

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Through The Mother Lode

As we motored through the Mother Lode country last week we entertained ourselves by Investigating the reason for many of the curious names of the communities through which we passed. We had taken along several books, maps, etc., stopped to read every historical marker we came upon and when we returned home we felt much more educated in Californiana than we did at the beginning of our brief vacation to the southern mines in the hills of California. Thanks to the Historical Landmarks Commission of the Centennial years for the information these stone and bronze markers give to the travelers. They are attractive, brief but extremely informative.

We found all the residents of the many communities we visited deeply interested and proud of the value of preservation of what they had Inherited from their forefathers and determined to continue with that restoration and preservation. If an historical society is not functioning at present, the residents are in the process of either establishing a local or county one. They seem to already realize that the old names, the historical buildings and the stories of the gold rush are the attractions that bring visitors to the Mother Lode.

Although we have enjoyed the same experiences in past visits to the same country we refreshed our memory again and remembered that Tuolumne County was one of the original 27 counties, and Sonora has been its county seat from the beginning, the name (Too-ol-a-me) is a corruption of the Indian word "Talmalamne," meaning stone houses or caves, or a collection of wigwams.

At Tuttletown we stopped to read a marker and this is what we learned: Named for Judge A. A. H. Tuttle, who built a log cabin there in 1848. It was the stopping place of packers carrying miners' supplies over the Slumgullion Road from Angel's Camp to Sonora and, by 1849-1850, was a flourishing camp. Since that time its population has dwindled to a family or two, whose needs are supplied by a little country store built of stone, known as Swerer's, where Mark Twain once traded.

Jackass Hill, just west of Tuttletown, received its name from the braying of 200 jackasses in the pack trains

stopping overnight there. They furnished the concert suggesting Jackass Hill as the name.

Mark Twain, the great American humorist, spent five months on Jackass Hill in 1846-1847 as the guest of William R. Gillis. We visited the replica of the cabin on the hilltop about one mile from Tuttletown, built around the old stone fireplace, uninjured when fire destroyed the original cabin. It is reported on the tablet, placed at the cabin by the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, that \$10,000 in gold was taken from 100 square feet of ground there and that Twain, wrote "Roughing It" there and finished "The Jumping Frog" from notes made at Angel's Camp Tavern.

Entering Calaveras County we stopped first at Carson Hill, which is about four miles south of Angel's Camp. It has been known, as "the classic mining ground of California" for it was generally considered the richest camp in all the Mother Lode. The bronze tablet on the native rock base informed us that over a period of two years quartz mines at the place yielded \$3,000,000. Carson Flat on Carson Creek, where gold was discovered in August 1848 by James H. Carson, was named in his honor. He was led to the place by friendly Indians and, according to his report, panned out 180 ounces of gold in ten days. The Lions Club and the Centennial Commission sponsored the monument and plaque at this place.

Calavaras County derived its name from the river which had been named by Gabriel Moraga on his expedition in 1808. The name is Spanish for "skulls." It was one of the original 27 counties. Double Springs became the county seat in April of 1850 but in 1866 it was moved to San Andreas. We stopped at Double Springs and took a look at the old courthouse, probably built in 1849, the material for which was brought from China in that year.

We repeat - the residents of all these Mother Lode communities are very proud of their heritage and seem most happy to entertain you with hospitality plus, generously mixed with tales and tours.