such lumber as was needed for the construction of a house.

In building the house, Beasore had to make all of his nails in his own blacksmith shop, and this was tedious work. Iron was scarce, and nails were valued too highly to use without care. Thus it was that the ceilings in the new house were laid on top of the ceiling joists instead of being nailed to them from beneath as is now the custom. Two boards were laid side by side, and the third was placed on top of these to cover the crack and insure warmth.

This house was the scene of many early day skirmishes with the Indians, but it stood from 1860 until 1930 when it was torn down by the present owner, W. H. Beasore, a nephew of the early John Beasore, to make room for a more modern dwelling.

After enduring the heavy winter snows and the hot summer suns of three score years and ten, the lumber was still found to be in such good condition that all of the ceiling boards were sent to Madera to the Madera Sugar Pine Lumber Company, to have them resurfaced and made into door sills and window frames for the new house. Upon seeing them, the Madera Company offered to replace them with twice the amount of board feet, if Beasore would allow them to use the original material for advertising purposes. Of course he consented, and the seventy year old boards, still bearing the marks of the early whip saw, were cut into 7" lengths, surfaced on one side, and bearing an account of the early wager and subsequent history, were mailed out to contractors, lumber dealers and builders all over the United States to testify to the strength and durability of the Sugar Pine lumber which has helped to make Madera City and County the prosperous place it is today.

A son of John Beasore, Tom, still lives in the hills, making his home near Coarse Gold, but the Beasore home, the first to be built in the valley still remains in the family name.



THE NEWTON SISTERS

Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. Laramore

Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Burford

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The real settlement of the Flats as a home for families rests upon the courage and hardihood of four sisters, who married and came to the hills with their husbands and small children to make their fortunes.

These four sisters were a part of the Newton family who came across the plains in 1851 and settled at old Fort Miller, where the mother, with the aid of her daughters ran a hotel, while the father conducted a freight train from Stockton, which was then their source of supply. Bills at the hotel were most often paid in gold dust or in nuggets; silver coins were scarce, and paper currency was unheard of.

As the daughters of the family grew older, Elizabeth married first a man named Hickman and then several years later Robert Nichols. Margaret Newton became the wife of Bill Taylor; Caroline married first a Mr. Wilson, and later 'Tank' Burford; Mary became the wife of a man named Philips, and then later married Robert Larrimore.

From Millerton they moved to Buchanan, where they lived for several years until the decline in the prosperity of Buchanan as a stage station caused them to seek new fields of adventure.

These four sisters and their families then made their way into the flats along the Fresno, and Taylor and Nichols became the best known of the early home builders of this community, and no story is complete without the mention of their names.

Prior to 1873, the trading center for these settlers was the city of Stockton, about two hundred miles away. Each fall the cured meat of hogs, and the dried hides of cattle were loaded into a large wagon, together with the camping equipment of the owner. Of course this trip took three or four weeks, but was the only means whereby the settler could bring back to his family the supply of food and clothing for the coming year.

When the produce was sold, payment was received in gold and silver. No paper money was in circulation in the west, and had it been, the early settler probably would not have accepted it, but would have demanded payment in gold. What to do with this money after it was received was always a problem. First the supply of food was purchases, probably one barrel of sugar, one barrel of syrup, barrels of flour according to the needs of the family, one or more 50 pound sacks of coffee purchsed green, to be roasted and ground by the housewife as need arose, and then sufficient shoes and cloth for clothing and household needs to supply the family for the coming year.

You can imagine the homecoming of the father of the family. It must have seemed like Christmas, with the women and children waiting at home anxious to open and examine the new possessions. What money was left after the purchases was usually gambled away by the careless, or brought home by the more enterprising to either be buried, or loaned to neighbors who had need for more food and clothing, (probably never to be repaid).

In 1873 the railroad was built from San Francisco to Fresno, and then produce was shipped by train to and from that point. Going from Fresno Flats to Fresno was a much simpler problem. The trip was made almost directly south, crossing the San Joaquin at Jone's Store

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(Friant) and directly on to Fresno, which at this time consisted mainly of a warehouse, corrals and a water tank. The river was forded in low water, but in high water was crossed by a ferry operated by the owner of the store.

The first mail to come into this country was brought in by a man on horseback twice a week. This rider came from Mariposa on the Yosemite Road

Following the opening of the railroad to Fresno, mail connections were made with the valley and Berenda became the connecting link.

The first road into this section of the country connected with the Fremont Trail somewhere near Buchanan. From there into the hills the road followed much the same course it does today, through the present location of Raymond, Fresno Crossing, and Coarse Gold. From time to time as settlers increased this old narrow wagon road, with its switchbacks and 'turn outs' for passing has been improved until today we find ourselves traveling on a paved highway which connects Yosemite Valley with the City of Fresno, leaving Raymond and Buchanan entirely off our line of travel.

The first mail stage arrived in 1873, driven by Pat Grace, and brought the mail from Berenda. This route was also followed by any tourists wishing to reach the higher mountains. In 1874 horse trails were completed from The Flats to Yosemite, the trip costing about \$10.00 a horse for a round trip.

In 1880 the wagon road was completed from here to Big Tree Station(Wawona), and a stage line was operated by the Washburn Stage Company. This road was a toll road, costing \$1.00 a horse from Fresno Flats to Wawona.

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This stage used Madera as its starting point instead of Berenda and two six horse stages made this daily trip each way. Between 700 and 800 horses were in daily use. Complete changes were made at each station. Leaving Madera the stage stopped first at a point near the present Adobe Ranch, then at Bate's Station, Zebra Station (Dustin's), Dapelo's Ranch, Coarse Gold, Fresno Flats, Burford Station, Eleven Mile Station and finally Big Tree Station. At times many extra stages were necessary to accommodate the travel, so extra horses must be kept at each station to be ready if needed. It is estimated that there were about 10,000 horses in Madera County at that time.

With the opening of the railroad to Fresno, the Flats began to grow and became a prosperous settlement.

The change in transportation, and the opening of the Sugar Pine Flume both added to the growth and prosperity of the community.

In 1876, there drifted in from no one knows where, one Chinese man and his wife. They settled near the small creek which flows into the Fresno River in the lower Flats, and here they made their home for several years. They were followed by others of their kinsmen, and one, Ah Ling, built and managed a Chinese store, supplying his countrymen and others with whiskey and groceries.

Since these Chinese lived near the water, and washed for gold along its banks, it soon became known as "China Creek", and to this day bears that name as a reminder of those early Chinese who for a short time made their homes here.

Reports as to their actual number vary, estimations reaching as high as one hundred fifty. 'Mal' McLeod remembers once when a young lad walking up the creek to watch them wash for gold, and counting sixty-three at one time. Mining was a poor paying occupation, and they drifted out one at a time as they had come, their destination being unknown.



MR. AND MRS. JOHN DE LONG

The name of "Fresno Flats" was given to the first Post Office
by Mr. De Long.

The first store to be operated in the Flats was one run by a man named Balleau, in the year 1873.

In 1874, a building which had been used for a store at what is now the Burguet ranch near Coarse Gold, was torn down and moved to the Flats by D. H. Myers, where it became again a store operated by Tom Allen. Allan became the first post master, and with the opening of the post office the official name of "Fresno Flats" was given to the settlement by John de Long, what at that time was an employee of Allen and assisted in the store and post office.

About 1878 Larrimore and Phelps built a building at the south end of the China Creek bridge and there operated a general merchandise store. About 1879 Captain Wesley Smith purchased Phelps' part of the store and the name was changed to 'Larrimore and Smith'. These two men built a larger building across the street from their former location in the year 1884. This building still stands, and was used as a school building during the spring term of 1936 while the present school building was being remodeled to meet the needs of the community.

Finally Smith sold his interest to Larrimore, and moved to Grub Gulch where he conducted a store and hotel for several years.

Another store was built in 1884 by Walker and McFadden.

At this time Fresno Flats seems to have reached the height of its progress. There were, in the town, three saloons, two hotels, two stores, a blacksmith shop, a skating rink and dance hall, and a school house. Approximately two hundred people lived in the town, and the surrounding territory was rather thickly populated. This was the last outpost for all the miners and cattle and sheep men going back into the high mountains with their pack stock, and cattle for the summer range. Freight to and from the mines in the Minaret country used this as their headquarters, and many of the families of the mill workers moved with their children here for the winter. Business was good,

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and stores, saloons and pool halls seem to have been quite prosperous. Because of the many drifters who came and went with the work in the mills and the mines, this became rather a wild mountain settlement, until the influence of the permanent residents forced the saloons to close, and with their passing, passed the undesirable element who moved on to other towns which cared more for the money of the gamblers than it did for the reputation of the community.

According to Bob McKenzie, who was one of the early settlers, this is the only place in the hills where he ever saw men gamble by pitching twenty dollar gold pieces to a wagonwheel track in the road, the man who pitched nearest taking all the gold, and then backing off to pitch again, perhaps until all his winnings had passed on to some other gambler whose luck had taken a turn for the better.

As in all mountain towns of its time, Fresno Flats saw its share of murders, robberies and drunken brawls, but with the decline in the population, following the moving of the mills, and the closing of some of the mines, the Flats, gradually became of less importance, until today, even the name is unfamiliar to the newer settlers.

In 1912 the old Traditional 'Fresno Flats' was changed, by a petition to the State Senate instigated by Mrs. Chas. Myers, into its present name of 'Oakhurst'. While this is perhaps a more beautiful name, it is to be regretted that much of our early history and stories of adventure seem to die with the death of the names with which they were first associated. The time is fast coming when nothing of the old town will remain as a reminder of the early days of the wild west of which it was a part.

In 1876 Robert Nichols bought the Balleau property and built a house large enough to accommodate his immediate family as well as serve as a stopping place for stages and for two years room and board

was furnished to transients. Freight to the old California Mills came from Merced and stayed its last night at the Nichol's place. From the Flats to the mill was not such a great distance, but the road was very steep and narrow. It passed up what was called 'Rocky Cut', and rounding 'Cape Horn' wound its way up the mountain until it came to the mill. When the wagons started down, the road was so steep that a tree was usually cut and tied to the rear of the wagon to keep it from coming down too rapidly.

About 1878 Nichols tore his hotel down and moved the lumber to his homestead where he built a ranch house which stood for more than fifty years, becoming a land mark on the old road.

About 1880 Bill Taylor and John Beasore hauled lumber from the mill at Wawona and built a hotel, but after a few years this building burned.

In 1886, another hotel was built by J. M. Johnson which stood until Nov. 23, 1930, when it also burned.

In 1901 the old Larrimore and Smith building was purchased from Ab Taylor by Chas. Nelson, who then operated the store.

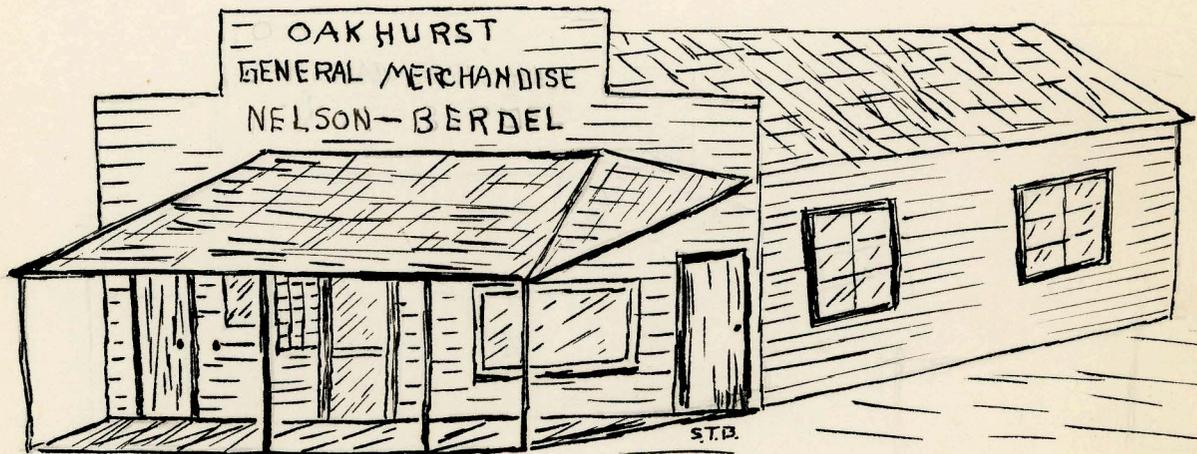
In 1907 Miss Elena Dyer came to the Flats to teach school, but after teaching for several years, married Mr. Nelson, and gave up her work to assist her husband in the management of his business. Mr. Nelson had become the Post Master in 1909, and continued in that work until his death in 1915. At that time the Fourth Class ^Post Offices were put under the Civil Service, and Mrs. Nelson took and passed the first examination ever to be given in this state for Post Masters of that class. From then on Mrs. Nelson managed the store and post office.

In 1925 Mrs. Nelson married Lee Berdel, and together they managed the old store until the opening of the paved highway in 1936, when they moved their supply of merchandise and later the post office

to a new building on the highway.

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Now, Like so many of the early mountain towns, Fresno Flats finds itself slowly rotting away, soon to become another of the Ghost Towns of the Sierras.

Mr. and Mrs. Berdel are the last link between the new Oakhurst, and the business houses of the old Fresno Flats.



BUILT BY
LARAMORE + PHELPS
— 1878 —



THE SCHOOL

In 1868 John Beasore, George Sharpton and a man named Winkleman began to realize that some sort of education should be provided for their children, so pooling their funds and materials they built a school house near where the Dupzyk home now stands. This was called "School House Flat" and later "Crane Valley".

The first teacher was named Hiram Cornet. His home was near Fresno, and he walked to and from school whenever he went home. He taught the school for three years, and by that time the Nochols and Taylor children had moved to the Flats, so a more convenient location was sought to accommodate them.

At this first school we find the following enrollment;
Tom, Nancy, Polly and Zila Beasore; Mary Sharpton; Joe Burns; Belle, Kate, Juanita and George Winkleman; Morgan, Ella and Jenny Nichols; Susan and Sophia Hickman; Molly and Maggie Taylor.

When the old schoolhouse at Crane Valley was abandoned for the better location in the Flats, a controversy arose as to what should become of the lumber. Since it had been donated for the building by John Beasore and George Sharpton, it naturally reverted to them, but this did not settle the question. Having no particular use for the material, each offered to sell to the other, and the argument as to which should purchase grew hot. Finally these two old-timers decided that if they were to maintain their friendship they had better divide the material equally between themselves with no outlay of money, so the building was

Map 1

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cut in two exactly in the middle, each man moving his share of the school house to his own property. Beasore used his to build a corn crib, and as the coming of the years brought less and less use for corn, it was finally torn down and moved again, and today stands as a cooling house on the Beasore property, perhaps the last remains of the earliest school house ever to be built in what is now Madera County.

The new school in the Flats was situated on the Nichols property near where the present school house now stands. This building was built in 1871 of logs, and was replaced in 1874 by a much better one built of boards and battings. R. H. Bramlet was then the teacher, and he is still remembered by some of the older members of the community who still live near the school which they attended sixty-five years ago. Names of other teachers remembered are those of Frank Short, A.M. Drew, T.J. Kirk ('76-'77) and later J.G. Smale.

The Fresno School Building was remodeled in the '80's and rebuilt in 1923, and again in 1936.

On hand in our school is an old register for the years 1884 and 1885. The term for 1884 began in March and ended Nov. 21. It was an ungraded school, and was taught by Alice M. Pratt, whose salary was \$75.00 per month. There was an average daily attendance of 26.9. The visitor's record which was kept in the back of the register is a roll call of the early settlers.

The school now serves as a community center, and is one of the largest one-teacher schools in the county.

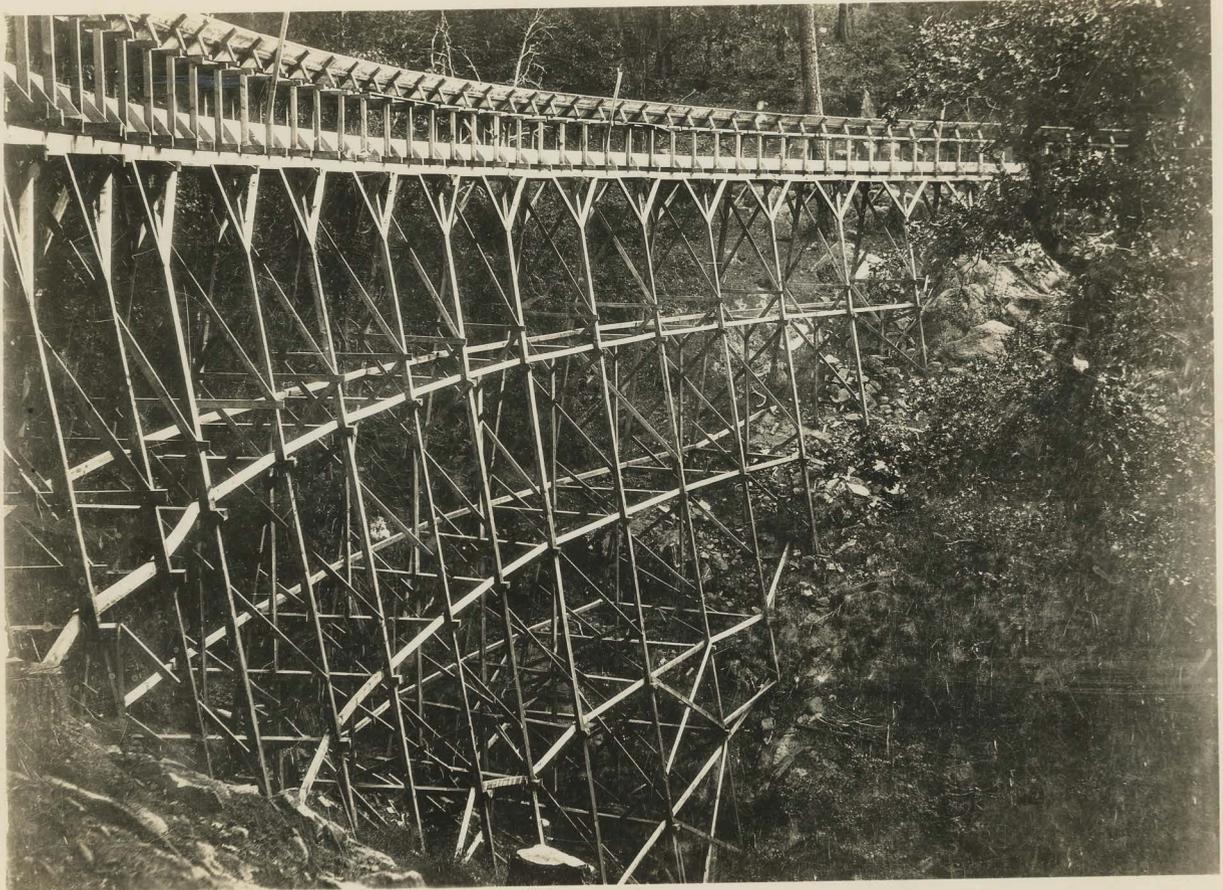


THE CHURCH

In 1895 the Nichols family gave to the Episcopalians the ground upon which they erected a church. The bell for this building was donated by a woman in Massachusetts and the stained glass windows were given by another Episcopalian church in the east. The lumber for the construction was purchased by money given by the citizens of the Flats and the work was donated.

In 1908 the Episcopalians agreed for other denominations to use the building, and since that time a Presbyterian minister has been furnished by the Presbyterian Missionary Board whenever funds were sufficient to allow it, and today it stands as a community church to which all are welcomed.

15A



JOSEPH'S JUMPOFF
a scene on the old Soquel flume
above Fresno Flats.

The 'Sugar Pine', and Other Saw Mills.

The development of the lumber industry has had a great influence on the development of the mountain region as well as adding to the prosperity of the valley towns.

The first little saw mill to be remembered in this vicinity was one called the "Green Saw Mill", which must have operated in the '50's. Another was that owned by George Sharpton, and stood near the present site of Bass Lake. A third was owned by Sivils and Noyes, and operated at what has since been called the 'Board Ranch'. The California Saw Mill began work about two miles above the present Batterson Ranch and ran for about a year. This mill was purchased by the Soquel Co, and was moved near the Old Soquel Mill near Soquel and both were managed by the same concern.

In 1868 a flume was started from Soquel by a group of San Jose men who were seeking a faster and cheaper means of transportation than the freighting by means of horse drawn wagons, which was both slow and costly. Part of the flume was built, and then the men went broke and the project was abandoned.

Dickerson and Ingraham took over the California Mill, under the financial aid of a San Jose banker named Mallory, and the building of the flume was again undertaken. It was completed to Fresno Flats in 1874, and the following year was finished into Madera, and from then until 193 held the distinction of being the longest lumber flume in the world.

Return Roberts, another San Jose Banker, bought land enough to control the water supply surrounding Soquel.

A man named Hill secured the timber claims from the original holders of all the best Sugar Pine forests. These plots of land were purchased sometimes for as little as \$300.00 for the 160 acres which

made up a timber claim in those days. Thus it was that Hill, Roberts and Mallory became the controlling holders of the Soquel Lumber Company.

About this time another pioneer in the lumber business, E. H. Cox, seeing that the timber available to Soquel would soon be depleted, searched through the mountains until he found the only real valuable location for another mill, and this he purchased for \$7,000.00. This little basin controlled the waters of four streams. Thus it happened that when the time came for another location to be found, Cox came forward with a proposition to the owners of the Soquel. A company was formed, and Roberts was elected Treasurer, Hill the President, and Cox the Vice-President and General Manager. This was known as the "Madera Sugar Pine Lumber Company". In 1897 they took over the flume from the now defunct Soquel Company, and operated until the lack of available timber caused the mill to shut down in 1933.

In building the flume, much of the construction was left in the hands of Robert Larrimore. No money was paid the owners of the land over which it passed, but a guarantee was given each owner that he might use all the water he needed as long as the flume stood. This agreement was never disputed, and even today some sections of the flume still carry water to mountain gardens, while that in the lower hills has been removed and sold.

Stations on this flume were from six to eight miles apart, according to the roughness of the country. The first, and most important station was known as 'Salt Springs', and stood about one mile above Fresno Flats. Here all the lumber was stopped and tied into trains before going on down to the next station. Salt Springs aided materially in the prosperity of Fresno Flats, furnishing employment to many of its citizens.

17A



MR. AND MRS. ROBERT NICHOLS.

ROBERT NICHOLS

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Robert Nichols first came to California from Salt Lake with Fremont in 1851. He ran cattle on the Adobe Ranch for a time, until he and a man named Hunt opened a store at Fresno Crossing.

In 1857 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Newton Hickman, a young widow with two small girls. In that year he first came to Fresno Flats, and finding it a country unsettled and well suited for cattle raising, he kept it in mind until he could move his family here and establish his home. Mr. and Mrs. Nichols were the first settlers of the town which grew up around them. Today we find that the school house, the church, and the cemetery were once a part of their ranch, and that Mr. Nichols, seeing the need of the community, gave the land on which they stand.

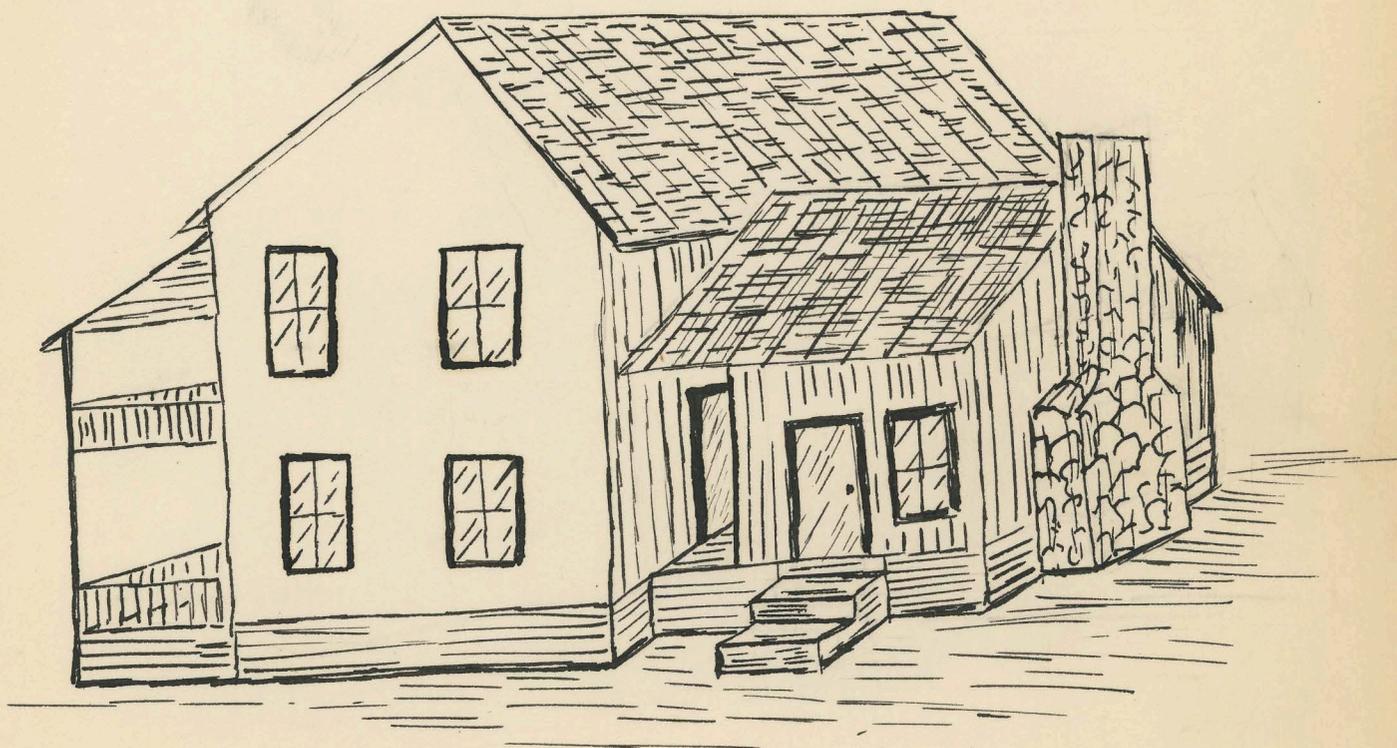
Mr. and Mrs. Nichols became the parents of a large family. Besides the two Hickman children, Margaret (Mrs. De Long) and Susan (Mrs. Brown) their family included Morgan and Ella (Mrs. Poole), twins; Virginia; Carrie (Mrs. Mount); Kate (Mrs. Poole); Josephine (Mrs. Ragan); Stuart; and Frankie.

Miss Virginia Nichols served for six years as a Deputy Recorder for Fresno County, and at one time was associated with an abstract company in Madera.

Frankie Nichols dies in the early seventies, and as there was no cemetery near, the father chose a beautiful site on an oak covered hill, set it aside for a cemetery, and dug the first grave for his small son.

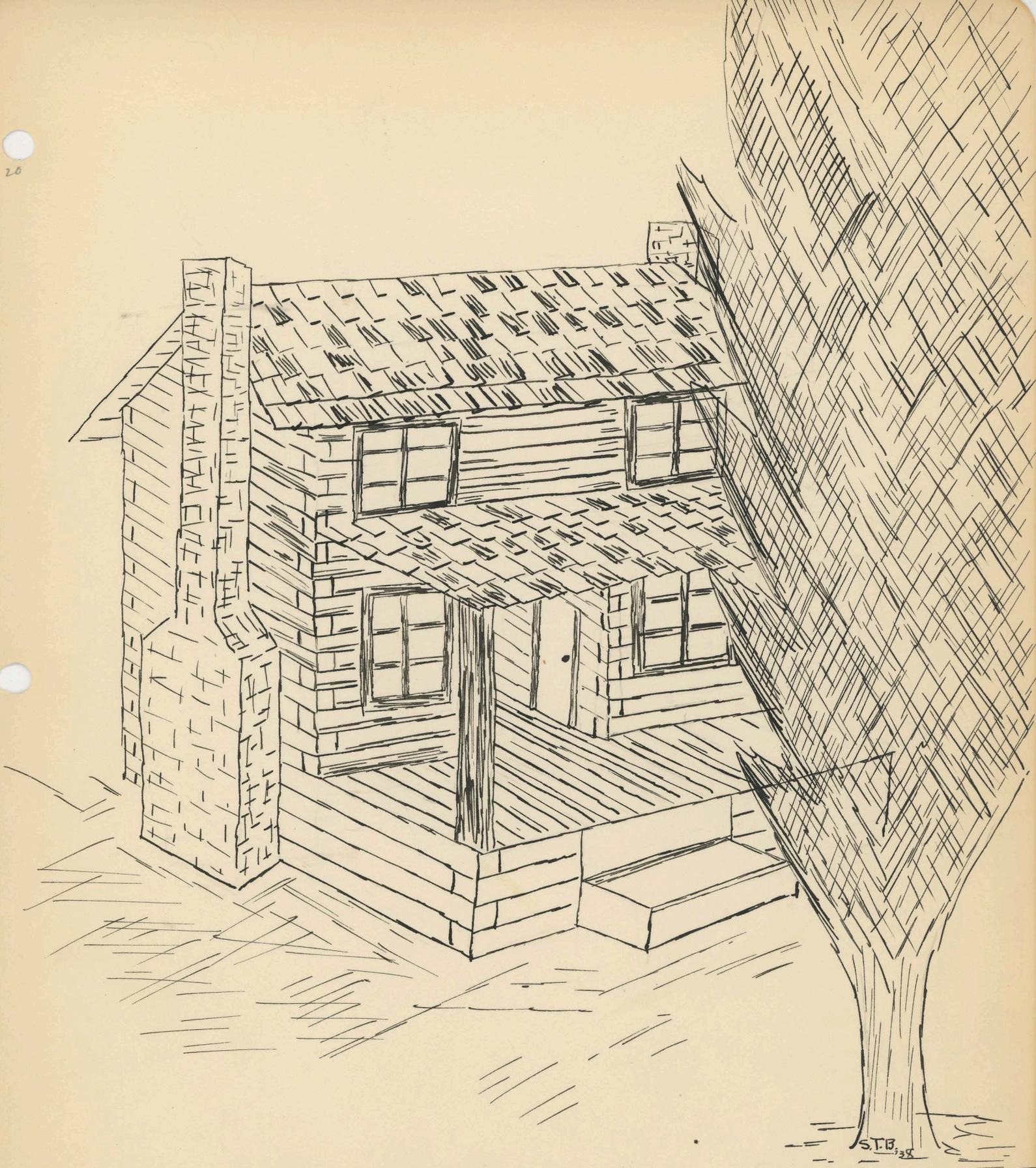
Morgan Nichols was born in 1859 at the Taylor Ranch near the Jessie Belle Mine. He is today the oldest registered native born white citizen of Madera County. From 1886 until 1890 he was Constable and Deputy Sheriff of Madera County. From 1909 until 1911 he served as Guard

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at Folsom State Prison. Now he lives, retired, with his brother Stuart
on the old home of his father, although the original house no longer
stands, having been destroyed by fire several years ago.



Nichols House

1878-1931



The Taylor House
1869.

26A



BILL TAYLOR

BILL TAYLOR

21
Bill Taylor and Margaret Newton were married at old Fort Miller Dec. 2, 1857. From there they moved to Buchanan where they lived until their home was destroyed by fire in 1863.

In searching for a new location Mr. Taylor found a desirable spot near the home of his brother-in-law, Rob't Nichols, along the Fresno River. The place he desired was occupied by a man named Hunt, but he was persuaded to sell his property, and Mr. Taylor immediately started the erection of a house he deemed worthy of sheltering his family. He hired two experienced woodsmen and set them to work hewing timbers about twelve inches square from the hearts of Yellow Pine trees which he found growing on the land. They were shaped to fit at the corners and were anchored with hand whittled ash pegs. Nails were scarce, being made by hand, and so were used only when absolutely necessary. The house was about thirty feet long, with an open passage through the center. It was a story and a half high, and had two huge fireplaces, one at each end of the house. These fireplaces were built of natural materials, the bricks being made by hand on the ranch. This house still stands, although it has been remodeled in the last few years to suit a more modern style.

In 1869 the new house was completed and the family moved here to made their home.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor became the parents of the following children; Franklin, Mary (Mrs. Gash), Margaret (Mrs. Price), Amanda, William Bluford, Thos. Jackson, Richard, Teal, Byrd Witt, and Emily Jane (Mrs. Mal McLeod).

'Taylor Mountain' was named because the Taylor ranch lies at its base, and was used in the early days as a free range for Taylor's horses and cattle.

ROBERT LARAMORE

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Robert Laramore and Mrs. Mary Newton Philips were married at Millerton and came to Fresno Flats in the early '70's where Mr. Laramore secured work for the Soquel Mill. He was a carpenter and cabinet maker, and was the foreman on the construction of the flume which ran through the Flats on its way from Soquel to Madera.

Following the flume to Madera, he worked there for a time and then returned to the Flats in 1878 when he and Phelps built a store at the south end of the China Creek bridge which Laramore operated until 1884, when he and Cap't Wesley Smith built a larger building across the street and again conducted a general merchandise business.

Mr. and Mrs. Laramore were the parents of four children; Lee, Mary, Ed, and Marion Witt.

Mr. Laramore, when returning from the funeral of his son Witt, was thrown from a wagon by a run-away team and was killed when his head struck a rock. This rock is still pointed out by old timers who remember his tragic death.

The old Laramore home still stands and is now known as the 'Lyman' house, having passed into the possession of the Lyman family after Mr. Laramore's death.

'Goat Mountain' received its name from the fact that Mr. Laramore used it as a pasture for his herd of several hundred goats, many of which became wild and lived on the mountain for years.

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'Tank' Burford.

R. T. Burford married Mrs. Caroline Newton Wilson at Millerton, and with her moved to the Willow Creek Ranch near Raymond, where the present Knowles Quarry stands. From there they came to a ranch about three miles below the Flats near the Dar Lewis place.

Their next move was to a ranch about eight miles above the Flats where they established a stage station to accommodate the Yosemite Valley stages which passed by on their way from Madera. This became known as 'Burford Station', and remained an important stopping place as long as horse drawn stages were used.

With the establishment of the Forest Service, the government placed a ranger at this place and it again became the Burford Station, and for many years was the government headquarters for this section of the country.

About 1912 the original Burford house was torn down and moved to the Taylor place, where it was reconstructed, and is today occupied by M. M. David, a grandson of the original owners.

Mr. and Mrs. Burford were the parents of the following children; Scot, George, Belle (Mrs. David), Alice, Bob, Jim, Philip, Avery, Marion and Sidney.

DAVID H. MYERS.

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David H. Myers came across the plains in a covered wagon in '49 to the City of Stockton, which was at that time the chief city of California. From there he went into the mining district of the Tuolumne where he ran a store.

It was while here that he once met up with Joaquin Murietta and his band. The Mexican bandit entered the store and ordered something to eat, and while he was thus employed the partner of Myers criticized him in no complimentary manner, having of course, no idea of who he was. Without a word, Murietta drew his six shooter from his pocket, laid it on the counter, and continued to eat. Needless to say, the criticism stopped. Upon leaving the store, he was followed closely by the sheriff and a posse of men. Murietta was expecting them, and ambushed the posse and killed several of them, then making his escape into the hills. Myers always felt that he had escaped very luckily, and doubtless berated his partner severely for his undue remarks.

From Tuolumne he went back to Ohio in 1852 where he married. Again he came to California, but this time, chose the faster route, going by boat to the Isthmus of Panama, crossing which he boarded a ship on the Pacific side and sailed to California.

This time he settled in San Luis County, and secured a large well watered ranch which he proceeded to make into a beautiful home. Soon however, he was dispossessed by the owner of a Mexican floating grant, which had been issued by the Mexican government prior to California's admission, but which had been honored by the United States when peace had been made with Mexico.

Having lost his home, he moved to Ventura County in 1872, then on to Merced, back to Monterey and finally to Fresno Flats in 1874 where he found the home for which he had been searching. Here he made his home

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until the time of his death.

He was the father of four children; Mrs. George Wood of Fresno, Mrs. Lyman (deceased), Mrs. McMillan of Haywards, and one son, Charles H. Myers who still lives on the home of his father, holding in his possession the original patent as issued by the government as a homestead right in 1876.

The son, Charles H. Myers, has conducted a blacksmith shop and garage at Oakhurst for more than thirty years, and today is the only one of the old timers who operates a business house in the old Fresno Flats. Fire has destroyed many of the old buildings, and rapid transportation has carried the need for merchandise stores to larger centers.

FRANK FEMMONS.

Frank Femmons was born in 1834, and came to California with his wife and two sons in 1857 when the golden days of California were at their zenith.

He lived for many years near the present site of Ahwahnee. After the death of his wife he moved to Fresno Flats, where several years later he married a Mrs. Adams, the proprietress of the Fresno Flats Hotel.

They saw Fresno Flats change from the wild outpost of early days to the peaceful cattle and agricultural center which it is today. Mr. Femmons spent most of his time in planting an orchard and in farming small flats of rye and barley.

He spent his last days on the ranch in Ahwahnee Valley where he had planted the first apple trees in this section of the hills.

He died Nov. 1. 1922, and was buried in the historic cemetery at Oakhurst.

'Mal' McLeod

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Mal McLeod's father, Daniel McLeod, came from the Highlands of Scotland in 1862 to make his home in the city of Boston. There, in 1864, he married a Scotch-Irish lassie, by the name of Francis Carlin, who had been born in the Province of Nova Scotia.

Together this young couple moved to Stillwater, Minnesota, where they lived for twenty years. While there, they became the parents of six children, Christina, Malcolm, Rose, Frankie, Dan, and Will.

In 1884, the father having become a victim of rheumatism, and seeking relief for his ailment, they sought the dryer, warmer climate of the west. They came first to Cloverdale, in northern California, and finding this too damp and cold, moved on toward the south. Finally they landed in Madera, on January 1, 1885.

Being short of funds, having spent their savings seeking aid for the father, Malcolm, although only fifteen years old, started out to find his fortune in the hills, as many of the earlier settlers had done before him. He found a job in the old Soquel Mill at three dollars and a half a day. Even though he was very young, he held this job for four years, his wage gradually climbing to six dollars a day. Good help was scarce in those days, and a good worker was well paid for his efforts.

After four years in the mill, he secured a job for the Spreckles Sugar Company, taking a ship load to mules to the Sandwich Islands. He was supposed to herd and break the mules to work in the sugar cane fields on the Spreckles plantations, but after a short time was put in charge of a crew of Kanaka sugar planters. Even then, he was impressed by the musical and aquatic ability of even the youngest natives.

After having worked in the Islands for two years, he again returned to California, where for a time he worked in the mines, before

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going back to the lumber mills, where he worked in the logging crew for the Sugar Pine Lumber Company for eight more years.

By that time the United States government had taken over much of the scenic parts of the mountain regions and opportunity was offered to young men of ability to become a part of the United States Forest Service. Young McLeod applied for a position, was accepted, in 1902, where he began work which was to last for more than thirty years. It took courage and foresight to enter the government service in those days. 'Mal', as he was called by everyone who knew him, had been receiving good pay on a tender hook job for the Sugar Pine, and the government wage was only \$60.00 a month, and he must furnish a string of horses and most of his tools.

He had been married in 1899 to Emily Jane Taylor, who unofficially joined the Forest Service with him, and became almost as good a ranger as her husband.

In 1905 'Mal' took his Ranger's examination, which he passed very satisfactorily. In those days much of the examination was practical knowledge, such as choosing a well balanced axe, sharpening it, and felling a tree; saddling and riding a horse; putting on a pack saddle and then a pack; and actual practice with a revolver.

'Mal' was always intensely interested in the fire game, and having lived in a community which believed in fires as an insurance for good cattle feed, he had an excellent opportunity to carry out his own ideas.

In 1910 he made a tool in the blacksmith shop at Sugar Pine, which has been adopted by the United States Government as a fire fighting measure, and is officially known as the McLeod Tool. It resembles

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both a heavy hoe and a strong rake, being a double tool on a single handle, and even after twenty five years of fire fighting, is still considered the best tool of its kind in the service.

In 1932, Mal McLeod was retired from the government service and since then has made his home on the old Taylor place, the girlhood home of his wife, near Oakhurst.

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SAMUEL ROBINSON MURRAY.

Samuel Robinson Murray was born in Merced County Nov. 16, 1855 and spent most of his youth at Merced Falls, where his father built and operated the first flour mill in this part of the country. He also assisted his father in managing a general merchandist store, and in building and operating a ferry across the Merced River.

Sam Murray's father had immigrated from Ireland to Missouri, but moved on to California during the gold rush.

Mr. Murray married Miss Florence H. Barret March 31, 1880, and about 1887 severed his connection with the mill and store and moved to Fresno Flats where he entered the cattle business, remaining in this district the rest of his life.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray were the parents of four children, Judge Stanley Murray of Madera, Raymond and William Irwin of Oakhurst, and Mrs. V. D. Rosasco of Stockton.

Mr. Murray died April 14, 1938, and was buried in the cemetery at Oakhurst. He is survived by his widow and all his four children.

MRS. MARY E. DICK

31
Mrs. Mary E. Dick was born near Atlanta, Georgia, Sept 5, 1852.

During the Civil War her father joined the Confederate Cavalry, and Mary, being the oldest of five children was forced to assume some of the responsibility of their livelihood.

After the War ended, the father again became a cotton planter and Mary learned to card and spin cotton thread and to weave the cloth for the family clothing.

In 1869 the father sold his home and the family set out with an ox team for Chattanooga. From there they moved to Memphis, then on to St. Louis by boat, and then on to Omaha, which was then the end of the Union Pacific Railroad.

On May 28 they left Omaha and arrived in California June 2, 1890, on the second train ever to leave Omaha for the Pacific. They remained in Sacramento for a few days until the father secured a team and wagon and equipped it for his search for a new home.

They started south, and journey over bare plains for several days until they came to a large sheep ranch near Buchanan owned by Johnathan Rea. They had in mind a place near Visalia, but Mr. Rea advised against their going there because of the chills and fevers prevalent in the swamps, recommending instead, that they search for a place in Mariposa County. This they did, and there found a home where they lived for many years.

On June 3, 1871, Mary married Marcus Lewis of White Rock, but Mr. Lewis lived just one year after their marriage, dying of Lock Jaw caused by an injury to his foot.

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On Feb. 11, 1875 Mary became Mrs. Joseph Dick, and together they moved to the first mill site above Fresno Flats where a mill was being operated by W. H. Thurman and James Dickerson. Summers were spent working in the mill and in the winter the family moved to the Flats.

On June 2, 1898 Mrs. Dick became the Postmistress at Fresno Flats and served until March 2, 1910, after which she moved to Raymond where she now resided. Mrs. Dick will be 86 years old Sept. 5, 1938, and is in very good health. Failing eyesight is her greatest handicap, but she still loves to go places and see new sights, and finds a great deal of pleasure still in life.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick were the parents of five children; Anna, who died at the age of two and is buried in the Oakhurst Cemetery; Lucy, Now Mrs. John Krohn of Raymond; Ella, Mrs. Walter Mills of Madera; Emma, Mrs. C. R. Shepherd of Los Angeles, and Walter J. who died Oct. 21, 1925.



Mary E. Dick

Died March 1945

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- Fresno - Calif.
May 1st - 1938

Mrs. Selta P. Brockman
Oakhurst - Calif.

Dear Mrs. Brockman:

This will acknowl-
edge yours of April 19 1938. You will
please excuse my delay in replying but ill-
health of my wife and myself is my apology.
We have both been unable to communicate
by writing for the two years last past.
In reply will say that I came to Fresno Co.
on Aug 15 1878. I was sent here by the State
Supt of Sacramento. I had been attending Howie's
Private School for nearly a year. I had come to
California, arriving about April 1st 1878 and
put in the year on a cattle ranch in Shasta Co.
and had put in the time on the ranch known as
the Thomas grant. I was a High School grad-
uate where I came but concluded to go further
with my work and finally received from the
State Board of Education the certificate a
copy certified of the enclosed signed by the
Governor. The State Supt and the Pres. of the
San Jose State College. I taught 2 years

of 2.5 months in three schools and then
went back to Sacramento and ^{was} sent by the
State Board to organize the High School at
the Iowa Hill a mining town in Tuolumne
Co where I remained for 4 years and then return-
ed to Fresno Co and took the principalship of
Washington Colony and organized the first High
School in that county. During my stay in Fresno
County I became acquainted with all of the teachers
in the county but had been studying law and
took up the practice and followed that for 46
years retiring in 1934.

This length of time and experience gave me an
acquaintance with the educational interest generally
which has been helpful in many ways.

You may wish me for further information
if you desire.

Yours Respectfully

A. M. Deew

P.S. I find I shall have to have
a copy of that certificate made
for you. It is dated July 12, 1886

A. M. Deew

