

Many catch fever for gold in California

By Kristin Delaplane

Sunday, February 22, 1998

The 50th anniversary of the discovery of gold in California was celebrated in 1898, and this year is the 150th anniversary of the same event.

The event was celebrated in San Francisco in 1898 with a Mining Fair. This included a diversified program for all attending.

The focal point was a pyramid of gold cubes measuring 45 feet from the floor and nearly a 1,500 square foot base. Admission was 25 cents.

There were many exhibits of miner's equipment and types of mining operations, band concerts, cooking lectures, baby shows, lectures, cafes and grillrooms.

Gold fever remained a part of the California scene, and is even in evidence today with people panning along California's riverbeds and revisiting old mines with modern technology. In years past, Solano County residents sought the riches of gold ore near and far.

In 1886, The Glade Gold and Silver Mining Company was formed with several gentlemen from Napa and Isaac Greeborne of Green Valley and Ole G. Buhrmister of Suisun Valley. The capital stock came to \$140,000.

Gold was discovered in the Klondike, Alaska, in 1896, leading to the gold rush of 1897-1898. Fueled by the excitement of this gold rush, the hunt for gold in California was renewed with zest.

In 1897, prospecting for gold was being pursued in earnest on W.R. Brown's Suisun Valley ranch.

There also existed the Napa and Solano Mine (a.k.a. the Best Mine) in Butte County. J.W. Reams of Suisun Valley was the owner, J. Zwelfel was the superintendent with seven men working under him.

Reams and Barry opened another mine in Butte County and Suisun's L.B. Abernathie and Calvin Reams were also associated with that enterprise.

But the biggest news in October 1897 was the report of a gold mine in Green Valley on a hill near or on Joseph Oberti's place. Traces of gold were found about a year before,

prompting the belief that gold could be located in the hills.

In March 1897, two Vallejo prospectors, Christian Mangold and a Mr. Ashley, began working quietly on the hill, prospecting and sinking shafts. When their prospects began to look very promising, they purchased 16 adjoining acres. This perked people's interest in their activities, but the pair remained mute on the subject of their findings.

The rock containing gold was soft and chalky, breaking readily. Samples were taken to the Selby Smelting Works and California Amalgamator Company in Rodeo where they were assayed. The results of the tests deemed that the ore was worth from \$7.50 to \$150 per ton, with a projection that the whole hill the pair were working on could bring forth an average of between \$4.50 and \$6 a ton. The company said they would put in a stamp mill if more diggings in the area proved to be fruitful.

Little is known of Ashley, except that he was the junior partner of this operation and worked at Mare Island. Much more is known about Mangold, who was 40 years old when the Green Valley mine was discovered.

His first taste of mining came in the early 1880s when he traveled to Leadville, Colo., during the region's gold and silver strikes. He fared well in mine leasing. In 1885, he and his wife came to Vallejo and Mangold worked at the shipyard for a year. In 1890, the family purchased a home on Florida Street. He built an oven and engaged in a bakery business. He had other family in the area; brother John was a farmer and Henry was a farmer and currier (one that prepares tanned hides for use).

In the bakery business Mangold was able to save \$50 a month and in 1895, he purchased a lot on Virginia Street and built a six-room home. The place on Florida Street was later used for their ice cream business.

In his own words, Mangold was a prospector at heart and was always off mining. At some point he joined the mad dash to the Klondike during that strike. After his partner Ashley died in 1914, Mangold bought out Ashley's one-third share in the mine. It was at this time that Mangold moved full time to the Green Valley property and cleared a portion for a cherry orchard. He also continued to prospect for gold on that land. He first lived in a tent and later in a two-room house. Mangold, so appropriately named, died in 1927.

Oberti had been keeping an eye on the operation and when assays of the quartz rock proved promising, he began prospecting on his property. Samples of rock he mined were assayed and the report returned that the ore went for \$4.50 per ton for gold. As these samples came from shallow workings, it was assumed that greater wealth could be found at a greater depth. Oberti had intentions to drive a tunnel 200 feet long as an

experiment.

In 1898, a Mr. Hall and a Mr. Simon, both from San Francisco, came to the unlikely location of Collinsville to prospect for gold. They were somehow convinced that gold could be found in the mud flats. They tried their luck from Sherman Island to Dutton's Landing and did not find color.

They were followed by Sam Stewart, John Marshall and John Haile, who arrived equipped with auger, sand-pump and pan.

Despite their high tech gear, they did not meet with any success either. They went down 13 feet when they reached the black sand thought to contain the gold, but the show of color was not sufficient to warrant further trouble.

Caught up in the possibilities, several others in the Collinsville area began prospecting. Rumor had it that one company of men discovered a deposit that assayed at \$25 of gold to the ton. The report was unconfirmed. In 1908, Solano County's Ben Reams uncovered a gold mine in company with James Lang, Sr., an experienced miner and Fairfield resident. The mine was located in Yuba County.

They sunk a shaft and at a depth of 24 feet they uncovered a ledge, which proved to be of immense value. They took out between 400 and 500 pounds of high-grade ore and between 1,500 and 1,600 pounds of low-grade ore. The best samples were brought to Suisun and exhibited there. Reams took other samples to San Francisco. The high-grade lot was assayed at \$2,135.85 to the ton and the low grade lot at \$130.02 to the ton.

Before making the location public, Reams legally filed the claim and returned to Yuba County to continue working. As it was, the ore the pair had taken out was worth several thousand dollars.

In 1913, Putah Creek's George Wolfskill and his pal, Harry Hartel, trekked to Miller Canyon where Wolfskill picked up a gold nugget worth \$20. This encouraged the pair to pursue some prospecting in the area and they came up with some gold dust after panning out seven or eight pans of dirt. They returned to Winters and secured a "grub stake" and filed a claim and began mining in earnest.

A group of Vacaville orchardists, or prune pickers, founded the Vaca Mining Co. and decided to incorporate in March 1933 after they encountered a 7-foot and a 9-foot gold bearing gravel strata in their Amador County mine.

The Vaca Mining Company actually dated back to the late 1800s and around 1898, the

cookhouse and bunkhouse on the property were destroyed in a fire. Adolph Schaefer suffered the greatest loss, losing three guns, a camera, clothing and books. Herbert Masters lost a sum of money, jewelry, clothing and a camera.

They had plans to sink the deepest placer shaft in Amador County to confirm a connection between the Indian Diggings mine and the American Flat district.

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