

Downieville, today, with its shady streets, picturesque old buildings with tidy yards, and its relaxed and pleasant pace of daily life, is indeed a charming retreat from the frantic activity of the sprawling and ugly cities in the valley. But a century and a few years ago things were much different.

This was the frantic bustling community, isolated from the outside world, but here the center of a large number of booming gold camps. Excitement ran high and violence was commonplace. A horde of new prospectors was steadily streaming in over the long, hard trail from Marysville, to replace those leaving the Northern Dig-gings, disappointed and looking for better prospects elsewhere, or others, luckier, with a fat stake, heading for Sacramento and San Francisco.

An endless procession of mule trains slowly plodded up and down this trail, to keep Downieville and the surrounding camps supplied with the necessities. Expressmen, with bulging saddlebags, astride sturdy and sure-footed mounts, impatiently rushed past the slower traffic. Events in the neighboring camps were eagerly watched by the townpeople, the hopeful prospectors, the gamblers, and no doubt, by a small but dedicated group of professional highway-men.

The author of "Early Annals of Downieville and Vicinity," recaptures this gold rush spirit in his seventh and last install-ment, published in the Tuolumne Courier in 1860, which he en-titled "Scattering Camps." This chapter is reprinted below, just as our Annalist wrote it more than a hundred years ago.

William Pickiepoche

SCATTERING CAMPS

In as rapid a review of the history of this vicinity as I have necessarily been obliged to make, much has been overlooked, much condensed, and, perhaps, something entirely left out. I intend in this, my last of the series, to take a rapid glance at some of the surrounding camps.

The most important of these, perhaps, are the quartz leads sur-rounding the Downieville Buttes, which were discovered early in 1851, during the great quartz excitement of that period. These were taken up rapidly, and many quarrels and lawsuits were in anticipation from the frequency of the claims being jumped, and the unconscionable size of the claims which the cupidity of the holders had induced them to seize. A proposition was in consequence made to throw all claims together, enumerate the claimants; and then allow to each a certain number of feet. But as this was likely to create disturbance again, it was agreed that each one should draw his claim in a sort of lot-tery, and should be obliged to locate that one and no other, or abandon it, at his own pleasure. This necessarily obliged the com-mittee of arrangements, who had to be disinterested persons, to num-ber each claim, corresponding to the number of claimants. By this arrangement much quarreling and bloodshed was avoided, although en-

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tire satisfaction was not given, because it divided the claims too much; for partners were frequently separated hundreds of feet apart making it unhandy to work the claims. Many abandoned, others only worked them enough to hold them, watching for a chance to change the laws. The minority, that kept to work diligently, invariably did well.

A large mining town was soon built, which was named Quartzville, and machinery brought with much trouble and expense there. The quartz was extremely rich; but like all first attempts at quartz, mining was not generally profitable; although there was a show of working the quartz for some time. Little by little the companies began to drop off, until the camp, town and leads were all but aban-doned, except by some roving bands of Mexicans, who did not con-fine their operations to any particular claim; but were a kind of roving, predatory set, now working on this man's claim, and now on that; anon commencing again where the croppings were the easiest to get at, and which appeared to pay best; but no regular mining ben-efit was obtained in this way, although vast sums were taken out by these Spanish banditti.

I term them thus, from the fact that they were the nucleus from which our troubles on Kanaka Creek and Pike City proceeded; for their countrymen, hearing of their success, flocked to this vic-inity for two or three years. Too lazy to work, fond of gambling as the whole race is, they commenced a species of guerilla robbery which was extremely annoying. Being in alliance with the gamblers-who invariably sent them notice of danger-they eluded for a long time the efforts of the miners' police to put them down.

In 1854, they attacked, in broad daylight, Langton's Express-man, and robbed him, obtaining but a small booty, however, but doing it in a bold and skillful manner; attacking him almost with-in sight of Galloway's Ranch, while a team was actually in sight in the direction of the ranch, and another so close behind that they were obliged to release their prisoner in a few minutes. The party robbing him were armed with double barrelled shot guns, and rose out of the chapperral so suddenly that he had no time to draw his pistol. After robbing him, they tied him to a tree and retreated. In this gang were two young white men-the rest were Mexicans. Many men were also missed, and never more heard of, on this trail, about that time; others, who had not been missed, were found in old des-erted shafts. The writer well remembers quite an excitement caused by the discovery of a body in a deserted shaft on Durgan Flat, by some miners, in 1854.

But one company of whites, in 1854, commenced regularly to work the Butte lead. In August, 1855, just after the driving out of the Mexicans from Kanaka Creek, this company, finding their provisions going too rapidly for the legitimate consumption of their number, determined to watch their cook, who was a Spaniard. Catch-ing him in the act of carrying provisions into the "bush", they threatened to flog him if he did not tell them the truth. He con-fessed that there was a party of his countrymen concealed in that neighborhood, waiting for an opportunity to rob the arrastra, which had not been cleaned up for 14 of 15 months.

Accordingly, the company cleaned it, and Moffat, one of their

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number, started down to Downieville with the treasure. On his way down to Downieville with the treasure, he saw a Mexican following him. Stopping, he found the Mexican did the same. Drawing his pistol, he ordered the Mexican to go ahead. This he did, sullenly, and Moffat, being a determined man, kept him within shot all the way to town. As soon as Moffat arrived, he deposited his gold in the banking-house of Sam Langton & Co. On leaving the bankinghouse, he saw the Mexican and a gambler known as Dave Butler, in conversation, but thought not much of it.

In the evening, Moffat, being in Craycroft's saloon talking with some friends, Dave Butler came up to him and stationed himself so that he could hear all that was said, at the same time looking very hard at Moffat. Moffat, supposing that Butler wished to speak to him, courteously asked if he wished to see him. Butler answered roughly that he could look at whom he pleased. Moffat replied that he thought he might be more civil. Butler said he would do as he pleased, and if he did not like him, he could do as he pleased. Moffat, who was getting warm by this time, replied, he certainly did not think much of him, or anyone who followed his profession. Whereupon, without more ado, Dave Butler drew a six-shooter, and blew Moffat's brains out, and then escaped, although it was done publicly, in the largest gambling saloon in Downieville.

Butler escaped for the time, after stealing the fastest mule in town. He was subsequently arrested in Oregon, brought back, tried, and executed at Nevada City, to which he had changed the Venue.<sup>1</sup> This ended the rule of the Mexicans and gamblers. Quartzville is still in existence, but never has regained its pristine vigor which it lost in 1852.

Cayotville, or the Blue Barks, was also a place of some im-portance in 1850 to 1855; after which time it has commenced to decay, although mining has not entirely ceased. One of the most in-teresting and at the same time curious fossils ever found, was taken out of one of the tunnels in this rich deposit, which may be ranked as a depression of the celebrated Blue Lead. It was a solid fossil fish, weighing 17 pounds, showing not only the form of the fish, but the fins and scales. The color being of blue on the back, and whitish on the belly, carried the illusion still further. It was found by a Mr. Walker, who refused \$100 for it from the writer.

The City of Downie was established or founded in 1850, on the upper bench of Downieville Hill, and is directly in the range of the celebrated Blue Lead; which here is nearly of a white color. It has always been a place of some note as a mining camp.

Goodyear's Bar is the oldest camp of the upper Yuba, being settled early in 1849. It has always been noted, as well as the creek of the same name, as a place of considerable value to the miner. Here, on the upper flat, is the grave of Mr. Goodyear, the founder of this celebrated mining camp.<sup>2</sup>

Jem Crow Canon I mentioned before, in a former number, and Secret Canon, although only separated from the last by a trifling divide, was not discovered until the summer of 1850, by Wm. Downie, and not till the spring of 1852 by the public, upon the robbery of Downie by his partners.

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Wolf Creek, another rich placer, was not discovered until 1851. All these places diverge as from a common centre, from the Downieville Buttes, and are all rich even to this day. And now, having completed my rounds of Downieville and vicinity, I shall humbly make my congee, wishing that the public may reap as rich a harvest as I did.

Columbia, June 23rd, 1860

1. The fascinating story of the Moffat murder and subsequent capture, trial and execution of Butler, is told in great detail in "Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Major C. Dulin, Alias David Butler, as Related by Himself to A. A. Sargent," republished by Lewis Osborne, Palo Alto, 1966, with a foreword by Richard H. Dillon. Sargent was Butler's attorney, and believed him innocent, but the justice of the day made short shift of the matter.

2. According to the Goodyear family history, his remains were taken to the Goodyear plot in Benicia.

Editor's Note: The Sierra County Historical Society is again in-debted to William Pickiepoche for the above article, number seven in a series about Downieville and vicinity. Notes on Mr. Pickiepoche can be found in previous bulletins. We will all look forward to further contributions from Mr. Pickiepoche.

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