

Auburn's 49ers

The stories of the brave men and
women who came
to California for gold in 1849 and
early 1850.

Volume One

April McDonald-Loomis

Research by John Knox and April McDonald-Loomis
Edited by Diane M. Fishburn

Placer County Historical Society
2022

Introduction

The general story of the 49er's is well known. In 1848 and 1849, young men, excited by the news of the gold discovery, flocked to California. Initially, the area around Auburn was rich with opportunity. Spanish Flat, near present-day Nevada Street, Rich Flat, near the Gold Country Fairgrounds, and the Auburn Ravine and its tributaries all yielded substantial amounts of gold in the first few years of the Gold Rush.

One of the most common attributes of the newly arrived would-be miners was their propensity to move about following rumors of the next "big strike." As such, not very many 49er's stayed put once they arrived in California and very few left a record of their time here.

When we started researching for this project, John Knox and I were hoping to identify maybe 20 forty-niners who came to Auburn in 1849 and early 1850. So we were astonished to find over eighty men and women who came to the Auburn area in the first years of the Gold Rush that we could document. Most did not stay long but they still left a record of their time here.

Each story is a unique tale about a pioneer who came hoping for gold. Though they rarely found it, many ended up loving California and cherishing the memories of the biggest adventure of their lifetime.

*“ The whole tract of the mountainous land is
impregnated with gold
but it is verrey hard to be got.”*

Isaac Annis - 1849

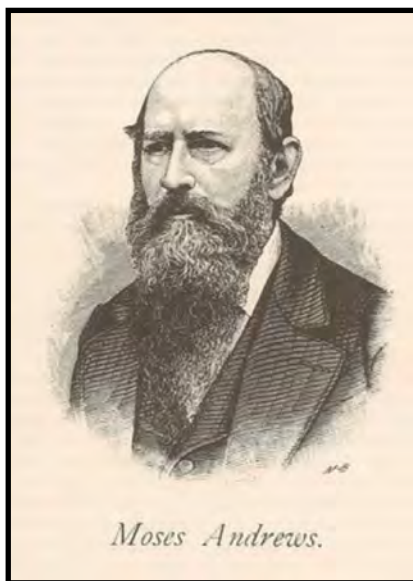
Table of Contents

Moses Andrews	4 - 6
Myron Angel	7 - 11
Isaac Annis	12 - 17
Frederick Birdsall	18 - 19
John Boggs	20 - 21
Abram Bronk	22 - 23
Claude Chana	24 - 26
Jean Charbonneau	27 - 29
John Crandall	30 - 31

Moses Andrews

1822 - 1883

Moses Andrews seemed as though he had his future well planned. At age 17, he was apprenticed to a watchmaker and jeweler. He was talented at the demanding job but he must have been restless for soon he made his way to New York where he worked for Stebbins and Company, a prestigious firm. But still he was looking for something else. He made his way to Alabama in 1846 but returned to New York in 1848. He was in New York when the news began to circulate on the east coast about the gold strike in California.



Moses wasted no time at all in joining the throng of young men intent on cashing in on the Gold Rush. On February 10, 1849, he boarded the sailing ship *Cameo*. The trip took 232 long days before they sailed into San Francisco Bay on September 28, 1849. Within a few days he was on his way to the settlement of Sacramento, the gateway to the gold fields. He was soon mining at Tamaroo Bar on the American River but didn't stay long. He returned to Sacramento intending to sell off his goods and provisions and head to Auburn to spend the winter. While in Sacramento he sent a letter to his parents telling of his

adventures so far and sending along pieces of gold from the North Fork of the American River.

Later with his partners, perhaps some from the Franklin Company who traveled with him on the *Cameo*, Moses was engaged in mining and merchandising in Sacramento and on the North Fork. He traveled throughout the gold country, at times in Auburn, others times in Sacramento, on the North Fork and at Salmon Falls. While mining at Secret Ravine, Moses made a substantial strike. He moved there and while still mining, opened a trading post and boarding house called the *Wild Cat House*.

The strikes soon played out and Moses turned his full time attention to running the *Wild Cat House*. While there he was elected to the State Assembly. In 1855, Moses was ready to return to the east coast. There he married Hannah Maria Stephens on September 20, 1855. By the end of October, Moses and Hannah were back in California at Rattlesnake Bar, a prosperous mining camp on the North Fork.

Moses seemed to settle down, now more focused on his watchmaking and jewelry business. Quite likely he brought stock with him from his east coast trip. He was elected Justice of the Peace in Rattlesnake Bar in 1856. He and Hannah were on the Bar when the famous singer, Kate Hayes, came to entertain the community.

Hannah and Moses moved to Auburn in 1857. They built a home on Prospect Hill where they had over 50 acres. Moses opened his watchmaking and jewelry store in what is now Old Town Auburn. The 1860 census gives us a good picture of the Andrews' circumstances. Moses' business was assessed for 130 ounces of gold, 50 ounces of silver, 384 rings, pins and other jewelry. He had two employees.

In 186, he was elected Auburn City Trustee. In 1866, Moses joined with Henry Hubbard and opened a banking establishment and they also became the local Wells Fargo agents. In 1872, he and several partners began publishing the *Placer Weekly Argus*, a Republican newspaper.

In 1874, Moses bought out Hubbard's interest and joined in partnership with O. W. Hollenbeck. Their business on Main Street was the Wells Fargo office, a bank and the jewelry and watchmaking shop.

All in all, Moses Andrews was a very successful 49er. How much of his wealth came from raw gold or how much from gold jewelry is hard to tell. Although the Andrews had no children, in Auburn they were surrounded by family. Two of Moses' sisters came to Auburn and Hannah's brother was also here.

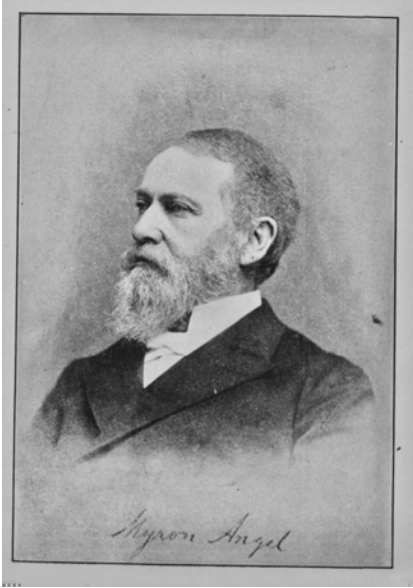
Moses died quite suddenly in 1883 when he collapsed after returning home from his bank. Hannah moved to San Francisco after Moses passed but when she died a few years later in 1888, she was carried home to Auburn to be buried next to Moses in the Old Auburn Cemetery.

*Andrews family grave
marker in Old Auburn Cemetery*



Myron Angel

1827 - 1911



49er Myron Angel deserves a whole book dedicated to his life and his adventures as they are quite extensive.

Myron and his brother Eugene were orphaned as young children but were fortunate enough to have been left an estate that paid for their upbringing. They had stable childhoods and received good educations. Eugene went to law school and in 1846, Myron was admitted to the West Point Military Academy.

As Gold Fever spread like a pandemic through the eastern states and most parts of the world, it struck both brothers hard. Eugene, at age 23, abandoned his law career and Myron, at age 21, resigned from West Point. They made plans to head to California with a large party leaving from Peoria, Illinois called the Peoria Pioneers. In an odd coincidence, the Pioneers were led by future Auburn resident John Riggs Crandall.

The brothers were set to meet in April 1849 in Peoria but travel was difficult and Myron arrived too late so the Pioneers left without them. They attempted to join up with the Pioneers and boarded a steamboat headed up the Missouri River. Arriving just south of St. Joseph, Missouri, the classic "leaving off" spot, the brothers found they had missed the Pioneers again.

Eager to catch up, the brothers went to St. Joseph and joined the Pancoast party. After buying a wagon, cooking utensils and a small amount of provisions, the Angels had only \$100 between them, most of their money having already been given to the Peoria Pioneers. The rest of the party, Charles Pancoast, Smith Phillips and George Phillips had only \$15.00. Pancoast would later write that “they were a poverty-stricken party.”

Meanwhile, the Pioneers had been ill advised to take the southern route to the California. That route would soon gain the reputation for brutality and the toll it took on men and beasts: miles of waterless desert and the merciless heat were devastating.

By the time the Pancoast party finally joined up with the Pioneers, the Peoria group were traveling very slowly and beginning to fall apart due to the harsh conditions. Myron and Eugene made the terrible decision to leave the slow moving train and set out on foot. They had to decide what to take with them that they could carry on their backs. The trunk of books that seemed like a good idea at beginning of the trip was left behind. It would show up later and be life saving.

The brothers' journey was filled with more hardship than can even be believed. Along the trail, the Pancoast party came across Eugene's worn-out boots and decided the brothers must be dead.

Despite the horrors, the brothers managed to reach San Diego in mid-November 1849. They had swollen limbs, were barefoot, ragged, exhausted and starving. They spent the last of their money on a little food and passage to San Francisco on a small brig.

Arriving in San Francisco in winter brought little relief. Hungry and out of money, the brothers sought work wherever they could. Unfortunately, as Myron later recounted, when he was offered a job nailing shingles at \$8.00 an hour, a substantial sum at the time, he had to turn it down admitting he had never hammered a nail in his life. They were saved from the fate of so many others when Lt.

Cave Coutts arrived in San Francisco with Myron's trunk that Coutts had found along the trail. When he had searched the trunk, Coutts discovered references to Myron's West Point experience and being a West Point man himself, felt it was his duty to bring the trunk along and try to find the owner.

Reunited with the trunk of books, the brothers were able to sell the books and make it through the winter. Myron would never forget that his inability to handle common manual chores might have caused the brothers to starve that winter. Later in life he would put that lesson to work.

Ever hopeful, the brothers made their way to Bidwell's Bar on the Feather River where they mined with "rather poor success." In 1852, they gave up and squatted on a piece of land near present-day Chico and began raising stock and farming. They called it Rancho Angel. They invested the profits from their crops into a toll road and hotel but their luck didn't hold here either. The Sacramento River flooded and destroyed it all. They were ruined and nearly penniless once again.

The brothers headed to Long Bar on the American River and met up with three cousins, the Fairchild brothers. They seemed to do better here and by 1855 they joined with others to invest \$40,000 in a mining tunnel in North San Juan in Nevada County. The venture at North San Juan was hard and tedious work.

By 1859, Eugene Angel, and his cousin Mahlon Fairchild headed to the newly opened silver Comstock Lode, again searching for the next get rich quick scheme. Unfortunately, the land around the Lode was hotly contested by the local Paiute Indians. Men assembled to "deal with" the Paiutes at Pyramid Lake on the Truckee River. In what would later be called the Pyramid Lake Massacre, there was a massive conflict. Only 29 of the original 105 miners who gathered for the fight survived. Eugene was one of the unfortunate men who died on May 12, 1860.

Myron was devastated by his brother's death. He left North San Juan and for a year joined his Fairchild cousins in Placerville where he was editor of the Placerville semi-weekly *Observer*.

When the Civil War broke out, Myron personally raised a company of infantry and supplied them from his personal funds. Meanwhile the North San Juan venture went bust and Myron was once again broke. Mahlon Fairchild paid off Myron's debts and they all moved on to Austin, Nevada where they established the *Reese River Reveille*. The cousins would continue to invest in mining ventures while working in the newspaper business.

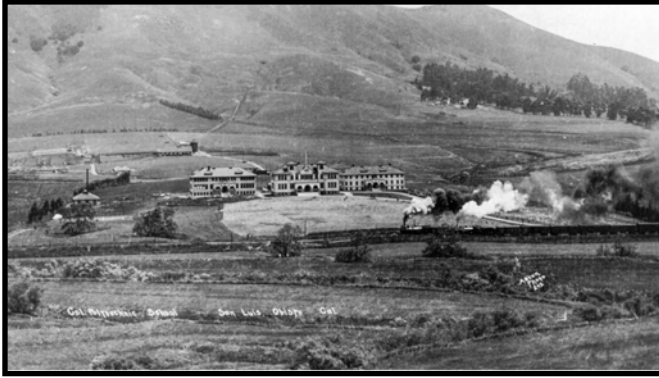
In 1879, Myron, finally in fairly good financial shape, returned to his hometown of Oneonta, New York and married his childhood sweetheart, Charlotte Paddock Livingston.

They returned to California and Myron teamed with his cousin Mahlon Fairchild to write the histories of several counties. Around 1880, they arrived in Auburn and lived here while doing the research for *The History of Placer County* which they published in 1882. This history continues to be the most inclusive and accurately written account of our area and is still used today.

Eventually, Myron and Charlotte settled in San Luis Obispo where Myron continued writing history including *The History of San Luis Obispo County*. He also became the editor of the local newspaper. He continued in the business, owning and editing several newspapers.

Charlotte died in 1886. By 1889, Myron had married Carrie Flagler. In 1893, they visited his hometown of Oneonta and visited the New York State Normal School. Myron was very impressed. Remembering how he and Eugene almost starved to death because they had no manual skills, Myron returned to San Luis resolved to establish a vocational school which he did in 1901. Myron Angel is considered the father of the California Polytechnic School or Cal Poly as it is called today

Although Myron Angel didn't live in Auburn for very long, he got to know its people. It is through his observations that we know so much about our early history.



Cal Poly ca. 1907

"I mine for a fortune but write for a living"

Myron Angel

Isaac Annis

1787-1858

Isaac Annis left us one of the most informative and colorful accounts of Gold Rush life in Auburn. Isaac wrote a series of letters home to his daughter Nancy Russell. Home was Port Gibson, Ontario County, New York. Isaac's letters were passed down through his family and are an intimate and invaluable record of the time.

Isaac was a blacksmith working near the Erie Canal. By the time the news of the Gold Rush was circulating, Isaac was living with his daughter and her family in Port Gibson. His wife had died in 1847 so perhaps Isaac



was open to a new experience. At age 62, Isaac was much older than the typical gold seeker but he joined a group of younger men and paid for passage on a sailing ship to San Francisco. He paid \$150 for passage and board.

To Nancy from New York City, January 28, 1849, he wrote:

"We shall sail next Thursday in the ship Robbart Downe (Robert Bowne) for California by way of the Horn. Our Capt. name is Camron and is just as old a man as I be. With us we bought a boat and gave \$60 dollars for it and we bought a tent for \$24 dollars and we are going to carrey a set of black smith

*tools and other youtenesel (utensils) tu numbers (numerous) to menchen. I wish you could see the rush that there is here....men and women in a soled (solid) mass all for California.
Nothing here but California.”*

After six months at sea, they arrived in San Francisco. You can tell Isaac is excited by the adventure and was feeling well.

To Nancy from San Francisco, August 31, 1849:

*“I am on shore in the tent riding (writing) on a barrel...
I must tell you about my health. It was never better than it is now. I haft been sick at all. I am 20 lb. heavier than when I started from home.”*

Isaac and his partners made their way to Auburn and mined for a few months but mining was hard work even for a young man and Isaac struggled. He returned to Sacramento to buy tools and returned to Auburn to set up as a blacksmith. He wrote to Nancy:

*“The whole tract of the mountainous land is impregnated with gold
but it is verrey hard to be got.
It requeres a grate (great) deal of hard labor to git it in the dry diggins. The river is two miles from here and I will tell you what a place it is to git to. You would think that I could never git to it. Wee go till we com on a bluff of the hill.
It is almost perpendicular up and down.
It is 15 hundred feet down to the water and it takes one half day to*

*go to it and hard enough at that
and when you git down it is all rocks.
It is so hot that a man can't work
from 11 o'clock to 4."*

As for day to day life, Isaac was most anxious to tell Nancy about the high cost of everything. From October 14, 1849:

*"I bough me a half barril of
cleer port paid 25 dollars.
Half bushel of beans
1 ham 2 lbs. of butter paid 3 dollars.
2 lbs of pertators 1 dollar.
Tin pail to put my butter in 1 dollar. Bought
5 lbs of dried apples
3 lbs of peaches and bought ten lb.
of cheas 1 lb. of tea one lb. of
salratur (baking soda) 15 lb. of white
sugar. I think this will
last me. i bought me some cooking
utensils to cook with so you see
I have plenty to eat. But wee are
deprived of vedgtable
We back (bake)
our bread and biscuit and fret (fruit)
nut cakes... So wee live just as
well as I want to live all except what
I told you that is vedgtable. "*

Isaac was appalled at the number of men that were sick and dying all around him. In January he wrote:

*"They ware dieing all around me...
Thar is this deses (disease) the controy
(country) is subject to. All those that com over
land has it and a great manney
of them die with it. A most all of them
that come round the Horn have it -*

*that is the black disentary (dysentery)
and it is a verrey hard complaint. One
other is scurvy that begin in the laig
bones and the laig swills up read (red) as
scarlett and some die with it.
The other complaint is the nee.
The nee (knee) is verrey painful
and so weak that you cant go.”*

By March 1850, Isaac was coming to realize that mining was just too hard for him and gave it up completely. He wrote to Nancy:

*“Now Nancy I will tell you what I can git
gold here and not dig for it.
I have taken a large house
and I am keeping a bording (boarding)
house and I work at my trade. My kit is close to
my door. I have one hired man
witch I pay 5 dollars per day
but he is only stay with me till May.
I take money all the time. I handle
more in one day then I did at
Port Gibson in a month. Nancy
money is very plenty here. Ever bodey
got a bag of gold and tha dispute
no price. I have 32 dollars for
shoeing a horse. I often take 8 or
10 dollars before 10 o:clock in the morning.
I take some money for pulling teeth.
I have 5 dollars per tooth. I trade in
everything tha comes along picks
and bars. I have bought for 2 dollars
and sold them agin right off from
10 to 15 dollars. Nancy I tell you that if I was
young I would never leave California till
I head 50 thousand but my age and health
do not permit.”*

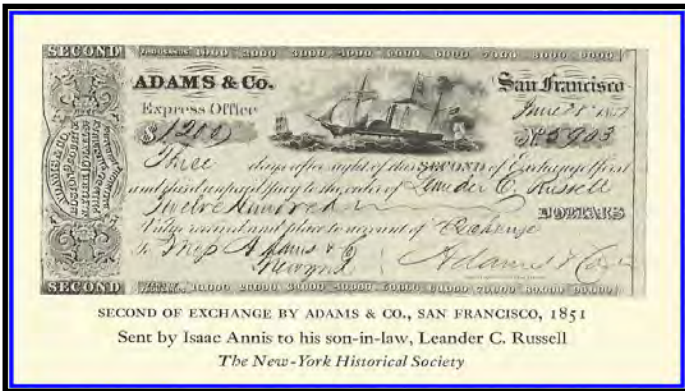
The winter of 1850 was tough for Isaac. He had stocked up on provisions from Sacramento counting on the upcoming bad weather to isolate the area but the weather was so good that the roads stayed open and goods were plentiful. He spent three thousand dollars for flour and pork that came to about 20 dollars per hundred but as the winter progressed he could only sell it for 10 dollars per hundred. He wrote:

*"I shall loose 15 hundred dollars and it is all owing to the winter.
I could com home last fall and brought thee thousand and now if I git home with half that money I shall think I shall due well."*

Keep in mind that Isaac's \$1,500 would be worth about \$50,000 in todays dollars. He did far better than most miners. He sent Nancy a draft from Adams and Company for \$1,200 in case he didn't make it home. In June of 1851 he wrote:

"Nancy I am now on my way home to the States. I will tell you that my health is not verry good and I have got a hard jerney (journey) before me at this time of the year as it is the rainey season. But I hope I shall indur it as I have gone through a good many hard trials. I know inclose a draft of twelve hundred dollars. If I never git home this may reach you so you will dispose of it as you see fit. Give some of it to the children more pertickerly to Alice but I hope providens (providence) may smile on me so the I may return."

Isaac did make it home to Port Gibson and I'm sure enthralled his family and friends with tales from his adventures in the California Gold Rush. He died in 1858.



Frederick Birdsall

1829 - 1900



Frederick Birdsall was a young man of 22 years when he left his home in Peekskill, New York for the California Gold Rush. In early 1850, he was in Sacramento City. Later he mined for a while and kept a store in Deadwood in Placer County, but he made his fortune in silver from the Washoe County mines in Nevada. In 1866, he married Esther Stratton and they would eventually have five

children.

Selling out his Nevada interests, Birdsall moved to Sacramento. In 1875, Birdsall bought the Bear River Ditch Company from George Reamer. This famous ditch system had been in place serving the mining districts since 1852.

Birdsall expanded the water system and by 1880 his system covered over 300 miles of ditches and watercourses. During the same time period he was President of the Sacramento Bank and was involved in financing the San Joaquin & Sierra Nevada Railway.

In 1887, Birdsall built a reservoir on Huntley Hill in Auburn to bring water into the town expanding an older system. With the expansion, fire hydrants appeared in Auburn for the first time. Needing an office for his ditch company, Birdsall financed the building of Firehouse # 1 in Auburn and used the second floor for his office while the fire truck was housed on the ground floor.

In 1888, Birdsall, along with Colonel Edward R. Hamilton, purchased seventy acres on Huntley Hill and developed the land for homes. They named it Aeolia. While the Birdsall family lived in a large mansion in Sacramento, they also built a large house on Aeolia Heights. Birdsall delighted in the ranch and planted over eight thousand olive trees. He produced and sold award winning olive oil made from the olives grown on his ranch

Meanwhile, the water system was expanding to serve the new agricultural needs of the area. Birdsall would eventually sell the whole system to the South Yuba Water Company for an astounding \$210,000.00 in 1890. The South Yuba Company was soon bought out by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

Frederick died in 1900 but several of his children made Auburn their home. One son, Ernest, was an Auburn businessman and state representative. His daughter Etta married in Alaska and became the author of several best-selling books about the sled dogs of Alaska and often returned to their ranch in Aeolia. When she retired, she returned and lived here until her death.

Firehouse

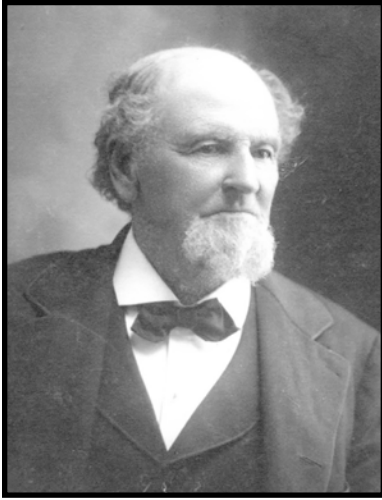
1

*Lincoln and El
Dorado Streets*



John Craig Boggs

1825 - 1909



John Boggs was 24 years old with \$1,000 in his pocket when he set forth on February 3, 1849, for San Francisco. He took the ship *Xylon* out of Baltimore. The trip on the *Xylon* proved to be a hellish voyage.

Desperately short on water and rations, things got so bad that the passengers mutinied in Rio de Janeiro forcing the Captain and First Mate to leave the ship. They finally landed in

San Francisco on September 14, 1849.

Upon arrival, Boggs unexpectedly met up with his brother William, who unbeknownst to Boggs, had come overland and arrived just before the *Xylon*. They formed a party and quickly made their way to Woods Dry Diggings, as Auburn was called then. The little mining camp was just beginning to come alive. William Gwynn had just built his store/saloon/boarding house, Major Bailey and Charles Ellard had their saloon up and running (most likely from a tent), and Hudson House was operating a boarding house/saloon.

Boggs and his party mined for a while without much luck. Boggs tried running a store but it too proved unsuccessful. He wandered around the Mother Lode in Placer, Sutter, Yuba and Nevada Counties. He finally took the job as nightwatchman in the newly named Auburn in 1853. He must have been successful enough for in

October 1854, he returned to his home in Pennsylvania. By the spring, he was back in California helping run cattle from Los Angeles to Sacramento. He returned to Auburn and was appointed Deputy Sheriff. He also invested in a venture to flume the American River.

In 1857, he married Louisa Harrington, they would have two children. Boggs became a pillar of the community. He was Deputy Sheriff, he founded a newspaper, the *Stars and Stripes*, he was a District Assessor and County Assessor, Under Sheriff and finally Sheriff.

As a lawman, Boggs proved to be tenacious and brave. He chased some of the most notorious criminals in Placer County but most especially, Rattlesnake Dick Barter. Boggs arrested Barter several times but Barter always escaped. When Barter was finally shot by a posse, he was found with a note by his dead body saying "if John Boggs is dead I am satisfied."

When Boggs retired from law enforcement ,he set up a fruit ranch in Newcastle. He was one of the pioneer fruit growers in the area. After Louisa died in 1898, he married Alice Watson. Boggs was the postmaster of Newcastle for two terms. He lived to see the mining camp of Dry Diggings become the prosperous and thriving town of Auburn. He was a miner, a merchant, a politician, a militia officer, railroad detective and civil servant but most of all he was a lawman. He is credited with more arrests of law breakers than anyone in Placer County, most of which he did alone. He was tough and fearless and served with dedication. Boggs died in 1909.

Abram Bronk

1819 - 1870

Abram Bronk, at 30 years old, was a bit older than most of the early gold seekers. Perhaps his age contributed to his early success in the political and engineering realm. He first engaged in mining upon his arrival in 1849. He mined at Horseshoe Bar until 1851 when he was elected County Treasurer for Placer County.

In 1851 and 1852 Bronk was living in Auburn. In fact, he owned the land that the county bought to erect a courthouse on in 1853. In 1852, he was part of a group of men who owned and built the Alta Telegraph Line. When he resigned the position of Treasurer in 1853 he immediately joined a group of men intent on building a toll road and suspension bridge to cross the North Fork of the American River.

The Horseshoe Bar and Pilot Hill Suspension Bridge and Turnpike Company was sometimes called the Whiskey Bar Suspension Bridge and Turnpike Company. The bridge was actually at Whiskey Bar.

Bronk was the superintendent during the construction of the bridge.

The *Sacramento Daily Union* noted in December of 1854 that: "Bronk attended personally to every part of the work which does him great credit." This bridge is thought to be the first bridge over the American River that could handle wagon travel. Later he worked on building the



bridge at Folsom that crossed the Middle Fork of the American River.

The bridge at Whiskey Bar was destroyed in the flood of 1861/62. It is believed that the cables from the bridge were later dragged up to Rattlesnake Bar and used to build the suspension bridge there in 1863.

Bronk left California in 1855 and returned to New York. In 1856, he married Cynthia Brewster in Shortsville, New York. He bought a farm and they would have two daughters and two sons. In 1942, his son, Mitchell wrote a book called "Discovering my Forty-niner Father." He included some letters that Abram had sent home to New York and he remarked that for all his growing up years a drawing of a suspension bridge hung on their wall of their family home.

Abram died in 1870 in New York. He still held property in Placer County and held shares in the Auburn-Yankee Jim's Turnpike Company. Towards the end of his life, Bronk talked about returning to Auburn and even sent letters to friends inquiring about land prices. He once wrote of his experience in the Gold Rush, " I can say that I have not yet to regret it. "

Claude Chana

1811 - 1882

Chana did not initially come to America for gold. He immigrated to New Orleans in 1839 from his home in the Rhone area of France. He moved on to St. Joseph Missouri in 1841. He set himself up as a successful cooper and did a little farming. He watched as wagon trains assembled and gathered provisions for traveling across the Plains to the unknown land on the west coast. Finally seduced by the tales of opportunity and the lush land in the West, he joined a wagon train in 1846 and headed to California.

One especially important event happened on his journey. After some of the party split off and headed to Oregon, the original train overtook the Donner Party. Chana's group tried in vain to persuade the Donner group to move more quickly to beat the winter storms in the Sierras. Later in his life, Chana greatly regretted not being able to persuade the Donner's to push on.

Arriving in California, Chana spent some time with fellow Frenchman Theodore Sicard on the Bear River. The two worked well together and began planting almonds, peaches, apple seeds and grain. Chana even traveled to Mission San Jose to buy hundreds of grape cuttings for the rancho. This was probably the first large agricultural endeavor in what would become Placer County.

For some reason, Chana left the rancho and the now extensive garden and went to work for John Sutter at the Fort in what would be Sacramento. While there he worked in the same area as did wagon maker James Marshall and they became friends. About the time Sutter sent Marshall to the Coloma area to build a sawmill, Chana returned to Sicard's rancho. He was at Sicard's, where many French trappers had gathered, when the news of James Marshall's gold discovery began to circulate. Deciding to check it out, Chana left Sicard's to head to Coloma to see his friend.

Arriving to find an almost frenzied scene of gold diggers, Chana was determined to get in on the action. He turned right around to go back to Sicard's to get all the supplies he would need for a gold prospecting expedition.

At Sicard's he recruited Francois Gendron, a French frontiersman, Philibert Courteau, who traveled to California with John Fremont in 1843-44, and a third man only identified as Eugene. He also persuaded about twenty-five Native Americans to accompany them along with thirty-five horses. They formed wooden pans called bateas from trees and loaded with provisions they set out. Gendron suggested a shortcut to get to Coloma. The second night out they camped on what would later be named Auburn Ravine. There they decided to try their luck and were more than delighted to wash out three "good-sized" nuggets. They remained there for about two weeks and then headed to what would later be named Baltimore Ravine. They found gold there also but hearing about even richer areas, they headed to the Yuba River area. Chana and his party had discovered the first gold in our area. Had they stayed longer they would have discovered the whole Ravine to be a source of great deposits of gold.

The diggings on the Yuba were also profitable and Chana came away with over \$25,000 dollars worth of gold. Mining was not his main desire though and he took his profits and went back to the Bear River area and purchased Sicard's Rancho for \$6,000. The land covered four leagues, a little over sixteen thousand acres, of rich bottom land where his earlier efforts were showing good results. He continued planting fruits, nuts and grains and he built a flour mill and a winery. Soon wagons were arriving from all over the Mother Lode to purchase Chana's good wine and fruits and vegetables.

Chana seemed to be more than comfortably settled in when a problem came up with the legal ownership to the Rancho land. After a long and costly legal battle, Chana was left with only 500 acres. At the time it seemed that luck was on his side as most of his orchard, gardens, mill and

winery were on those 500 acres. That luck did not hold however. The severe winter of 1861-62 brought high water and flooding. Chana had been fighting the river for years by building levees but this time his land was overrun by not only water but water that was filled with debris from mining further upstream. His once flourishing rancho was now covered by several feet of sand and muck. His beautiful property became a wasteland. He was only able to sell it for \$500 (at one time he had turned down an offer of \$25,000 for the same land.)

He moved a few miles to Wheatland and set up again. He built another winery but had to buy grapes from other farmers.

The man whose fortune had been made from gold found his dream and his life diminished by that same gold. Chana died in 1882.

*Newspaper ad auctioning
Chana's farm.
1875
Marysville Daily Appeal*

FARM FOR SALE
— AT —
AUCTION.
— — —
THERE WILL BE SOLD AT
AUCTION,
On Monday, September 27th, 1875,
At 12 o'clock, P. M.,
IN FRONT OF M. SAMUELS & CO'S STORE,
At Wheatland,
That Splendid Farm of Bottom Land
CONSISTING OF 432 ACRES (More or less)
Situated about three miles southeast from Wheatland,
on Bear river, formerly owned and occupied by Claude
Chana; bridge across Bear river included,
— — —
This will present an opportunity for the purchase of
some of the very best land in California, upon which
has been raised two crops of Potatoes and four of peaches
per year. Terms will be made known on day of
sale.
— — —
TITLE PERFECT.

Jean Baptiste Charbonneau

1805 - 1866

Charbonneau was another man who was already in California when the Gold Rush erupted. He had been born on the plains in what today is North Dakota. His mother, Sacajawea and father, Toussaint Charbonneau were interpreters for the Lewis and Clark expedition to the west coast in 1805.

Among the party, William Clark was especially fond of little Jean and nicknamed him "Pompey or Pomp." Several physical features along the trail are named after him. William Clark would later take guardianship of Charbonneau and raised and educated him. Clark was also the guardian for Charbonneau's half siblings.

When Charbonneau was eighteen years old he met Duke Frederick Paul Wilhelm of Wurtemberg; European nobility on an expedition to study the flora and fauna of America. The Duke had hired Charbonneau's father Toussaint as a guide. The teenaged Charbonneau took the opportunity and went back to Europe with the Duke. While there he learned several languages and traveled extensively.

Upon his return in 1829, he drifted back to his roots and became a skilled fur trapper. He would later know some of the most famed trappers/mountainmen in the Rocky Mountains: Jim Bridger, William Sublette, Jedediah Smith and Jim Beckwourth were among his companions. He led several buffalo hunting trips and was known to be an excellent guide for Europeans looking for adventure. He even met John Fremont's expedition party and Fremont wrote in his journal, "Mr. Chabonard [*sic*] received us hospitably. One of his people was sent to gather mint, with the aid of which he concocted a very good julep."

In 1846, he helped guide the famed Mormon Battalion forging a wagon road from Santa Fe to San Diego. The leader of the expedition mentioned Charbonneau numerous times in his journals. He spoke of Charbonneau's skill in selecting routes, trapping beaver, finding water, establishing camps, discovering passes, scouting, estimating distances, locating smoke signals, hunting bears, fighting Indians and many other such valuable services. For a brief time, Charbonneau was even Alcalde (mayor) at the Mission San Luis Rey de Francia near present-day Oceanside, California.

When the news of gold began to circulate, Charbonneau and Jim Beckwourth were quick to get to the American River to pan for gold. In 1852, he was also doing surveying work for Placer County. As the early gold diminished, in 1857, Charbonneau set to running a ferry on the North Fork.

He eventually settled in the Secret Ravine area and spent several years searching for gold in that rich area. In 1861, he was taking a more sedentary role as a clerk at the Orleans Hotel in Auburn.

In 1866, at age 61, considered to be "an old Man," Charbonneau heard of a gold strike in Montana territory, an old familiar realm for him and he decided to go. Charbonneau died on that journey. His friend Dana Perkins wrote: "Though strong of purpose, the weight of years was too much for the hardships of the trip undertaken, and he now sleeps alone by the bright water of the Owyhee." The Owyhee is a tributary of the Snake River. Charbonneau's burial spot is near present-day Danner, Oregon.

*Artistic representation of Sacajawea, Toussaint
and Jean Baptiste Charbonneau*



John Riggs Crandall

1808-1885

John Crandall was born in Massachusetts in 1808. Little is known about his early years as the family moved quite a bit. By 1835, he was in Batavia, New York where he married Harriett Russell. Together they moved to Peoria, Illinois.

In Peoria, Crandall was involved with the mercantile business of J. Moore Company. This company was organizing a wagon train bound for California and Crandall would be its superintendent.

They named the group the Peoria Pioneers and in April 1849 left for St. Joseph, Missouri.

St. Joseph was the “taking off” point for the West. They originally planned to take the traditional South Pass route across the Plains. But in St. Joseph, Crandall changed the plan and decided to take the Gila River route to San Diego and then go up the coast to the gold fields. Part of the Pioneers group split off and took the South Pass route.

This decision would prove to be a disaster. The journey was more than miserable and they arrived in the northern mines a good six months after the party who took the South Pass. Unlike Crandall’s later reputation as a solid, respectable, citizen several of his fellow travelers



would claim in a later court case that Crandall “was intemperate, quarrelsome and overbearing” and that he was “intoxicated often during the journey.”

Crandall appears to have acquired his moniker of “Dr. Crandall” while on this journey. There are no records of him taking any professional training as a physician but there was story told that he was highly successful in treating some of his fellow passengers who had cholera, a disease that could easily kill.

Finally arriving in California, Crandall mined on the Feather and Trinity Rivers for some time, then moved to Marysville. While in Marysville, he helped establish the Marysville Masonic Lodge and the Methodist Episcopal Church. Later, living in Nevada City, he was elected City Alderman. He sent for his wife Harriett and she arrived in December 1851. They moved to Auburn where they would live out the rest of their lives.

Crandall very quickly became involved in the huge Bear River and Auburn Mining Company’s endeavor to bring water to the mining areas, becoming one of the first officers. A few years later, he was one of the five men who organized the Auburn Turnpike Company. Both of these businesses were highly profitable. At the same time, Crandall, like so many men who turned to business to make a stable living, also had investments in several mining claims.

Crandall and his wife were also early fruit pioneers. As early as 1856, he had plums, crab apples, apricots, almonds, figs, pears, cherries, citrus trees, grapes, peaches and quince. Harriett was winning prizes at the State Fair for her dried fruit in 1859.

Despite his early reckless years on the overland journey, Crandall settled to a stable citizen. He and Harriett were two of the founders of the local Methodist Episcopal Church in Auburn and he was an officer in the local Masonic lodge.

Crandall died in 1885. Harriet died in 1903.