

# GHOST TOWNS OF THE S

## Hardy Pioneers, Denied OLD PHOTOS DEPICT B

### Land in Valley, Claim Skid Roads, Ox Tra

### Homes From Wilderness

Crossed by Trails and Traversed by Occasional Hunter, Unexplored Forests Speedily Transformed After the Coming of the Yankee.

Demand for Fences, Grape Stakes and Split Lumber From Farms Below Gives Birth in First Decade To Lumber Industry of Large Proportions.

By JOHN V. YOUNG.

(Introduction.)

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"The adjacent mountains were wild and rugged, the canyons deep and dark with the shadows of the forest. Coyotes broke the stillness with their dismal howls, and herds of deer slaked their thirst in the clear waters of the San Lorenzo. Grizzly bears were numerous, prowling about in herds, like hogs on a farm."

Comparing this early description of the Santa Cruz mountains, by some forgotten padre before the founding of the missions, with present-day scenes in one of California's growing playlands, it becomes increasingly difficult for city dwellers to comprehend the romantic and tradition-filled background of the region.

Equally difficult to understand at first glance in viewing the fertile Santa Clara valley today is the turning of the first American settlers and the horde of ranchers that followed the gold rush to the mountains for their homesteads. Homes were hewed from the tangled forest and even more tangled chapparal of the hillsides while vast acres lay untouched below.

#### VALLEY OCCUPIED.

But there was a reason—a good one. By the time the Yankee settler and his family had started to arrive in numbers, early in the 50's, all available land in the valley region had been taken up with holdings already undergoing an amazing conflict of titles, jamming the courts with litigation for a half-century to come.

Mexican grants and a few Spanish grants, pueblo titles and other claims rendered uncertain the most expansive holdings as well as the poorest. No man knew positively whether the land on which he built was to be his or his neighbors on the morrow.

Indians were far from plentiful in 1850, having dwindled in disease and degradation from estimated thousands to mere handfuls from the time of Spanish exploration until American occupation.

Authorities are more or less agreed on their racial origin, although

tive regions almost at the wave of a hand.

Skid roads and ox trails interlaced the hills and the wealth of redwood began to pour out in an ever-growing stream into Los Gatos, Saratoga, Santa Cruz and up and down the coast.

Sawmills, paper mills, tanneries, flour mills and factories of all descriptions lined the lower reaches of the principal streams. Crude slab homes with dirt floors occupied the open swales and hurriedly cleared land. Every usable stream was followed to its source as the urgent demand for water grew—water for power, water for logging flumes.

#### CAME THE RAILROAD.

The opening of the railroad from Los Gatos to Santa Cruz in 1880 was the most important event in Santa Cruz mountain history since the coming of the white man. It wiped out towns that had existed for years

had been the prevailing wage when McKiernan left Ireland.

With his savings from his wages as a miner for a short period, McKiernan started a pack train carrying supplies to the Trinity county mines. His first trip a success, he put everything he had back into the project and started on a second three-day journey, with three helpers and 45 pack animals.

#### ATTACKED BY INDIANS.

Attacked by Indians, McKiernan and his party lost everything they had, and escaped with their lives only after a desperate battle.

Returning to the mines, McKiernan again accumulated a small stake and set out for the Santa Clara valley. Here they found that Spanish grants, squatters' titles and overlapping land claims of the pueblo properties made investment inadvisable at the time.

With a friend named Page, McKiernan set out for the Santa Cruz mountains early in 1850 to view the government lands. Following the old Indian trail from what is now Los Gatos, they stopped at the Lagunas del Sargento, a beautiful lake

Scenes from the logging provided an industry and a source of revenue. Upper left, Neil Carney at Waterman's gap above San Jose. Below, a burro loaded with lumber.

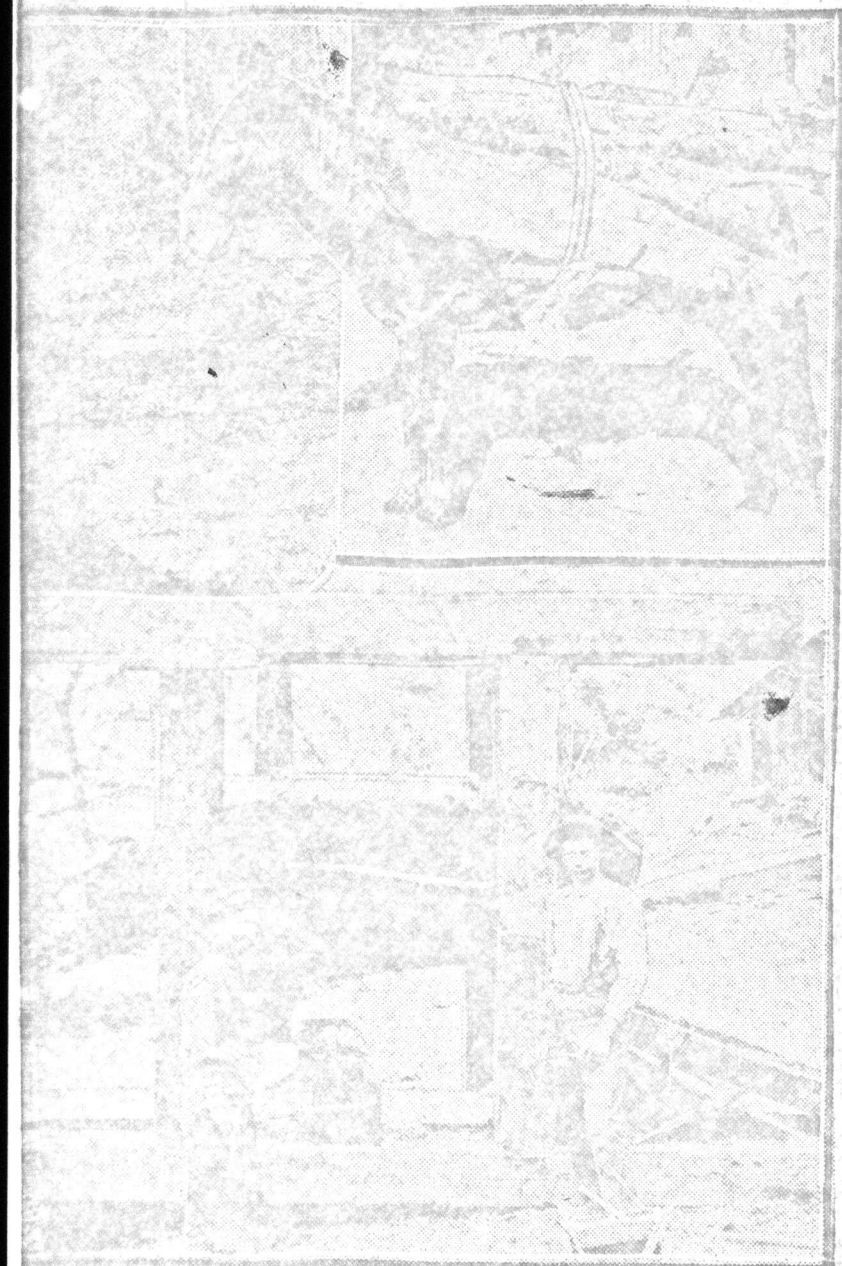




SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 22, 1934.

## SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

BIRTH OF LUMBER INDUSTRY "Mountain Charley,"  
*Picture'sque Figure,*  
*First White Settler*  
*ails, Penetrate Forests*



"Man With Silver Skull" Attracted to California by Gold Discovery, Establishes Homestead at Highest Point on Santa Cruz Ridge.

Suffers Near-Fatal Encounter With Wounded Grizzly and Skull Mended With Silver Plate Fashioned of Two Mexican Half Dollars.

down relentlessly by the ranchers of the region, who also derived a profit from the hunting by selling the bear hides and meat.

McKiernan had often shot grizzly bears, in fact, he was one of the best known bear hunters in the mountains. They were great shaggy creatures weighing from 800 to 1400 pounds, the only bear found in the mountains here. But always the grizzly was treated with respect, and the best shot was a downhill shot, with a fast horse for a quick getaway if necessary.

### ENCOUNTERS SHE GRIZZLY.

On May 8, 1854, McKiernan and a friend named Taylor from Santa Cruz started out for a gulch about a mile southwest of the McKiernan home, where Taylor was planning to take up some land.

After shooting a couple of deer near the top of the gulch, Taylor and McKiernan spotted a she grizzly and two cubs near the bottom. As both were dead shots, the two decided to get the bear, and set out for the head of the gulch to approach the bear from above on the far side of the canyon for the customary downhill shot.

However, when they arrived at their designated spot, they found the bear out of sight, and followed down a deer trail in pursuit. McKiernan, in the lead, swung around a bend to find the mother grizzly standing on her hind legs within six feet of him, her forepaws outstretched for a raking hug.

### WOUNDED BEAR ATTACKS.

McKiernan fired instantly, with the muzzle of his gun against her chest, while Taylor fired over McKiernan's shoulder into the bear's face.

McKiernan clubbed the grizzly with the stock of his gun, but the bear beat down the weapon and

corroded and had to be taken out, to be replaced later with another plate. Without the use of anesthetics, McKiernan suffered without complaint through the ordeal. His wound healed, he became subject to severe headaches, which continued for two years until he went to a Dr. Spencer in Redwood City, who after consultation with specialists reopened his skull and took out a lock of hair. This operation was performed with an anesthetic, the use of which had just been discovered.

McKiernan remained in good health until 1890, when he became ill and died two years later on January 16, 1892, from an obscure stomach ailment, at the age of 67 years.

### OTHER VICTIMS.

But McKiernan was by no means the only well-known mountain man to be attacked by a bear. Many a disappearance was blamed either on the bears or the bandits, a convenient method of disposing of murders, but not without good cause.

William H. Waddell, Santa Cruz county pioneer lumberman and former owner of the Theodore Hoover Rancho del Oso (bear) on Waddell creek, died early in October, 1875, from the effects of an attack by a grizzly bear.

Waddell was deer hunting with John Bradley in the gulch above his mill on Waddell creek, when he encountered a bear being chased by one of his dogs while Bradley was in another part of the canyon.

Before he could run or shoot, the bear had pounced upon him and bit him severely before it was chased away by the dogs. Waddell died five days later at his home.

The last grizzly bear to be seen in Santa Cruz or San Mateo counties was killed on Ben Lomond mountain by a Mr. Blodgett in November, 1886, according to Leon Rowland and Tom McHugh of the Santa

days in the Santa Cruz mountains when redwood lumber provided a source of livelihood for thousands in the decades between 1860 and 1890. At the head of an ox team hauling logs. Upper right, a

the mountains and valleys surrounding for at least 3000 years, from the evidence of burial mounds.

#### GRIZZLIES ON DECLINE.

Grizzly bears were also on the decline, far removed from the "prowling herds" of early description, although notable instances of their depredations are matters of record. Cougars and wild cats constituted the chief menace.

The mountains remained unexplored, to all intents and purposes, until the coming of the Yankee, although they were crossed by trails and traversed by occasional hunters and trappers.

Nearly 200 years before the founding of the missions late in 1700, Viscaino, on a visit to Monterey bay in 1602, noted the abundance of game in the foothills. Fra Crespi scouted the Soquel region in 1769, when Portola's expedition sought in vain for Monterey bay which lay almost at their feet.

A military expedition led by Diego de Borica, Spanish military commander of California, from Santa Cruz to Santa Clara in 1796 gives no description of the country. An amusing account is contained in the journal of Colonel James Olyman, American frontiersman who followed the same trail in 1845, although his descriptions are equally barren.

Don Miguel Riviera, Spanish military leader, set out from Santa Clara mission early in 1790 to explore the southwest mountain region, and according to some accounts planted a cross in view of establishing an outpost, but the plan was dropped.

#### THEN CAPTAIN FREMONT.

It remained for Captain John Fremont, the famous Pathfinder of California history, to give a more or less complete description of the topography, climate and forest cover, in his memoirs on his trip from Los Gatos to Monterey in February, 1846.

To this unknown land came the intrepid homesteader of the 50's, to a land of amazing timber, of plentiful water and grass, of mineral and forest wealth from which sprang an amazing list of industries. Mining for everything from lead to gold, primitive logging, milling, hunting and tanning provided a full livelihood for the industrious.

A curious necessity of the valley farm aided materially in the early development of the forest resources of the mountain region—fences!

#### AN INDUSTRY BORN.

With the growth of large valley ranches came an enormous demand for fences, for pickets, posts and rails, and for grape stakes and other split lumber to which use redwood was peculiarly well adapted because of its rot-resisting properties and the ease with which it could be split.

Starting with split lumber and tanbark, a booming mountain industry sprang up in the first decade after the coming of the settlers, changing the tangled wilderness into one of central California's most ac-

tivities followed the railroad, highways followed the roads, and automobiles and trucks soon arrived to rob the railroad of its hitherto unchallenged importance in the economic scheme of the mountains.

Today, new highways are leaving stranded towns that have existed for scores of years from the revenue of travel on the old established routes, and will shortly bring about the beginnings of new villages. No railroad station is now open between Los Gatos and Felton, although heavier rails are being laid in anticipation of summer traffic on the line.

Summer cottages and permanent residences started to flourish, especially in a few of the larger subdivisions, just before the depression, and already are beginning to increase again in numbers—with a kind of growth alien to the surprisingly strong community spirit that flourished in the mountains 40 or 50 years ago.

The day of the mountain family—plain, homespun "mountain folks," has passed—a new era is in the making, burying in the corridors of the long ago the last vestiges of a colorful and romantic age.

#### Chapter I

#### "Mountain Charley"

Most colorful of all characters in Santa Cruz mountain history was "the man with the silver skull," Mountain Charley McKiernan.

The first white settler in the Santa Cruz mountain section, a pioneer hunter, rancher, teamster and road-builder, McKiernan was the idol of every small boy in the mountains and the friend and counselor of all. His motto was "Right wrongs nobody."

The simple statement, "I knew Mountain Charley," is the proud boast of many an old mountain man today, while tales of this half-legendary figure are rampant in the region. Disfigured by an encounter with a wounded grizzly bear, it was said of McKiernan that a grizzly meeting him on trail would be first to give way—a typical mountain yarn that in no manner detracts from the sterling reputation of the man.

#### LURED BY GOLD.

Charles Henry (Mountain Charley) McKiernan was born in 1825 in County Leitrim, Ireland, and reared in County Cavan. As a quartermaster in the British army, he traveled in Australia and New Zealand, where he was stationed when word of the California gold strike came in 1848.

His enlistment having expired, he signed as a sailor on a ship, the "El Dorado," arriving in San Francisco in the spring of 1849. Not waiting for their pay, the sailors at once joined runners who met them at the ship, with bottles of whisky for inducement, and set out for the mines at wages of \$20 a day, as compared to the £4 (about \$20) a year, which

by the quantity of mortars, pestles and flint arrowheads found thereabouts.

Page continued on his way to Santa Cruz, but McKiernan had found the spot for which he had been searching, and there he settled, establishing a homestead at the highest point on the ridge where the southwest corner of Redwood Estates now joins Summit road, soon to become part of the Skyline boulevard, and where a sign now marks the location of his first cabin.

#### FIRST MOUNTAIN HOUSE.

Near a spring McKiernan erected the first house in the Santa Cruz mountains, built from whip-sawed lumber split from the nearby redwood groves. Whip-sawing, a crude form of lumbering performed by two men, one in a pit under the log and the other above, cost about \$100 a thousand feet in those days, it is recorded.

His home and corrals completed, McKiernan started to raise sheep and cattle and to hunt for the market. Grizzly bears, coyotes, mountain lions and eagles made short work of his sheep flock. Steers, less vulnerable to natural enemies, were worth from \$6 to \$8 a head, sold principally for their hides and tallow.

Deer meat was worth 10 cents a pound, and was easy to obtain, at first, since the deer had never heard the sound of a gun, were day feeders, and would stand and stare when one of their number grazing openly in a flock would fall before Mountain Charley's crude old muzzle-loading blunderbuss. McKiernan made two trips a week to Alviso with a pack-train of deer meat to be shipped to San Francisco.

#### SETTLERS ARRIVE.

McKiernan was alone in the entire Santa Cruz mountain region until the latter part of 1852, when the Burrell family settled above what is now Wrights, and a man named John Bean settled near the present town of Glenwood, where Bean creek was named for him.

In the following year Charles O. Martin came to Glenwood, and the Schultheis family arrived near where Soquel road joins the Santa Cruz highway at Woodwardia now.

There were no roads west of The Alameda in San Jose at the time McKiernan came to the mountains, and no fences. An Indian trail wandering from the mission was followed by padres, Indians, Mexicans and early settlers alike until ox-teams following the same route blazed a way by sheer, brute force through the dense undergrowth to provide passage later for stages and horse teams.

#### STAKED MINING CLAIM.

Mountain Charley built roads all through his property, including a cut-off trail from Los Gatos creek up through the Moody gulch country near Holy City and across the present Redwood Estates holdings to the old Indian trail near McKiernan's home.

That McKiernan, along with hundreds of others, engaged in an early

First permanent settler in the Santa Cruz mountains, "The Man With the Silver Skull" (insert) known from one end of the valley to the other as "Mountain Charley," pioneer idol of the mountain people.

The upper picture shows the first house in the mountains, built about 1850. The road sign (insert) is posted on the Redwood Estates, indicating the location of the first settled, several miles from the spot treated here. The house buried do-





gold mine venture on his property near the summit is revealed in a mining claim filed for record in the Santa Cruz county courthouse December 1, 1864, by the "Peterson Summit Lodge Company," claiming 1800 feet of a ledge for mining purposes. Partners in the venture were McKiernan, Peter Peterson, Alexander Leich, D. H. Haslam and Robert Ebers. The claim apparently didn't amount to much, for nothing more was heard of it.

### Chapter II "The Bear Fight"

Even for a region as rich in legendary lore as the Santa Cruz mountains, the story of Mountain Charley McKiernan's fight with a grizzly bear is outstanding as a typically heroic tale, sufficiently colorful to remain in the minds of men without the necessity for embellishment. One of the most famous of all the legends of the country, the story in its present form, as told by McKiernan's son, James V., who lives on the old home place near the summit, is as nearly correct as the passage of a few weeks less than 80 years will permit, and is unadorned. Grizzly bears in the early '50's were plentiful, killing off the stock with abandon, and were hunted

and started for Taylor. Meanwhile Taylor's small dog had attacked the cubs, whose squalling attracted the mother and she turned to the dog, while Taylor escaped to the top of the ridge, thinking McKiernan had been killed instantly. The bear chased the dog away, returned to McKiernan and dragged him to the end of a clearing under an oak tree, and after pawing over him in curiosity, left him. Taylor, his rifle reloaded, returned to the gulch to find McKiernan sitting up and conscious, but paralyzed from the waist down from shock. While the fight had been only a matter of seconds, Mountain Charley said he remained conscious throughout, and remembered every act of his life to date while it was passing. The bear was not seen again. Taylor bound up McKiernan's head with his shirt, and leaving him his loaded rifle for protection, went to bring a horse to carry the wounded man home. **THE "SILVER SKULL."** A Dr. Bell of San Jose manufactured a silver plate out of two Mexican half-dollars to fit in the broken portion of his skull, where the bear had bitten through the frontal bone and the top of his skull over his left eye. Mrs. Schultheis was his nurse.

Within three weeks the plate had

### THE "BIG TREE."

One of the present-day landmarks of the mountains is the "Mountain Charley Big Tree," named for McKiernan after loggers had ceased their operations. A Sequoia Sempervirens, originally over 300 feet high, the tree stands today 260 feet to its tip, broken off in a storm years ago. It is located 300 feet from the highway at Big Redwood park subdivision, a half-mile north of Glenwood on the Los Gatos-Santa Cruz highway. One of the largest trees of its species in California, the tree is 20 feet in diameter at its base, 63 feet in circumference, and over five feet in diameter at the top. Because of its immense size and the difficulty presented in hauling out timber of its diameter in the rugged region where it grows, the tree was spared by woodsmen. A second tree may be seen growing out of a broken branch more than 100 feet from the ground, itself a good-sized tree over two feet in diameter. It is now the property of McKiernan's son, James V. McKiernan of San Jose. **Next Sunday:** The Schultheis, Averill, Chase and Taylor homesteads; development of Summit district and ghost town of Patchen.

## Fascinating Variety Of Mountain Lore In Weekly Installments

Many famous stories of almost legendary character of early days in the Santa Cruz mountains have come down to the present, distorted almost beyond recognition by the passage of time and the inaccuracy of memories—stories whose true versions are often more unbelievable than the accepted accounts. To unravel the tangled threads of these legends, to find the real sequence of events that led up to each, will be one of the main purposes of the stories appearing on this page during the Sundays to come. How a crew of Chinese workers was blown to Kingdom Come in an explosion in the Wright tunnel; how a school teacher lived in a cave above Saratoga; how a band of hardy gold-hunters from Skyline sailed to Alaska and sailed back again empty-handed—these are but a sample of the lore in store for Mercury Herald readers as this series unfolds. Towns that most residents of this region never head of: Loma Prieta, Patchen, Highland Center, the uproarious camp at "The Tunnel," as Wright's station was once known; Castle's famous "discovery," and the all-important coming of the railroad, these are but the beginning of the story of "The Ghost Towns of the Santa Cruz Mountains."

in the Santa Cruz mountains was "Silver Skull," Charles McKiernan, and of the mountains to the other pioneer rancher, road-builder and

is the first "hard-finished" frame built about 1858 by McKiernan. posted on the summit road above the spot where McKiernan from the site of the house illustrated down 30 or 40 years ago.