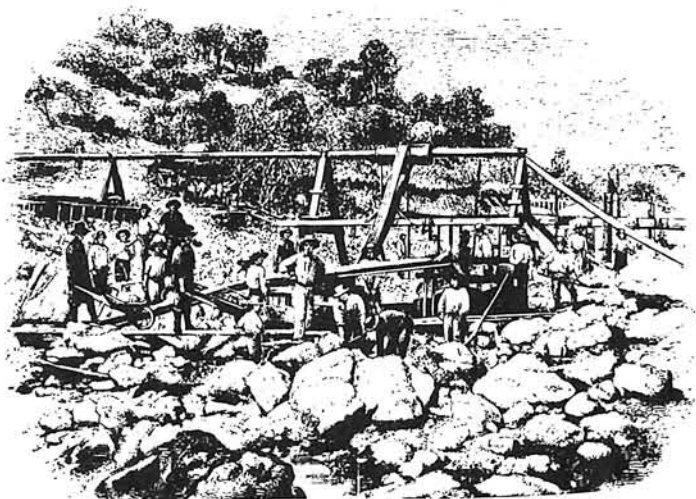




SUMMER 1990

LOS ANGELES CORRAL

NUMBER 180



Chili Gulch

by Powell Greenland

Two miles south of Mokelumne Hill at the side of Highway 49 stands a stone monument bearing the legend "CHILI GULCH." Over the years thousands of motorists have stopped here and read the following statement: "This five mile gulch was the richest placer mining section in Calaveras County. It received its name from Chileans who worked it in 1848 and 1849, and was the scene of the so-called Chilean War. The largest known quartz crystals were recovered from a mine on the south side of the gulch."

Most visitors to the gold rush country are very interested in the many historic sites that dot this fascinating country. People with just a casual interest in history seem to grasp the idea

that something very special happened here. It is not surprising then that many are intrigued or, perhaps, puzzled by the implications in the term "Chilean War."

Among the first wave of argonauts to reach the gold fields of California in 1848 and early '49 were a large contingent of Latin Americans. The first of these to arrive were Mexicans from the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Durango, but by far the largest number was from Sonora and thus, the term, Sonorans, was applied to all Mexicans. These people came overland, many with wives and children and for the most part settled into the southern mines section. The

(Continued on Page Three)

The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL
*Published Quarterly in
Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter*

OFFICERS 1990 TRAIL BOSSES

SIEGFRIED G. DEMKE Sheriff
731 Fairview Ave. #10,
Arcadia, CA 91007-6697

DON FRANKLIN Deputy Sheriff
2114 N. Louise St., Santa Ana, CA 92706

JOHN SELMER Registrar of
Marks & Brands
55 E. Arthur Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006

RANDY JOSEPH Keeper of the Chips
1439 Pilgrim Way, Monrovia, CA 91016

DONALD DUKE Publications Editor
P.O. Box 80250, San Marino, CA 91118-8250

WILLIAM LORENZ Past Sheriff
Trail Boss

JAMES B. GULBRANSON Past Sheriff
Trail Boss

APPOINTED OFFICERS

TODD I. BERENS Representative
13202 Sussex Pl., Santa Ana, CA 92705

FRED BENNETT Wrangler Boss

BILL CATTRON Exhibits Wrangler

IRON EYES CODY & FRANK NEWTON
Daguerreotype Wranglers

RAYMOND J. NICHOLSON Magic
Lantern Wrangler

ART CLARK Librarian

BILL ESCHERICH .. Membership Chairman

L. CRAIG CUNNINGHAM Historian

MIKE NUNN Assistant Registrar

DOYCE B. NUNIS... Editor, Brand Book 18

Address for Exchanges
and Material Submitted for Publication:

The Publications Editor
Donald Duke
P.O. Box 80250
San Marino, CA 91118-8250

THE BRANDING IRON solicits articles of 2,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

Copyright © 1990 by the Westerners
Los Angeles Corral



THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

by Abraham Hoffman



Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton

Superior Court Judge James R. Ross spoke to the Corral about Jesse James.

MARCH 1990 MEETING

The subject of the March meeting was "Jesse James." The speaker was Superior Court Judge James R. Ross, who for 23 years of his life lived in a household which was alive with Jesse James legend and lore. His mother, Jo James Ross, was the daughter of Jesse James, Jr., the grandfather of the speaker. Recalling his family history, Judge Ross decided it was time to set the legend of Jesse James in the correct perspective. He wrote a book about his famous ancestor.

He stated that Jesse James became a legend in his own time. Many of the blood-and-thunder stories clustered around the memory of this outlaw are, like the technicolor movie of 1939 in which Tyrone Power played the title role, mostly on the fiction side. The speaker claimed that many of the organized raids on banks and the

(Continued on Page Fourteen)

present mother lode city of Sonora, one of the earliest mining camps in the area, is testimony to the impact of these people. Many of the men were professional miners with a knowledge of placer mining methods. The second largest group of foreigners to arrive in California, beginning in the latter months of 1848 and early 1849, were Chileans and Peruvians who also came with a background of mining experience. This group arrived by sea mostly from the busy port of Valparaiso. At the height of this immigration the number of Chileans reached about 7,000. Like the Mexicans they introduced mining methods into California. The very word, "placer" is Spanish in derivation. The Chileans had a knowledge of geological formations that might indicate the location of rich placer deposits. This is probably why they staked claims in the region that became known as Chili Gulch (a contemporary misspelling of Chile).

At first, when the gold fields were sparsely settled, the American miners accepted the Latin-Americans and even appreciated the placer-mining methods they introduced. However, with the great influx of would-be miners from all over the world, the mood of the Americans changed and a period of discrimination and persecution set in that is not a proud chapter in California history. According to Rodman Paul, the population of California in 1848 was 14,000 and by the end of 1849 it was 100,000. In the next two years it more than doubled so that by 1852 the state had a population of 223,000. By 1850, 24 percent of the state's population was foreign born. This number, of course, did not include the numerous Indians nor the native born Californians of Spanish ancestry. The largest of this group of foreigners were Latin Americans.

The California gold rush has often been cited as a lesson in democratization, and a restructuring of the social order where a man was judged by his character, and his ability to adjust to the new environment and the rigors of a complete new life-style. California was a place where hard manual labor was prized and social pretensions despised. But it appears that during the gold rush, these standards only applied to Americans. This was a period when antipathy to foreigners was not confined just to California, but was prevalent in the rest of the country as well. Even the English were not immune to prejudice as illustrated by the following remarks from the

overland journal of James M. Hutchings: "... my having been born and raised an Englishman, and the three being American, I was coldly received..." However, in general the English had little difficulty in being accepted. Also the Germans, who were quite numerous, learned to adapt themselves to the American life-style and if they learned a little English as many did, they became accepted. This was not true, however with the French, they tended to band together and not readily mix with the "Anglo" population and as a result were the recipients of discrimination in California. A.P. Nasatir, in his introduction to *The Letters of Etienne Derbec*, comments: "... many were so [disgruntled] because of injustices from Anglo-Americans — but there were other and perhaps more important factors. Few Frenchmen in California were skilled workers and their ignorance of common trades plus their clannishness, caused them to refuse to learn the English language." J.D. Borthwick, in relating his experience with Frenchmen in the mines informs us: "When any one capable as acting as interpreter happened to be present, the Frenchman, in his impatience, was constantly asking him 'Qu'est ce qu'il dit?' This caught the ear of the Americans more than anything else, and a 'Keskydee' came at last to be a synonym for a 'Parleyvoo.'"

On the social ladder, in gold-rush California, the Digger Indian was at the very bottom. Next, and not far above were the Chinese. The persecution that these two races received from the Anglo-Americans has been widely revealed and does not need repeating here. Next, above the Chinese in social status, were the Latin-Americans composed mainly of Sonorans and Chileans. The event that first caused the most notice of the depredations on the Chileans occurred in San Francisco on July 15, 1849. On the evening of this date the "Hounds," a group mainly composed of discharged New York Volunteers, raided "Little Chile" located at the foot of Telegraph Hill. The assault was so brutal, involving murder, rape and robbery, that even in that lawless time, it shocked San Franciscans. But even before this event, Vicente Perez Rosales, a Chilean, related in his journal dated March 1, 1849: "The supreme authority in San Francisco is not an alcalde as many say he is. He is only a Yankee, more or less drunk, whom they call alcalde. His only function, if two Yankees are quarreling, is



Vicente Perez Rosales

to smooth things over; if the quarrel is between a Yankee and someone who speaks Spanish, his job is to declare the Spaniard guilty and make him pay the court costs. If the dispute is between two Spaniards, he sees to it that the decision goes against the one who has money enough to pay

the costs and the interpreter." Rosales, who could speak French as well as English, was treated so badly by the Americans, he often passed himself off as French in an effort to receive better treatment. His bitterness is reflected in the following statement also from his journal which, incidentally, was first published as a Spanish edition in Chile: "From the early months of 1849 on, the Chilean was looked upon as a pariah; he was viewed by most Yankees very much the way a Jew was by a Knight Templar in the Middle Ages. This inexplicable prejudice was not restricted to the cities. Outrages of a lighter or more serious nature were also perpetuated against them in the gold fields. Wherever the Chileans were outnumbered by their enemies they were dispossessed and driven out with the most fearful threats." This was the status of the Latin-American and the temper of the times in the gold fields of California when the Chileans took out claims on the richest gold-bearing land in Calaveras County."

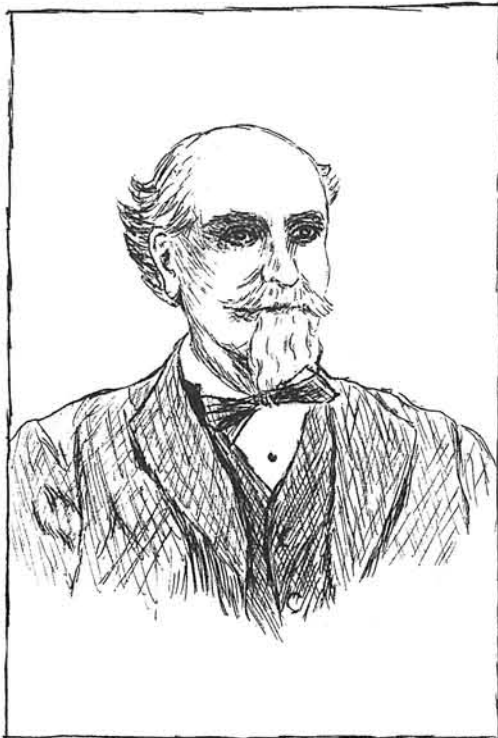
The so-called Chilean War commenced in December 1849 when American miners moved into the district and learned that the Chilean company leaders had taken out mining claims for their peons. The Americans immediately organized a camp meeting, elected an alcalde and proceeded to enact a code that prohibited



A scene from *Century Magazine* for February 1892 showing the anti-Chilean riot in San Francisco in 1849. The artist incorrectly dressed the Chileans in the costume of a Mexican *charro*.

mining claims from being issued to peons. The elected alcalde was a Virginian by the name of Collier who came from a slave state and, therefore, was considered an authority on the issue of slave labor. The rationale the American miners used at their meeting was that the Chilean peons were in effect slaves and, therefore, were not entitled to hold claims. They cited as a precedent the case of General Green and his slaves who had a similar restriction imposed in the northern mines. As a final order of business, the meeting also elected a military captain to enforce the new code. The action of this assembly overlooked the established alcalde in the area, a man named John Scollan and also the judge and county sheriff in Stockton.

From this point on, the story becomes very confused with conflicting accounts. We have as one source, the eye-witness report, written 47 years after the event by a participant, Colonel James J. Ayres, and another by Ramon Jil Navarro, who served as an interpreter during the court proceeding. His work first appeared in a series of newspaper articles in Chile between January 1, 1853 and January 27, 1854. Fortunately there are also contemporary newspaper accounts available that help sort out truth from fiction.

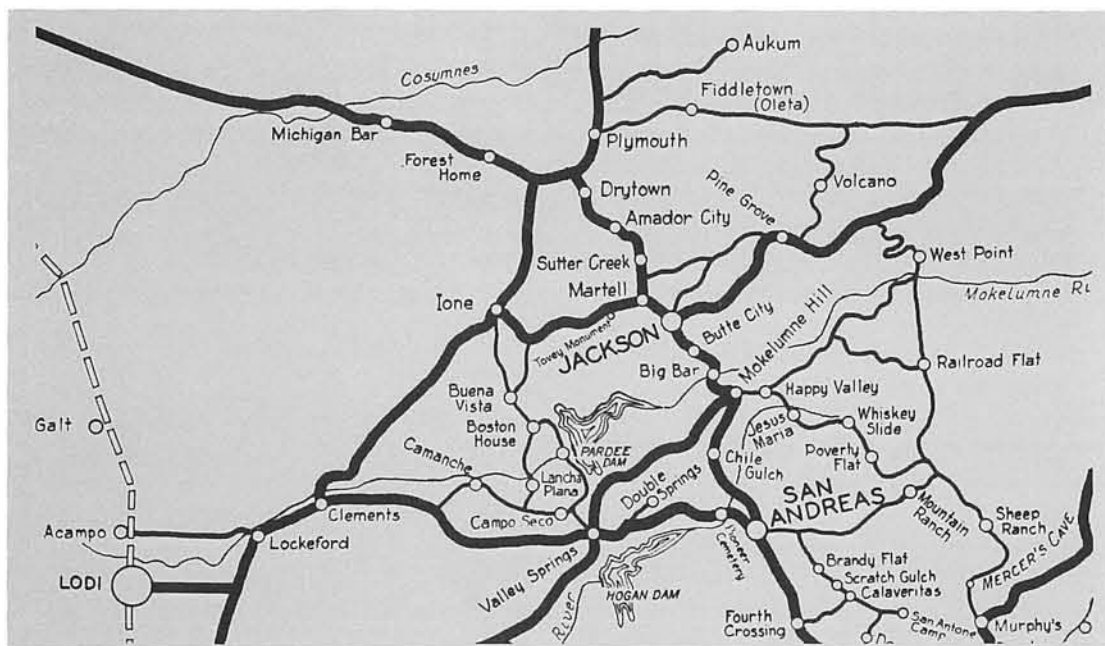


Colonel James J. Ayres

Shortly after the events of the miner's meeting, several Americans were driven from the gulch when they tried to jump some peon claims. After appealing to the alcalde for help, Collier called another mass meeting and a resolution was passed setting a date when all aliens must leave the district. The time allowed the Chileans to pack up and leave the area was fifteen days.

According to Navarro's account, the Chileans rejected the order to leave and continued to work their claims. Then on the 15th of December the Yankees came into camp on the pretext of friendship and by treachery they captured their unsuspecting victims, beating and robbing them and after all their possessions had been removed to the Yankee camps, their houses were burned to the ground. As a result of this atrocity, two of the Chilean leaders, Dr. Concha and Maturano sought the help of the legitimate alcalde, Judge Scollen. The alcalde was sympathetic, but told them he was powerless to help. He suggested they go to the county seat in Stockton and see the sheriff, a Mr. Dickenson, giving them a letter of introduction. Upon arriving at Stockton, which was a hard march of 50 miles, they met with Dickenson who advised the Chileans he would be unable to personally accompany them but he did write out an arrest order for Collier and his supporters. This gave them the power to form a posse and make the arrests. They then returned to Chili Gulch and under cover of night attacked one of the American camps by breaking into their cabins and taking the Yankees prisoner. At one cabin shots were fired and two Americans were killed in the ensuing fight. Navarro related that there were about 30 prisoners taken by just 15 Chileans. They then began a 50 mile march toward Stockton where it was the intention of the Chileans to deliver the American prisoners to Sheriff Dickenson. Then according to Navarro, when they were within eleven miles of their destination and having dinner at an inn which also included the prisoners, a mob of about 100 Yankees appeared and took them prisoner. They were again marched back to Calaveras where they were tried and sentenced.

This is just the bare outline of Navarro's narrative, however, the following description of their captivity is a sample of his extravagant prose: "The fate of those who remained captive was made doubly hard. The Yankees started



Map of the mining section of Calaveras County. Chili Gulch was located on Highway 49 midway between San Andreas and Mokelumne Hill. All that remains today is a monument.

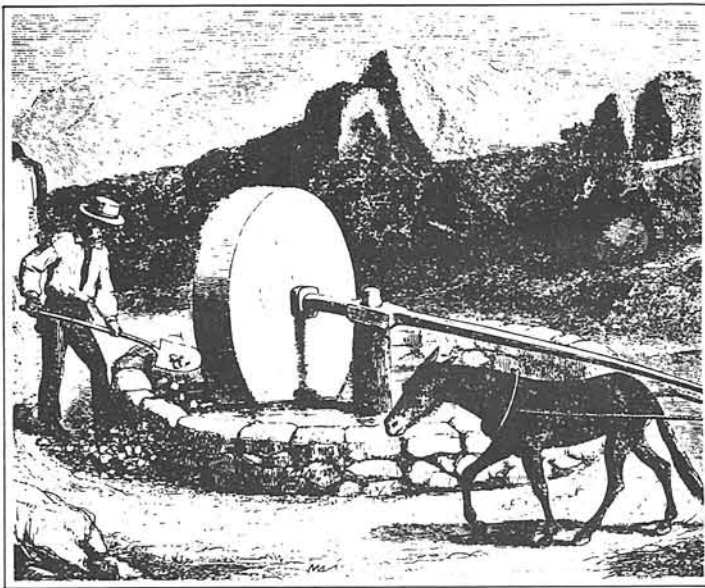
them off almost immediately to rob them of any further hope of escape. Suffering the same or worse treatment, they were brought to the camp of Collier [Collier] on December 30.

It was there the Chileans had to drain the last bitter drops of their ordeal. Every one of the Americans struck them or inflicted some other indignity on them while they were helpless. They were jammed into a corner of a cold room, still roped up, and treated exactly the way captains of slaving ships treated the unfortunate Negroes who fell into their hands. Most of the Chileans had not been given a bite to eat since the day before when they were seized — though they themselves had seated their prisoners at table with them and had paid for their food."

According to Colonel Ayers' version, also supported by newspaper accounts, no mention was made of the incident of the Americans raiding the Chilean camp — robbing and burning it. Instead, the first offensive taken in the affair was when the Chileans struck the American camp, killing two and taking others prisoner. Ayers was taken prisoner at this time and relates the following: "On reaching it [the cabin where the shots were fired] I found an old man named Endicott in the last agony from gunshot wounds, and near him was another man named Starr who had been severely wounded [both died] in the right arm and shoulder. These were the only

white men they found in the camp; for the others had gone off on a visit to other camps. The leader of the Chileans was called 'Tirante,' and was not misnamed. He seemed to gloat over the body of poor Endicott, and calling me to him, asked me if that was not Judge Collier. When I assured him it was not he seemed greatly disappointed."

The account that Ayers related indicated that 13 prisoners were taken by 60 Chileans as opposed to Navarro's version which had 30 Yankees captured by 15 of his countrymen. Both accounts agree that they then began a march toward Stockton where the matter could be settled by the authorities. During the march Ayers' narrative relates a little episode that is not borne out by newspaper accounts. Ayers, who could speak Spanish, overheard Tirante suggest to the other leaders that the Yankees should be "dispatched" but one of their members, a man named Maturano, talked them out of it. Ayers then relates: "The reader can well imagine that I felt greatly relieved at the result, and I made up my mind that if it ever lay in my power I would repay Maturano for the manly and humane stand he took in this terrible crisis of our fate." The Colonel was soon able to fulfill his resolve for, according to his story, when the Chileans became the American's prisoners he "... sought him out and told him that as he had been kind to us I intended to aid him to escape. I



The Chili Mill consisted of a circular enclosure, and, instead of the "drag-stones," a large stone wheel, attached to the horizontal shaft, was used for grinding the quartz rock.

walked with him past the tent, and when we reached the open plain where the wild oats was dense and tall, I told him to stoop and get away as fast as he could. He kissed my hand and thanked me, and I stood and watched his course by the trail he made in the tall oats until I was satisfied that he was out of danger." This story is not verified by other printed accounts but it is understandable, that if in fact it did happen, Colonel Ayers would not have reported it to the newspapers.

As captors and prisoners continued toward Stockton, Ayers noted that the ranks of the Chileans seemed to be dwindling, the peons appeared to be losing heart. One evening when they stopped to sleep, the Chilean guards fell asleep giving the Americans the opportunity to loosen their bonds, seize the Chilean's weapons and take their former captors prisoner. This story is quite different from that related by Navarro who had them all seated at dinner when they were surprised by a mob from Stockton. Neither of these stories proved to be accurate. Newspaper accounts relate that as they continued their march toward Stockton and passed a large tent, a group of Americans came out and disarmed the Chileans. The former Yankee prisoners continued on to Stockton where they were cleared of all charges. The Chileans were taken back to the camps on the Calaveras where they were then tried and sentenced. Ayers and Navarro are in near agreement as to their versions of the

sentences that were carried out. Three of the ringleaders, including Tirante, all involved in the double murder, were sentenced to death by firing squad. Navarro referred to it as target practice. Four or five others had their heads shaved and were given fifty to a hundred lashes and two others had their heads shaved and their ears cut off. These stories by Ayers and Navarro were groundless. Again newspaper reports indicate there were no executions and that no one had their ears cut off and no one was flogged. It appears that the sum total of the court's action was to condemn the actions of the Chileans and to excuse any wrong-doing on the part of the Americans. Of course, the Chileans were expelled from the district.

The inadequate and unsatisfactory coverage of the local press together with the fanciful and self-serving account of Colonel Ayers and the equally unreliable and inflammatory writings of Ramon Navarro make it difficult to determine at first glance if justice prevailed in the final settlement of these events.

The position of the Americans was based on the premise that all of the land in the mining area was public domain and an individual miner could claim a portion and continue to hold it as long as he marked the boundaries of his claim and worked it. The size of the portion varied from camp to camp depending on the nature of the diggings. The first organized mining law occurred as the result of camp meetings in local

districts that developed codes which governed mining practices. Ironically, these codes drew heavily from Spanish-American mining practices. These codes, in turn, came into general usage throughout the gold country. It was the usual practice to elect an alcalde at the initial camp meeting who, in turn, was empowered to settle disputes involving contested mining claims. However, if a situation arose which the alcalde felt was beyond his authority he would call a mass meeting and let the majority opinion settle the issue. In the absence of any meaningful mining law on the state or local level, the courts rarely challenged the authority of the miner's codes which, in effect, became common law.

For the most part the miner's meetings and the codes that evolved from them worked quite well throughout the gold districts, however, in some cases, they were misinterpreted or abused. Many of the Americans coming to the mines felt that "public domain" meant the land was reserved for their exclusive use and not for aliens. They felt it was theirs by right of conquest and the spilling of American blood. This was the prevailing sentiment at Chili Gulch which led to the decision to expel the Chileans from their claims.

The slavery issue, which was previously mentioned as a rationale, was more of a ploy to give the appearance of legal sanction to the high-handed actions of the Americans. Jay Monaghan, in his *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush of 1849*, dismisses the idea of likening the Chilean "roto" to a slave as having no basis in fact. Frank Soule explained the behavior of the Americans as follows, "Among the first emigrants to the mines was a multitude of foreigners of Spanish extraction from the various republics and provinces on the Pacific shores of America. The presence of these people — many of whom seemed little better than slaves — in the pay and under the command of their own wealthier countrymen, was considered by the American miners to be unfair toward themselves, as natural lords of the soil, purchased by their own blood and treasure."

The case for the Chileans appears to have more merit. They acted within the existing codes by first taking their grievance to the legally constituted authority, the alcalde, John Scollen. Upon Scollen's advice they then proceeded to the county seat, Stockton (Calaveras County then

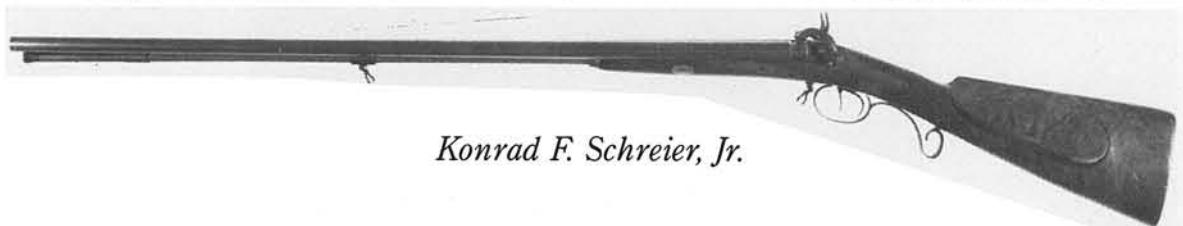
included what would later be Amador and San Joaquin counties) to put their case in the hands of the sheriff, Mr. Dickenson. There they received a legal writ permitting them to make the arrests and bring the prisoners to Stockton for trial. These proceedings were followed in good faith, but in the end, they met with failure and were tried by the very same illegal body that expelled them in the first place. In all fairness it is impossible to believe that justice was ever served at Chili Gulch.

The events that occurred in Calaveras County in addition to the riots by the Hounds in San Francisco and other unfavorable reports of mistreatment of Chileans in California received wide coverage by the press in Chile. With each report, hatred for the Yankees and particularly Californians, increased. Exaggerated inflammatory articles poured from national periodicals. With the passage of time, instead of moderating, this animosity seemed to increase in intensity. As late as 1891 this legacy of hate exploded on the streets of Valparaiso when a mob attacked and killed a number of American sailors on shore leave from a United States cruiser lying in port. This event almost precipitated an international incident between the two countries. According to Jay Monaghan this same rancor helped elect a Chilean senator in 1964 and even served to elect a president running on an anti-North American platform opposing Yankee imperialism in 1970. This seems incredible, but perhaps is understandable, when as recently as 1976 a book co-edited by Edwin A. Beilharz and Carlos U. Lopez entitled *We Were 49ers! Chilean Accounts of the California Gold Rush*, came into print. Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities it reprinted, among others, the account by Ramon Jil Navarro without one word of editorial comment. They even stated in their introduction that "the story of this incident, written by an interpreter who was present at the kangaroo court trial of the Chileans, has few parallels for poignancy, harrowing detail, or the eloquent indignation of the narrator."

The injustice that was dealt to the Chileans at Chili Gulch by expelling them from their claims is a sad commentary of the times, but the perpetuation of this hatred by translating and publishing patently distorted accounts in the guise of truthful and accurate history is an injustice far more grave.

THE DUCOMMUN GOLD RUSH SHOTGUN

An unusual relic of the 1849 California Gold Rush. . .



Konrad F. Schreier, Jr.

Certifiable relics of the 1849 California Gold Rush are rare, and those that have survived and with a complete history are rarer. Time and the catastrophic San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed many of them.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History was recently given one. It is a very well-made German shotgun carried by Charles Louis Ducommun on his trek to the California gold fields in 1849. It came to the museum from its original owner's descendants, along with a wealth of historic material. The shotgun has a very interesting history.

Ducommun had come a long way in order to join the California Gold Rush. He was born in Bescancon, France, November 15, 1820, and raised in nearby Switzerland. In 1839 he moved to Paris to practice his watchmaking trade. After staying there for a short time, he went to England in search of better opportunities, but even there, success eluded him.

Ducommun came to the conclusion that he could never achieve the chance he wanted in Europe. In December 1840, he left France for the "land of opportunity," America. He landed in New York City during January 1841.

Shortly after his arrival, he came down with smallpox. Although this epidemic disease nearly killed him, he survived, but was left weakened and blind in one eye. As a result of his poor physical condition, he moved to the milder climate in the southern part of the United States.

First he went to Augusta, Georgia, and worked as a watchmaker, but it was not long before opportunities appeared to be better in Mobile, Alabama, so he moved there.

It was in 1848, while he was still in Mobile, that he heard of the California "gold excitement." The stories that were circulating said that the "yellow stuff" could literally be found lying on the ground, and the excitement of this possibility

soon spread wildly throughout the eastern United States.

Ducommun, who seemingly had been a careful and pragmatic man, was among the hordes who had caught "the gold fever," and decided to join the gold rush. By the end of 1848, he had moved from Mobile to Fort Smith, Arkansas, one of the principal jumping-off points for the overland Southern Trail to California and the gold fields.

At Fort Smith, Ducommun, like most other gold seekers, joined a "company" of fellow gold seekers who had organized for the long trek to California. These companies elected officers and established rules for their trip. They pooled their resources in order to procure supplies, outfit and animals needed for the journey.

The rules required each member of a company to have a personal kit of clothing and other necessities, including a good belt knife, and excellent gun, and a supply of ammunition. Family records indicate that Ducommun bought his shotgun at Fort Smith. It undoubtedly was purchased from one of the many merchants who flocked there to sell all manner of goods to the gold seekers.

Just how Ducommun's German-made shotgun got to Fort Smith is unknown. The gun was made in Herzberg am Harz by master gun maker E.A. Stormer. While the German record of this particular gun is incomplete, Stormer's reputation as a gunsmith is well-known, and his guns were exported. Since merchandise was brought to Fort Smith by ship through New Orleans from both the east coast of the United States and Europe, it isn't hard to figure just how the gun got to Fort Smith.

The shotgun is marked with the date 1847 in several places, so it had plenty of time to get to Fort Smith before Ducommun bought it.

Since Ducommun was blind in one eye, this



Master gunmaker Stormer's name appears on the rib of the gun between the two barrels. It reads: "K.O.H.R. MSTR E. A. STORMER, HERZBERG A/HARZ." — Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

muzzle-loading 20-gauge Stormer shotgun was a good choice. Although the gun indicates considerable evidence of heavy usage, it shows no sign of ever having been repaired. In fact, it appears to be in usable condition.

Ducommun's company set out for California over the Santa Fe Trail toward the end of 1848. They reached Santa Fe in early 1849, and remained there for several months in order to refit and wait for improved spring weather.

Upon leaving Santa Fe, the company followed the southern Overland Trail through Arizona to the Colorado River crossing at Yuma, Arizona. Like many other "gold rushers," Ducommun literally walked the whole way from Fort Smith to California!

Ducommun's group, as did many of the other companies, had a bit of trouble with the Indians in New Mexico and Arizona, but no fatalities were recorded. They had the common problems of finding good water, forage and firewood, and only limited success in supplementing their food supplies by hunting game. By the time they reached Yuma, they were on the verge of starvation.

At Yuma the company was able to purchase new supplies from enterprising Southern California traders. They then took a couple of days to rest before starting out again. The next part of the journey was possibly the worst they had encountered — the crossing of the Imperial Valley Desert between Yuma and the Southern California coastal mountain range. Old guide books all said the trail had "no water, no fodder, no firewood," and they should have added "no road."

Ducommun's company was fortunate to make it across the hazardous desert to Warner's Hot

Springs in good order. From there to Los Angeles was an easy journey, and they arrived on August 29, 1849. Their trek from Fort Smith to Los Angeles had taken them some ten months which, considering that it was 2,000 or so miles over the Southern Overland Trail, wasn't too bad.

By the end of the journey, Ducommun, having walked practically the entire way, was physically tough as nails. The Stormer shotgun he carried had become his lifelong pet, but unfortunately the flask, shot bag, and whatever else he used to load and fire it have been lost.

Early in 1850 Ducommun left Los Angeles, and headed for the mines of Mariposa County, at the southern end of the Mother Lode. He had to walk the several hundred miles to get there, still toting his shotgun. Upon arrival at Mariposa, he had no more luck than most of the other gold seekers. He then went further north to the "diggins" on the American and Feather rivers in the central part of the Mother Lode.

Ducommun's luck in the gold fields was not good, but his skill as a watchmaker provided him adequate enough earnings to keep him. His next move was to go "down" to have a try in San Francisco. He spent the winter of 1850-1851 there, and was able to make a living, but he didn't much like the rugged pioneer town or its nasty winter weather.

In the spring of 1851, Ducommun returned to the sleepy pueblo of Los Angeles where he set up a watchmaking shop. His faithful shotgun was kept in the shop, helping to insure that it would survive.

Ducommun's business grew and prospered. Eventually it evolved into one of the major hardware companies in the city, and the name remains in business in other fields. It was the



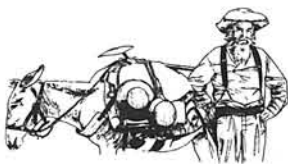
The right hand side of the Stormer shotgun showing the side lock detail. — Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

changes in the business which led the Ducommun family to give the gold-rush shotgun and other important historical material to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. They are now part of its collections concerning the history of the Southern California area.

The Ducommun gold-rush shotgun has been in the possession of the family ever since Charles Louis Ducommun bought it in Fort Smith way back in 1848. The museum considers it not only a very interesting piece of memorabilia of the gold-rush era, but also a wonderful remembrance of one of the city's pioneer businessmen. It is a

truly rare relic, and made even more so since its history is known.

SOURCE NOTE: The story of the gun is from the Ducommun family history from the Ducommun Collection in the History Archives of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Additional gold rush information was drawn from written histories of Los Angeles and the 1849 California Gold Rush. Thanks are due Janet Fireman and Donald Chaput of the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, History Division, for their kind assistance.



Wilderness Bridge to Nowhere

by John Southworth

In Southern California, out in the middle of nowhere, is a beautifully engineered modern concrete arch bridge spanning a tumbling mountain stream. This high-arch structure would be a credit to any highway, but instead it stands unused and forlorn, for there is no highway anywhere near it. The bridge waits patiently for occasional pedestrian traffic, but days and even weeks pass without it being seen by human eyes.

This wilderness arch was never opened to public traffic. It saw only construction vehicles and has been totally inaccessible to anything but foot travel for over fifty years. Just the same, it represents a very interesting piece of Southern California history.

Back in the 1920's and 1930's there were prison camps throughout Los Angeles County building otherwise unfunded roads, roads that would eventually be opened to the public. Great sections of the present Angeles Forest and Angeles Crest Highway were built using detention camp labor. The San Gabriel Canyon, in the Angeles National Forest, had its share of "alimony camps" whose men built roads to Crystal Lake and up the East Fork headed toward all the old placer and hard-rock gold mining areas.

Gold, in attractive quantities, had been discovered in the East Fork of the San Gabriel River in 1855. It was a time when many a disappointed '49er was desperately trying to make a stake and establish himself in the West. The East Fork activity was wild and fast, a classic small-scale gold rush. A jetty-built town sprang up overnight just below the present East Fork Ranger Station. It was called Eldoradoville and was soon boasting of three hotels and twice as many saloons. It was washed away, foundations and all, in the great flood of 1862. Placer gold continued to be recovered from the river's gravel into the late 1930's but any great interest in the area died with the destruction of the town.

There were a few miners who did not discourage easily even though their town and placer workings had washed away. Those stubborn men continued to search the high country for the hard-rock source of the placer gold. Men like Billy Heaton, George Trogden and Charles "Tom" Vincent spent the rest of their lives in the

quest.

Tom Vincent prospected the high streams and gulches for many years before discovering the Big Horn Mine high up on the east flank of Mount Baden-Powell (old North Baldy Peak). This mine, worked well into the 1930's, was a good producer but certainly no bonanza. Vincent's headquarters, during his three decade search for the Big Horn Mine, was a rustic cabin in Vincent Gulch. It was filled with the horns and skulls of bighorn sheep, grizzly bear and deer that had been felled by his gun during his years of residence in what would soon become a part of the Angeles National Forest.

The area is one of extreme natural beauty,



Looking up at the "Narrow" of the East Fork of the San Gabriel River. (BELOW) The road ends at the end of the bridge.



vast and rugged mountain gorges, and spectacular alpine vistas, all worthy of a visit by the public. It was this grandeur that caused the county to build the road into the East Fork of the San Gabriel River.

Construction of the first eight miles of the East Fork Road was fairly routine. This segment remains intact and in use today. It is kept well-oiled and maintained as far as the East Fork Ranger Station. It now has a more recent loop connection across Glendora Mountain to the Glendora Ridge Road which itself is a scenic western access to Camp Baldy and the winter sports areas.

The old East Fork Road pushed on past Heaton Flat, across at least two low-level truss bridges, and far into the crooked by generally north-south gorge. This gorge cuts deeply between 10,064-foot Mt. Baldy and almost as high Baden-Powell which was recently renamed in honor of the founder of the Boy Scout organization.

Between these bare, granite-topped and often snow-capped peaks, the river gorge is deep, steep-walled, and sinuous with a year-around stream of water which becomes impressive during the rainy season and incredible during flash floods. The new road was cut into the east wall of this canyon or was built out on deep fill where the wall was too precipitous or fragile to withstand cutting.

For nearly six miles the cut and fill continued on to form a road some 50 feet above the river bed, eventually climbing up to 200 feet or more above the river at a canyon constriction designated on modern maps as "The Narrows." At the Narrows, a high bridge was required as an approach to a long tunnel through the next ridge.

The bridge, a graceful arched beauty, was all finished in 1936 except for a few final cosmetic touches. The tunnel was well under construction when nature struck in 1938, bringing disaster to the East Fork building project. The unprecedented flood of that year is well-known for its widespread effect throughout Southern California. For the East Fork Road, its effect was permanent.

After the floodwaters subsided, little of the new roadbed above the site of Eldoradoville remained. Nature had repeated itself with an unexpected vengeance and signs of man's work in the canyon were hard to find. The deluge left no trace of two low bridges and at least three

miles of road through the steepest gorges. Of the remaining three miles, all near the Narrows, the fills were extensively damaged if not totally destroyed. Here and there bits and pieces of old oiled roadbed can still be followed but only for a few yards. Mostly there is not even a trail, except the dim one pounded down in the river gravel by passing feet.

But the glorious arch bridge remains intact. Its footings are on hard rock well above any but the most extreme flood stage. The basic arch spans about 90 feet clear and rises 110 feet above the normal stream, tumbling through the rock-ribbed, precipitous channel below. It carries a 25-foot concrete roadbed 180 feet across the Narrows into an abrupt canyon wall. Now time and a lot of dynamite have erased all traces of the road's continuation into a half-finished tunnel which would have become a safety hazard had it been allowed to remain open. A construction cable still spans the canyon directly above the bridge and others join the abutments below the arch, waiting in vain and in silence for the work crews that will never return.

You, too, can enjoy the artistry of this beautiful bridge in its sylvan setting if you are willing to walk six uneasy miles beyond the end of the present road. State Highway 39, north from Azusa, is a modern and excellent access into the Angeles National Forest. Stay with it for ten miles past Morris and San Gabriel dams to the East Fork low bridge and the turnoff going to the right. Traveling another scenic eight miles along the lower East Fork, keeping to the bottom of the canyon, brings you to the East Fork Ranger Station and the end of the pavement. A bit of Forest Service road extends nearly a mile beyond a sturdy locked gate (entry permits required during fire season) to Heaton Flat. Further travel is a matter of following the streambed for an additional five miles, crossing and recrossing the stream through shadowed canyons. This rough walk will take you past interesting rock formations including the imposing Swan Rock with its natural white-on-black swan (plus escaping fishes if your imagination is working well). You might even see a bighorn sheep or two.

Signs of mining activity are few, hard to find, and high above the river. But you will have no trouble locating that lonesome concrete arch bridge to nowhere. It is quite visible, overwhelming, and well worth the visit.

Monthly Roundup (continued) . . .

marauding expeditions were carried out by others in the name of Jesse James. He mocked not only railroad police, but also local police, sheriffs, and posses in half a dozen states. He was seen in Minnesota and Kansas at the same time. The search for Jesse was one of the keenest America has ever known. In vain did Pinkertons send their best men out for the outlaw. Many never to return.

After about ten minutes of background about Jesse James the speaker threw open to forum to questions. He failed to answer many of the questions with a straight answer. He would state, "A good explanation of your question is in the book." Naturally the speaker had copies of his book available at the end of the program. So, what could have been a bang up program, ended up as a book promotion.

Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton



Dr. Ralph Shaffer (left) spoke to the Corral about Los Angeles streetcars.

APRIL 1990 MEETING

Professor Ralph Shaffer of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, addressed the Corral on the streetcar era of Los Angeles, punctuating his presentation with slides illustrating the many types of streetcars that once traveled the streets of Southern California. This was not, however, a nostalgic look at a revered method of transportation, as Shaffer reminded his audience that there were plenty of complaints about streetcars in the "good old days."

Public transportation in Southern California was linked historically to real estate development, forming an inseparable link that brought

prosperity to its developers and growth to the region. Robert Widney exemplified the early pioneer in this area, running the first horse-drawn streetcar out of Los Angeles to his real estate developments in the 1870s. Interurban connections were made with steam trains, and cable-car lines also enjoyed a brief popularity.

But the real innovation would be electric streetcars. Moses Sherman created the Los Angeles Consolidated Electric Railway system in 1890, linking his transportation network to his real estate holdings. Overshadowing him was Henry E. Huntington who controlled the Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway systems. Huntington was involved in many commercial activities, from real estate to shipbuilding, and he saw his enterprises as one connected unit. He used standard gauge on his streetcar lines so they could also move freight. His streetcar tracks extended to his landholdings; for example, in 1906 he gave free rides to Redondo Beach where he advertised his properties, creating a real estate boom while making profits from his transportation network as well.

For Huntington, streetcars were a business, not a promise for potential nostalgia. His profit came when the cars provided standing room only, as "the dividends were in the straps." Streetcars had two workers, a motorman and a conductor, so Huntington around 1918 introduced a one-man operated streetcar which inevitably offered a lower-quality ride. After World War I Huntington crushed yet another strike, the most serious in the history of local transportation, but by this time passengers were declaring themselves unhappy with the declining quality of service. Between 1913 and 1925 almost no track had been built by the "yellow" city line, and the P.E. "red" line wasn't much better. Passengers found a new alternative in the automobile.

By the 1930's the streetcar lines were offering such reforms as streamlined streetcars, but it was a case of too little, too late. Buses were already replacing streetcars on unprofitable lines. The lines went through a series of ownership changes, from Pacific Electric to Metropolitan Transit Authority to Metro Coach Lines, until finally the present-day Rapid Transit District took over.

MAY 1990 MEETING

(Continued on Page Sixteen)



John Haskell Kemble: In Memoriam

The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners lost a longtime and valued member, John Haskell Kemble, on February 19, 1990. He died at sea while on board the *Canberra* on a three-month around-the-world cruise. According to reports, he died seated in a deck chair en route to the ship's next port of call, Sidney, Australia. Death was attributed to a heart attack.

Jack, to his friends, was born in Marshalltown, Iowa, on June 17, 1912. While attending Rogers Grammar School in his home town, his parents relocated first to Eagle Rock, then permanently to Pasadena. There Jack received the bulk of his education in Pasadena public schools. He attended John Muir and William McKinley Junior High Schools and graduated from Pasadena High School. He then matriculated in Pasadena City College before transferring to Stanford University where he graduated with honors, including Phi Beta Kappa, in 1933. He immediately enrolled in graduate study at the University of California, Berkeley, and earned his M.A. in 1934 and Ph.D. in history in 1937.

On the eve of completing his doctoral studies, in 1936, Jack was appointed an instructor in history at Pomona College and steadily moved up through the ranks, becoming professor emeritus in 1977. He also served as chair of the Department of History for several terms. In addition to his academic association with Pomona College, he held visiting appointments at UCLA, the University of Texas, and the U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I. Each summer from 1955 to 1982 he was on the faculty of

Munson Institute of American Maritime History, Mystic, Connecticut.

The research field which commanded Jack's lifelong interest was maritime history. This led to the publication of a number of esteemed books, beginning with *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (1943), *San Francisco Bay: A Pictorial Maritime History* (1957), and *To California and the South Seas: The Diary of Albert G. Osburn, 1849-1851* (1966), which he edited, and his definitive edition of *Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, Jr. (1964), a two-volume work designed and printed by Ward Ritchie.

In addition, Jack prepared three books for the Book Club of California, all handsomely printed; they are collectors items today: *Journal of a Cruise to California and the Sandwich Islands in the United States Sloop-of-War Cyane* by William H. Myers, 1841-1844 (1955), *Sketches of California and Hawaii* by William H. Myers, Gunner, United States Navy, Aboard the United States Sloop-of-War Cyane, 1842-1843 (1970), and *A Naval Campaign in the Californias, 1846-1849: The Journal of Lieutenant Tunis Augustus Macdonough Craven, U.S.N., United States Sloop-of-War Dale* (1973). He also contributed a half a dozen articles to scholarly journals.

Jack's scholarly contributions were recognized by research fellowships from the Huntington Library, the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations. He was also elected a "Fellow" of the California Historical Society and had been designated a "Fellow" of the Historical Society of Southern California, an honor which was awarded posthumously in May at the Society's Annual Gala. He was a dedicated two-term member of the Board of Directors of the HSSC and was a member of the board at his death. He also served as president of the HSSC, 1967-1970.

Jack's collecting interests centered on steamship ephemera and sailing, as well as marine lithographs and paintings. His book collecting focused around maritime history, especially Pacific Ocean steamships, biography, autobiography, exploration, and travel. His reputation as a serious collector led to his election to membership in the Zamorano Club in 1956. He was an active member, a regular attendee at Club meetings. In tribute to his deep interest in maritime history and collections pertaining thereto, a room was named in his honor at the Pomona Public Library, which was one of his philan-

tropic interest.

Jack had an absolute passion for the sea. This explains not only his research and collecting interests, but also his delight in ocean voyages. It was the lure of the sea that called him to service as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He served as a member of the personal staff to Admiral Ernest J. King (later admiral of the fleet) who, in December 1941, was appointed commander in chief. As a result, Jack's naval service was involved in the very center of naval wartime activities. As a testament to his abilities, he rose to the rank of captain.

Those who knew Jack well will recall his ramrod posture, his broad and engaging smile, the twinkle in his eye, his firm and warm handshake. Yet, there was a deep streak of shyness in him which surfaced on occasion, for he was not always at ease with those whom he did not know. And when he was called upon to speak from his vast knowledge of maritime history to the Corral, beads of perspiration would pop out on his starkly bald head and neck. He may have suffered from quasi-stage fright, an indication of his innate shyness. However, he could hold his own in any dispute, make no mistake on that score, and tenaciously so. One only had to see him in action as a member of the Sir Francis Drake Commission and the California State Historic Resources Commission to realize that here was a lion in sheep's clothing. He could be bold and incisive in delivering questions and in rebutting witnesses.

Corral members will recall his faithful attendance at our regular meetings. He rarely missed one. As a token of the Corral's high regard for him, he was elected deputy sheriff in 1962 and served as sheriff in 1963. After leaving the Trail Bosses, he was called upon on a number of occasions to sit on the Membership Committee.

Not content with writing about maritime history, Jack was a seasoned ocean-going traveler. He had sailed many times across the Atlantic to England and Europe, around South America and Australia, and had been twice around the world by ship. His third such voyage ended in his untimely death.

I suspect that Jack was delighted that death claimed him while in a deck chair, sunning himself in the warm sun, cooled by crisp fresh sea breezes, tinged with the smell of salt, the gentle rumbling of the ship's engines, the easy rolling of the vessel as it pushed its way through the Tasmanian Sea, the endless vista of sea and sky, all blue and white, flushed with golden sunlight. It was, I am sure, a happy way for him to go. Old salt and tar that he was, he could not have chosen a better way, a better time. He was 77 when God called him home from the sea he loved. He will be missed. A fitting epitaph might well be Robert Louis Stevenson's verse:

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea . . .

Doyce B. Nunis, Jr.

Monthly Roundup (continued) . . .



Charles A. Hettrick's topic was "Firearms of the Wild Wild West."

"Firearms of the Old West: from Promontory to 1912" was Charles Hettrick's topic. The owner of more than 60 antique firearms, mostly pistols and rifles, he brought along many samples from his collection and explained the gun, its use, its history, etc. All the guns were on display at the end of the meeting for members to inspect.

The speaker began his program with the development of powder in China, and described

the development of the gun, its use in hunting and self-defense, etc. He described the early flintlock of the Pilgrims, the Samuel Colt of 1832, the Texas Paterson gun, the coming of the revolving cylinder. He explained that the Fowler rifle was the gun used by many of the pioneers who moved West in the covered wagon trains. He described the various gunsmiths such as John Browning Firearms, Oliver Winchester and his Winchester rifle, Samuel Colt and his pistols, and the coming of the Remington.

Hettrick explained that the cowboy did little shooting. From a practical standpoint, cartridges cost money and his pay was around a dollar a day. He did pack a gun and, like every other item in his equipment, it had a purpose. The gun was mainly for self-defense, lurking savages, rustlers, and rattlesnakes.