

We continue with another chapter of the reminiscences of a gold rush miner, which appeared in the Tuolumne Courier on June 16, 1860. The unknown author of the "Early Annals" prospected in and about Downieville in '50 and '51, then on the Feather River 'till '53, when he participated in the subsequent "hill diggin's" boom around Alleghany in '54. We have reason to believe that a few of his facts may be just a little distorted, but the spirit of the times and the earliest events on Kanaka Creek are well chronicled for us by the Annalist. He does not refer to Alleghany as such, because the town did not receive its name until 1857, after the events described below, and after the Annalist had moved on to Tuolumne County. However, any of our readers who are familiar with this area will have no difficulty in following his narrative.

Wm. Picklepoche

Kanaka Creek and the Kanakas

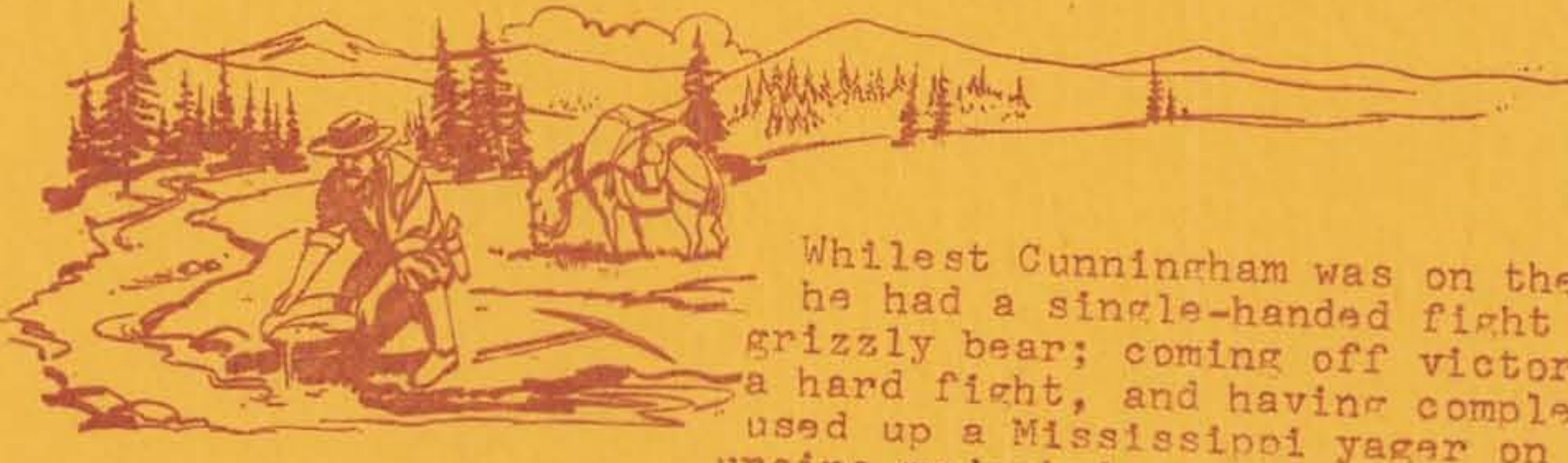
The year 1850 was preeminently the year of the prospectors; amongst whom was a large company of Kanakas and South Sea Islanders, under various chieftains. The most conspicuous were Capt. Ross, (commonly reported to be one of old Kamhehameha's sons; at any rate he was an educated native, and had been long amongst the whites, speaking our language fluently and well versed in our customs) and a native chief known as "Jem Crow the First," to distinguish him from another of the same name. Jem Crow also could speak English, having been long in our whaling service, and had married one of Capt. John A. Sutter's Indians. These two rival chieftains lived in a kind of rude royalty, exacting a daily tribute from their inferiors, ordering them to prospect, cook, etc., as they pleased; as well as administering their own laws and justice according to their caprice. Early in 1850 "Jem Crow," as I mentioned in a former number, discovered the famous Cañon, which has ever since gone by his name, and thus became a prospector of some importance among the now very heterogeneous community.

In May Capt. Ross, becoming jealous of the popularity which "Jem Crow" had secured, determined to try and retrieve some of his lost popularity. Accordingly dividing his portion of the Kanakas into small squads, he started them out in all directions, with orders to rendezvous again at his headquarters at Kanaka Bar on the south branch of the North Fork of the Yuba. This plan was not original with Capt. Ross, but was the suggestion of Major Wm. Downie; who, along with Howland B. Cossett Esq., subsequently—in 1853 or '54,—Prosecuting Attorney in Downieville, kept the principal store on the Bar. According to the agreement, Downie was to have a share if the project succeeded. It did succeed, as will be

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seen hereafter, and if the parties had used common prudence, all of them might have gone home with large piles. But Kanakas and sailors are proverbially improvident, and although they took out large sums daily, they were not the better for the strike; as every evening until late in the night, the monte gamblers were to be seen swindling them out of their wealth.

As I said before, it was in May that the discovery of the Creek was made by one of Capt. Ross' prospectors. It was of such astonishing richness, that it was currently reported the miners had only to locate their claims to be rich at once, without any, or at least but trifling labor. Downie, on receipt of the news, started off to secure his share. Rumors soon came that he was killed by the Indians, and H. B. Cossett raised a party to go and revenge his death; when, lo! as they were about departing, the Major was discovered coming down the mountain, on the opposite side of the river. On his arrival in camp, his description of the richness of the Creek was so enthusiastic, and the gold he displayed so alluring, that quite a local stampede was made of most of the miners, gamblers, and storekeepers, to this new Creek, which was named in honor of the discoverers, "Kanaka Creek;" a name which it has always retained. The exact location of the Kanaka Claim was on what is now known as "Little Kanaka Bar," situated immediately where French Ravine enters the Creek; and the first spot worked by them was a crevice at the foot of the claim, running diagonally across the creek. This was immensely rich; so much so, that if it were not so well known and attested to, the bare mention of the amount taken out by the Kanakas would not now be believed. As it was, Jem Cook, the gambler, and the then constable of Downieville district, made not less than \$15,000 to \$20,000 in a short time, and went home; coming back soon afterwards. This system he pursued five or six different trips up to 1855; never going home with less than \$5,000, and several times with a very great deal more. Charles Cunningham also went home with about \$10,000, which he made in three months, partly by mining, partly by store-keeping, and partly by gambling.



Whilest Cunningham was on the Creek, he had a single-handed fight with a grizzly bear; coming off victor, after a hard fight, and having completely used up a Mississippi yager on his ursine majesty's cranium. Cunningham was completely stripped of his clothing, and so far exhausted that he laid down to die on the side-hill, but was happily rescued by some miners who had been attracted that way by rapid shots he had fired. They carefully packed him into camp, together with the bear, where great rejoicings were made for the victor. Cunningham had the

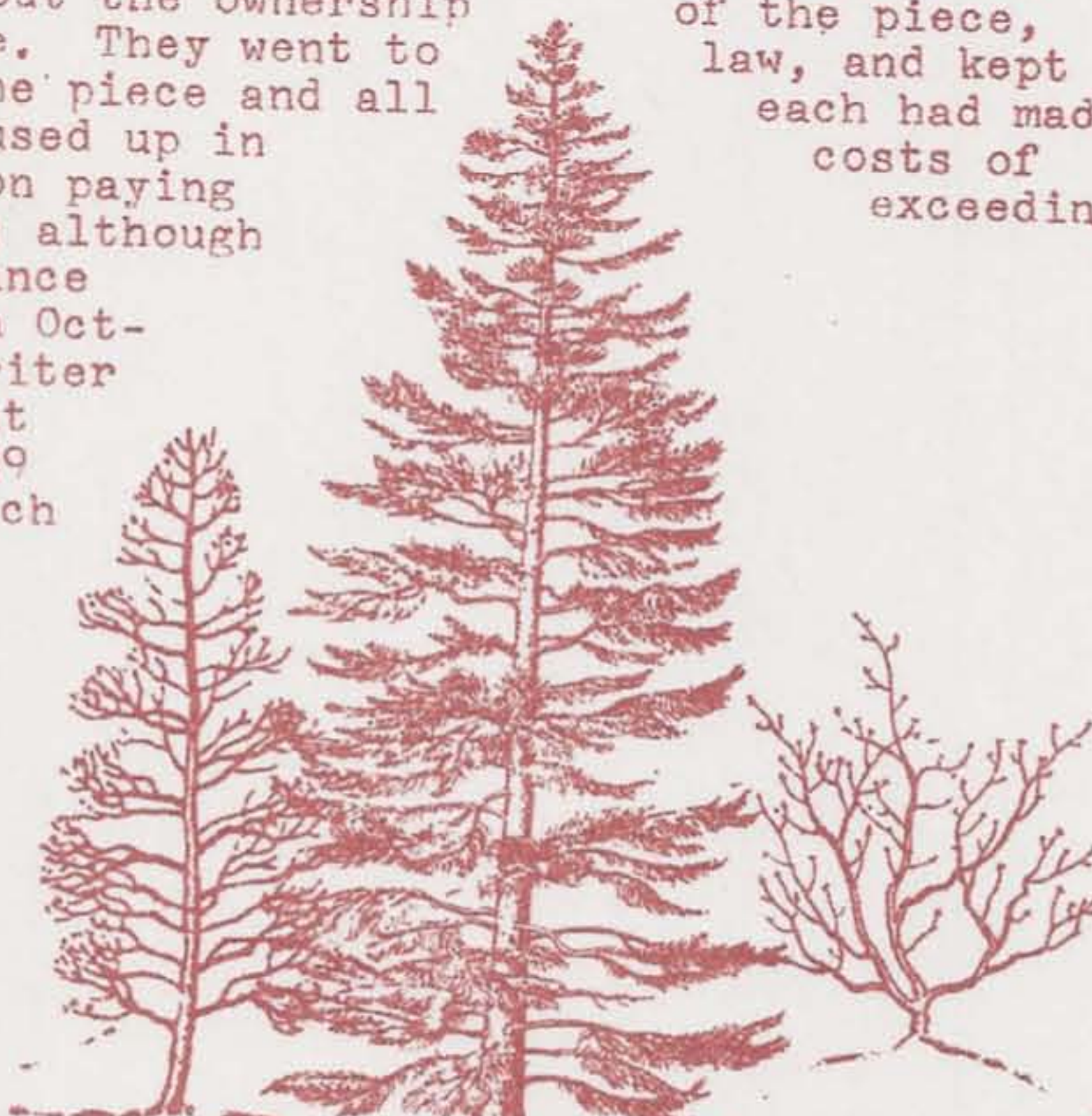
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skin dressed, and made into a coat. He also went home and returned again, but his luck was gone; he never made much afterwards, and became nearly blind. Others also made rich strikes, especially the three brothers Rapp.

In July 1850, a piece of quartz and gold, weighing nearly thirty pounds troy, was discovered in an old deserted prospecting pit on French Gulch, by two sailors, an American and an Englishman. They had been but two or three days there at the time. Not waiting for a second strike they returned below to San Francisco, paying their way by exhibiting the piece for \$1 per head. This piece at the time was supposed to be the largest piece ever found in California, and the second largest on record in the world. On arriving at New York, the partners quarrelled about the ownership of the piece, and each claiming the whole. They went to law, and kept each had made costs of exceedingly well for several years; although nothing of much importance occurred until the 14th October, 1854, when the writer and four others took out one boulder, weighing 39 pounds avoirdupois, which yielded \$4,730.50 cts.

Big lumps now became common all this Fall. Mrs. Smith, of French Ravine, finding one weighing ninety-six and one quarter pounds avoirdupois and sold it to Adams and Co., Bankers at Marysville, for \$10,500, shortly before their suspension. This piece was found 28th

October 1853. These strikes being noised about, a large settlement of Mexicans, Peruvians, Chilians, and other Spaniards was soon collected on the Creek. They soon out-numbered the white population, and began to manifest their particular proclivities for plunder, murder, horse stealing, and all kinds of rascality. Things went on thus until the 12th day of August, 1855, when Andrew Mauer, an old Dutchman, one of the police of the Creek, was inhumanly murdered. Demands were made on the Spanish Community to deliver up the murderer; this being denied the whites from the surrounding camps assembled, burned up the



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Spanish town, and drove the Greasers out of the County. Certain parers of the day without knowing the facts, made statements about as near true, as might be expected from the Prince of Lies.

In the summer of 1854 two or three important discoveries were made in the neighborhood of this Creek. The leading one of these, were the hill diggings of La Fayette, and Mount Vernon Hill, situated on opposite ends of the Creek. In the winter of 1854 Samuel Carr discovered diggings on his ravine, near Sparks Flat. In the winter of 1855 one of the richest quartz leads was struck, on a spur of the hill above Sparks Flat, by some Mexican packers who were weather bound there, and had formed a large camp. This last, was one of the richest strikes ever made in this section of country, and still continues to pay well.

(Punctuation taken from original.)

Notes on the Author—Mr. Wm. Picklepoche, William Picklepoche is the real name of a mining engineer, a New Englander and graduate of Harvard College and California Institute of Technology, who practices his profession in the Mother Lode Country. He has been in and out of the Alleghany area for the past 30 years and is well versed in the lore of that region. He is an occasional contributor of historical articles to the "Mountain Messenger," and also edits a local historical quarterly.



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