

## Gold Mining Journal of Stephen Wing - 1852-1860

Excerpts from the daily Journal of Stephen Wing, a gold miner in Placer and El Dorado Counties - spending four years mining and working in the Union Town, Coloma area - after trying his luck near Ophir, in Placer county, and Garden Valley on the Georgetown Divide.

Editorial and Biographical notes by Phyllis Lindert Gernes. (Thanks for permission to use this material).

. . . Stephen Wing and his companions came from South Yarmouth on Cape Cod. They came by ship, crossed the Isthmus of Panama and endured the hardships of bad food, crowded conditions and fear of cholera. He and his friends, leaving their luggage to be sent later, left San Francisco, and quickly made their way to the mining area near Ophir in Placer County. Wing tried his luck there until 1854. He then placer-mined on the South Fork at Uniontown, (now Lotus) about one mile from the gold discovery site at Coloma. Wing prospected over an even wider area, giving descriptions of Spanish Dry Diggings, Georgetown, Cave Valley, and locations on the South Fork. He made numerous trips to Todd's Valley and Forest Hill to check on the progress of the "Big Tunnel", in which he had a one-third of one share interest bequeathed him by a friend. He entertained hopes that a "big strike" there would make him rich.

March 20, 1852 - started for Ophir. . . found our way to the New World Hotel, which was six posts in the ground, one post in the center of each end place, eleven feet high for the ridge pole to rest on, 2x4 scathlings for the plates from which a few rafters to the ridge completed the frame, which was covered with old foresails, gaff top sails, jibs, and odds and ends of drilling and canvas. . . dirt floor. . . rough table . . two benches . . liquor bar in one corner. . . the landlord announced that those who wanted to "turn in" could do so. . . He added that he hoped they had blankets as he had none to supply. Some hay was brought in and spread along each side of the hotel, "and our beds were ready". I dropped off to sleep right off, but was awakened in a couple of hours bothered by fleas. "One flea is bad enough - but let 1500 of them jump all over you". . . The three inches of hay under us became less as the hours wore on, for several mule teams arrived from the mountains late in the evening and the mules were tethered all around the hotel, and after eating their allowance of hay, they put their heads under the sails and attacked our beds. . . the lodgers awakened in the morning with their heads on the ground, and one man lost a little hair. Rates here are thirteen dollars a week, payable in advance.

March 28, Sunday - No meeting here except the gamblers at the "El Dorado. . . Went two miles to Doty's Flat to look at a cabin on Bald Hill (Ophir District). We bought it for \$30.00. . . Settled in our new home. . . Had fifty pounds of pickled pork, in a sack, which had turned golden yellow color, as it had been out of the brine for sometime. I fried six large pieces of this, made a bread "turnover". The bread was not a success, partner Cook was the first to mention it.

Sept. 2 - Haven't slept for two nights, bothered with skunks. . . hogs roam at will - and butt through the door and eat everything. Wildcats in the dead of night find their way in - and steal everything.

Sept. 11 - 120 degrees in the shade - 108 at sunset - did not work. . . still working on dam. . .

Oct. 1 - Have been working 49 days on reservoir.

December - Chosen to tend reservoir at \$42 per week. . .

Dec. 11 - Part of the reservoir, 12 feet has broken away - lost all of the water. . .

March 17, 1853 - Been at Doty's Flat one year. . . passed through Newcastle and Centerville and took dinner at the Franklin House run by John Wixon - from Harwich, Cap Cod - from there to Mountaineer House and tried a ravine nearby. From there went to Horseshoe Bar and explored two drifts - one 200 feet into the hill and the other 220 feet. . . then returned home, a 20 mile jaunt.

(The journal continues until 1860, in similar fashion with some good details of what it was like to mine for gold and the many disappointments.) He returned to Cap Cod in 1860 and lectured about his time in the mines. He married and became . . .secretary of the South Yarmouth Library Association in 1869 and a selectman of the town of Yarmouth for three years. . .)

o o o