

GHOST TOWNS OF THE S

CLARET IS PUMPED BY FIRE FIGHTERS TO SAVE WINERY

Old Journal Yields Thrilling
Story Of Historic Moun-
tain Fire.

4000 Gallons Of Wine Bring
Flames Under Control
After Long Battle.

Chapter IX.

MYER WINERY FIRE.

By John V. Young.

Copyright, 1934, by Mercury Herald
Company.

The Wide World Magazine
August, 1900.

HOW A FOREST FIRE WAS
EXTINGUISHED WITH
WINE.

By Professor C. H. Holder,
of Pasadena, California.

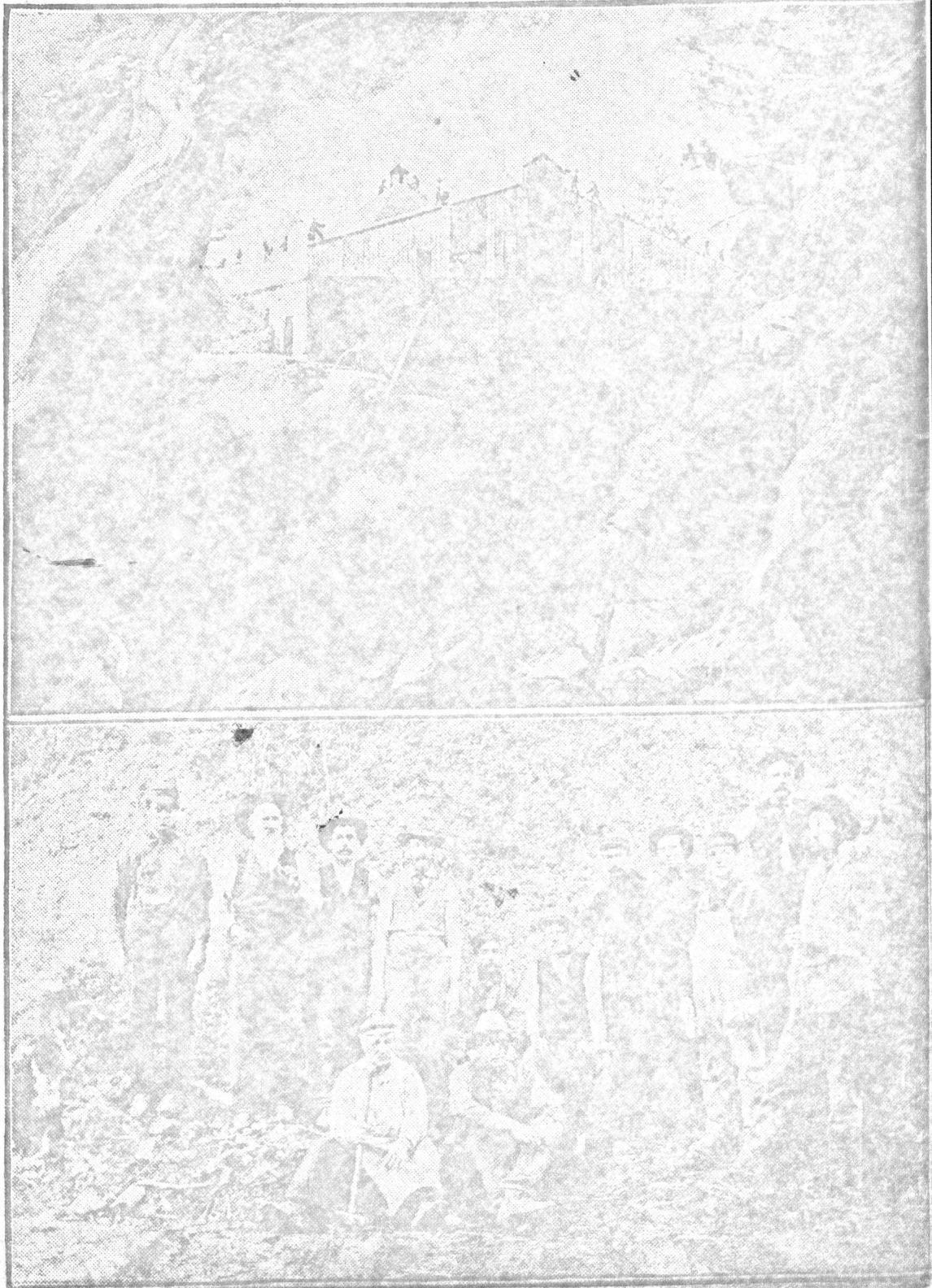
(We desire to draw particular at-
tention to this remarkable account
of American heroism and fertility
of resource. How, when the Meyer
winery was menaced the men turned
to, fastened their hose to the wine-
vats, and averted destruction by
pumping on the flames 4000 gallons
of young wine.)

This heading on a story which
appears in a magazine no longer
in existence, but well remembered
by most Californians, is the begin-
ning of a revelation of the strange
story of one of the Santa Cruz
mountains' worst and most tragic
fires, which was not without an ele-
ment of humor as well as of pathos.

When just last year students at
the Sacred Heart novitiate pumped
thousands of gallons of wine on a
fire to prevent its spreading to ad-
joining buildings, the novelty of the
thing brought nation-wide publicity
on the press wires and provided a
seven-days wonder for Santa Clara
valley residents.

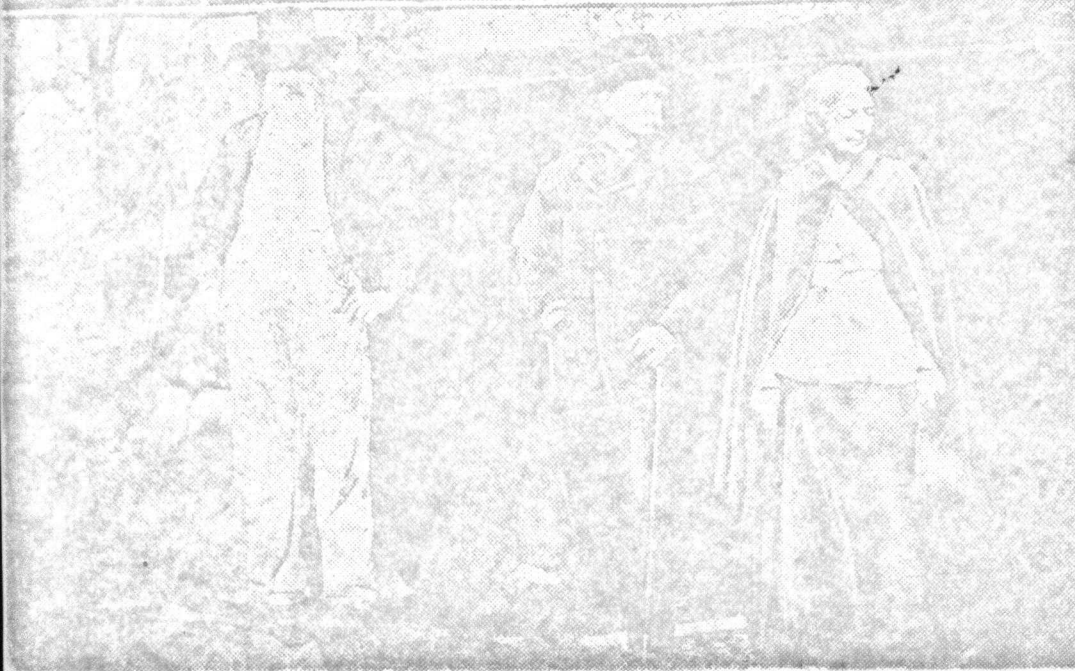
HISTORY REPEATED.

But this was not the first time—



NDAY MORNING, MAY 27, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



NOTABLE LITERARY FIGURE ACTIVE IN MOUNTAIN COLONY

Romantic Life Story Of Josephine Clifford McCrackin
Is Told.

Friend And Confidant Of
Group Famous On Old
Overland Monthly.

E. Meyers and his son, Emil, and other vigorous mountain residents, the Sempervirens club was formed. The club appealed to the Native Sons and Daughters, the Pioneer society and other public-spirited organizations, and in due time 3600 acres out of the 14,000 acres in the forest were purchased by the state under the name of the California Redwood Park.

Mrs. McCrackin also organized the first bird-protection society in California: The Ladies' Forest and Song Birds Protection association, of which she was first president.

In 1904, following McCrackin's death, she was forced to give up her mountain home, and moved to Santa Cruz, there to support herself by writing as a member of the editorial staff of the Santa Cruz Sentinel. She was then 66.

Mrs. McCrackin died in Pasadena November 16, 1920, at the age of 83, leaving behind her an eternal monument in her works in the Big Basin grove, as well as an affectionate memory in the hearts of the mountain colony where she had lived and worked.

ANDREW F. HILL

Responding to a call coming from all over the world for pictures of the great redwoods that followed publicity on the fire, Andrew F. Hill, who was then among the fore-

although it was described as such in many newspapers—that good red wine had been used for other than beverage purposes.

At Los Angeles a planing-mill fire was extinguished with Zinfandel wine from an adjoining warehouse, early in 1900. Prof. Holder's account reveals. Some years before, it is also described, the Salazar winery at Mission San Jose was similarly protected from fire.

"During 1899 a dry season made fire particularly prevalent in California, and thousands of acres of forests were burned out, owing to careless campers and sheep herders who believe that a forest destroyed makes good fodder the next year for the sheep," he wrote. "Thus it is to these ignorant Basques, and some equally ignorant Americans, that the destruction of some of the finest forests in California is due."

REDWOODS THREATENED.

"The great redwood trees in the Santa Cruz mountains are of especial interest, and they, too, were threatened, the flames eating their way across the mountains from the sea, cutting a wide and deadly path, and leaving only thickened and smoking stumps to tell the story. The trees in this range are among the wonders of the world."

"The fire which swept over the Santa Cruz mountains on October 8, 1899, was especially destructive, and to reduce it to subjection the entire mountain community came to the front. . . . The fire, it was believed, was deliberately caused on the other side of the mountain by some irresponsible and even criminal individual who merely wished to burn some brush."

"A high wind, however, blew the flames forward, and in a short time a vast area was a raging site of fire. The moment it was seen that it was going to threaten life and property the men of the mountains turned out en masse, hurrying to threatened ranches."

"By 2 o'clock E. E. Myer and his son Emil were battling the flames on the adjoining ranch of the McCrackins and also on Dr. Goldman's place, but the flames swept over the 50-acre timber tract, burning the ranch house, forest cottage at the McCracken estate and driving the little band of fighters before them."

LAST STAND.

Exhausted, the weary men turned to the threatened Myer house, gathering about 50 fighters, not to mention women and children, for a last stand—men from Alma, from Soquel and the entire mountain region.

"The roar of the flames was now so loud that men could not make themselves heard a yard or two away. The heavens were illuminated, and vast columns of smoke arose so high that they could be seen 50 miles distant. There was not a fire engine for miles around and no appliances for fighting flames except the small hose used at the ranch. The men began to fear that the women would soon be surrounded. . . .

"Falling trees added to the horror of the scene."

"The battle at Mare Vista was under the leadership of E. E. Myer

and his son, and no force was ever led with better strategy. A few men happened to be on the ground when the fire swept upon the ranch. Ying, the Chinese cook, without orders collected all the vessels that would hold water, and at once an amateur brigade was formed, composed of Mrs. Meyer and some guests, who tried to keep the flames from a ravine filled with trees near the wine cellars."

WINERY THREATENED.

"A fierce wind was now blowing, and the flames shot into the canyon like a fiery serpent and ate their way through it with incredible velocity. In a few minutes the building was surrounded with a crescent of fire . . . the winery was evidently doomed. Trees blazing from top to bottom had plunged across the gulch, bridging it with flames, and the building was threatened on every side."

"A new danger soon became apparent. On the west was a small canyon, into which the flames were seen eating their way with resistless force. They came on with a roar, licking up the largest trees . . . and following the driveway toward the house. The house was surrounded, but saved by the fire fighters, partly by the heroism of Frank Matty and others who crawled through the brush, up Soquel creek canyon and with a bucket brigade fought off the flames."

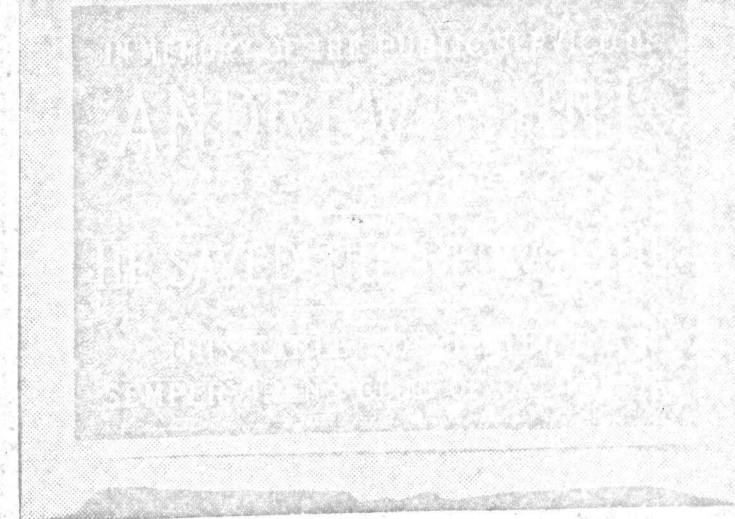
" . . . Meyer and Albert Morrell were fighting the fire in a seething pit of pumice into which the flames had found their way below the winery. They were directing a stream into the red-hot vat, while above them in a window surrounded by flames, stood Emil Mayer, making it possible for them to work by turning a second stream of water on their persons."

"Suddenly a fierce gust sent a cloud of embers upon the roof of the scale-house, and in a moment the cupola burst into a blaze. There was no ladder at hand, but one of the men, George Robeshot, who had fallen from the blazing McCrackin cottage earlier in the morning, made a running leap for the roof and almost fatally injuring himself succeeded in keeping his hold. He crawled slowly upward and smothered the blaze with water-soaked blankets which were sent to him."

GASOLINE HOUSE SMOKING.

"Small buildings and outhouses now began to catch fire from the terrible heat, and the men took their axes and tore down whatever they could. They were engaged in this when a cry of warning came. The pall-like cloud, which had hung over the north end of the winery buildings, suddenly blew aside and disclosed the gasoline-house smoking. In it were stored 100 gallons of gasoline, which, if it exploded, would have destroyed every person in the vicinity."

"It was necessary to break the connecting pipe between the gasoline house and the winery, and Albert Morrell climbed up to the engine floor and attempted to break it. He failed. Emil Meyer heard his call and swung himself down from



"How a forest fire was extinguished with wine," illustrated with pictures taken by Andrew P. Hill, is depicted in the above copies of Hill's photos which appeared in the Wild World magazine.

Upper left is a view entitled "The winery was evidently doomed," a scene staged by Hill with the original fire fighters on the great Mare Vista winery of the Meyers family. The winery still stands as it appears here.

The picture was artistically "faked" by Hill, as he did not arrive on the scene until after the fighting was all over, but he succeeded in rounding up the fighters, placing them on the barn, and supplied flames, smoke and other details with a brush. It gives an excellent idea of the terrific battle that took place about the winery, showing the "bucket-brigade" at work quenching embers on the roof of the huge winery barn, which is still one of the largest structures in the entire mountain region.

Upper right is Josephine Clifford McCrackin "surveying the ruins" of her home at Monte Paraiso.

Lower left are most of the fire fighters: Standing, left to right: A man named Peggles, Jackson McCrackin,

the winery roof. Then, single-handed, he broke off an iron pipe two men could not have bent under ordinary circumstances.

" . . . the wind began to drive the flames in the direction of the water tank from which the men were obtaining their supply. A huge fir caught, blazed upward like a gigantic rocket, then fell with a terrible roar directly upon the tank, crushing it . . . hope nearly fled from the brave band, while the flames came creeping ever inward."

MAN THE WINE-PUMPS!

"It was now that the resources—the genius—of Mr. Meyer as a fire-fighter were displayed. Attaching the hose unhesitatingly to the big wine vats, he shouted, 'Man the wine-pumps!'

"Merrily rang the clang of the pumps, and by tapping vat after vat and pumping no less than 4000 gallons of claret, the flames on the winery were finally subdued and by noon this extraordinary victory was won."

Some of the heroes of the wine-hose were found missing . . . "Since

2 o'clock in the morning every man had been fighting fire, with no food and no rest. Emily Meyer fell fainting across the threshold of his home and it was found that his clothes were literally burned from his body. George Robeshot was unable to reach the house and was found senseless lying in the yard. Frank Matty shouted that his brother had been overtaken by the fire, and a brave band of volunteers started in search of him. He was found lying exhausted where he had fallen, badly burned but still alive."

That women played a no less valiant part in the battle is testified in an account of the pluck evinced by Miss Inez Goldman, the 16-year-old daughter of the doctor, who rescued several horses from the barn after risking her life in a mad dash through the flaming bush.

Chapter X.

JOSEPHINE CLIFFORD
McCRACKIN.

Poet and newspaper woman.
friend and confidant of such il-



Martin Banish, James Squier, Jack Smith, George Eads, Bob Borella, Louis Krebs and Emil Meyer; seated, a man named Etiens, Hans Goertz, Frank Matty and Louis Matty.

Lower right are Jackson McCrackin, Ambrose Bierce and Josephine Clifford McCrackin.

Below is a reproduction of a memorial tablet which has been placed on a fountain in Big Basin, dedicated to Andrew P. Hill, and a picture of Andrew Hill himself, taken not long before his death.

lustrious characters as Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Charles Warren Stoddard, Ina D. Coolbrith, Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce, Noah Brooks and other writers of the famous old Overland Monthly when Harte presided at the editorial desk—this was Josephine Clifford McCrackin.

Knowing her, in the words of Ambrose Bierce, was a "high privilege,"—a woman who lived through and wrote of frontier days in the roaring West after the Civil War, and who came to the Santa Cruz mountains to live and to become one of the mountain region's most colorful and beloved residents.

MECCA FOR LITERATI

Her home at Monte Paraiso, on Loma Prieta avenue ("White Wash alley"), burned in the great forest fire of 1899, was a mecca for talented writers, musicians and artists. Here was the summer visiting place of Bierce, of Jack London, of George Sterling and that ill-fated poet, Herman Scheffauer, and innumerable others.

The petted child of German no-

bility, according to an account written by George Wharton James, which first appeared in the National Magazine prior to 1913, Mrs. McCrackin was born Josephine Wompner, daughter of an old patrician family. She was brought into the world November 25, 1838, at Petershagen on the Weiser river, in Prussia.

Her father fought at the battle of Waterloo, under Wellington, hence her earliest recollections were of tales of conflict on the field of battle. Her mother was the daughter of the younger branch of the Hessian family of Von Ende (Ende von Wolfsprung).

In 1848 her family moved to the United States in the period of political unrest in Europe that accompanied the gold discovery in California. Her father became a naturalized citizen, and settled in St. Louis, where he died in 1854.

WEDS ARMY OFFICER.

Shortly afterward she married Lieutenant James A. Clifford of the 3rd cavalry, United States army, and at the close of the Civil war

went with him to Carlisle barracks, Pennsylvania, where, they were ordered to Fort Union, New Mexico, to meet General Carleton.

Here this cultured lady, accustomed to the gentle life of a noble family, was plunged into the rough and ready existence of the western frontier—an experience that colored her whole life of the future.

Her husband had killed a man, in self-defense, he claimed, but civil officers of the state where the crime was committed had vowed to follow him and bring him to justice. Strain of the chase changed him to a mad man, and his chief obsession was that his wife was planning to betray him.

She lived in constant fear of death at her husband's hands, and on more than one occasion suffered bodily harm, being nearly strangled by the insane soldier.

THREATENED WITH DEATH.

She finally fled from him in terror, but her husband pursued and overtook her, threatening to tie her to the tail of her pet white horse, "Toby," and let her be dragged to death.

She again made her escape, after her husband had slid out from under court-martial proceedings, and never saw him again. He was dismissed from the service, she learned later.

Sketches of early frontier life brought her her first literary rewards, and she began writing under Bret Harte on the Overland Monthly, and later for eastern magazines, under the name of Josephine Clifford, which soon became famous.

TO SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS.

Returning to Arizona in 1881, she married Jackson McCrackin, a speaker of the first legislature in Arizona and a well-known gold miner. A few years later she moved to the Santa Cruz mountains, and built her famous home "Monte Paraiso." She lived there 17 years, and was burned out in 1899. Her husband died in December, 1904.

But the great fire and its enormous destruction of magnificent redwoods so impressed her with the wanton waste that she wrote a stirring article to the Santa Cruz Sentinel, calling upon the people of the state to awake and save the redwoods.

"Save the Redwoods" became her war-cry—and with Andrew P. Hill, noted artist and photographer, she began work in an attempt to save from destruction the Big Basin grove, discovered by Hill who was attracted to the region by the great fire.

SEMPERVIRENS CLUB FORMED.

Largely through her own efforts and those of Andrew Hill, aided by

most American photographers, he went out to photograph the forest near Felton.

At once he met with a refusal. Welch, the hotel keeper at Felton, denied him access, telling him that the redwoods and advertising of them were a perquisite of the hotel.

Out of this argument grew Hill's determination to save the redwoods, and with this in mind he communicated with Mrs. McCrackin. Mrs. McCrackin, taken with the idea, forwarded the letter to the Santa Cruz Sentinel, and its publication marked the first article that had ever appeared advocating public ownership of the trees.

FINDS BIG BASIN.

This was in March, 1900. Undismayed by Welch's antagonism, Hill went farther afield, photographing as he went, until an old-timer in the region told him that in a region to the northwest there were some "really big trees."

Thus it came about that Hill wandered into Big Basin. It is related that he crawled on his hands and knees through dense undergrowth, and found his way blocked by a wall—he arose to his feet and gazed upward—upward until it seemed that the "wall" reached the sky.

It was the "Father Tree," one of the largest redwoods in the basin, and the artist was spell-bound. He spent some time in the great grove, becoming more and more resolved that these noble, towering trees must be preserved.

GREAT EFFORT

The story of his efforts, the formation of the Sempervirens club, and Hill's personal hardships as he nursed the passage through the legislature of the bill which saved the redwoods has been told and retold, and remains one of the state's classic memories of a great man with a great determination.

The son of a family of military heroes whose names are inscribed in the journals of the Revolutionary war, the Civil war and frontier battles, Andrew P. Hill was born in 1853 in Ohio. His father, a fur trader, died of exposure following his trip across the plains to Amador county in 1853. Andrew Hill died in San Jose in 1922.

Next Week—Loma Prieta region, and the romantic Austro-German colony at "German Town," in Austrian gulch, near Wrights; the German families of Loma Prieta road; the hermit of Nib's Knobb, the story of Maymen's flat and the hardships of the pioneers of this mountainous sections.