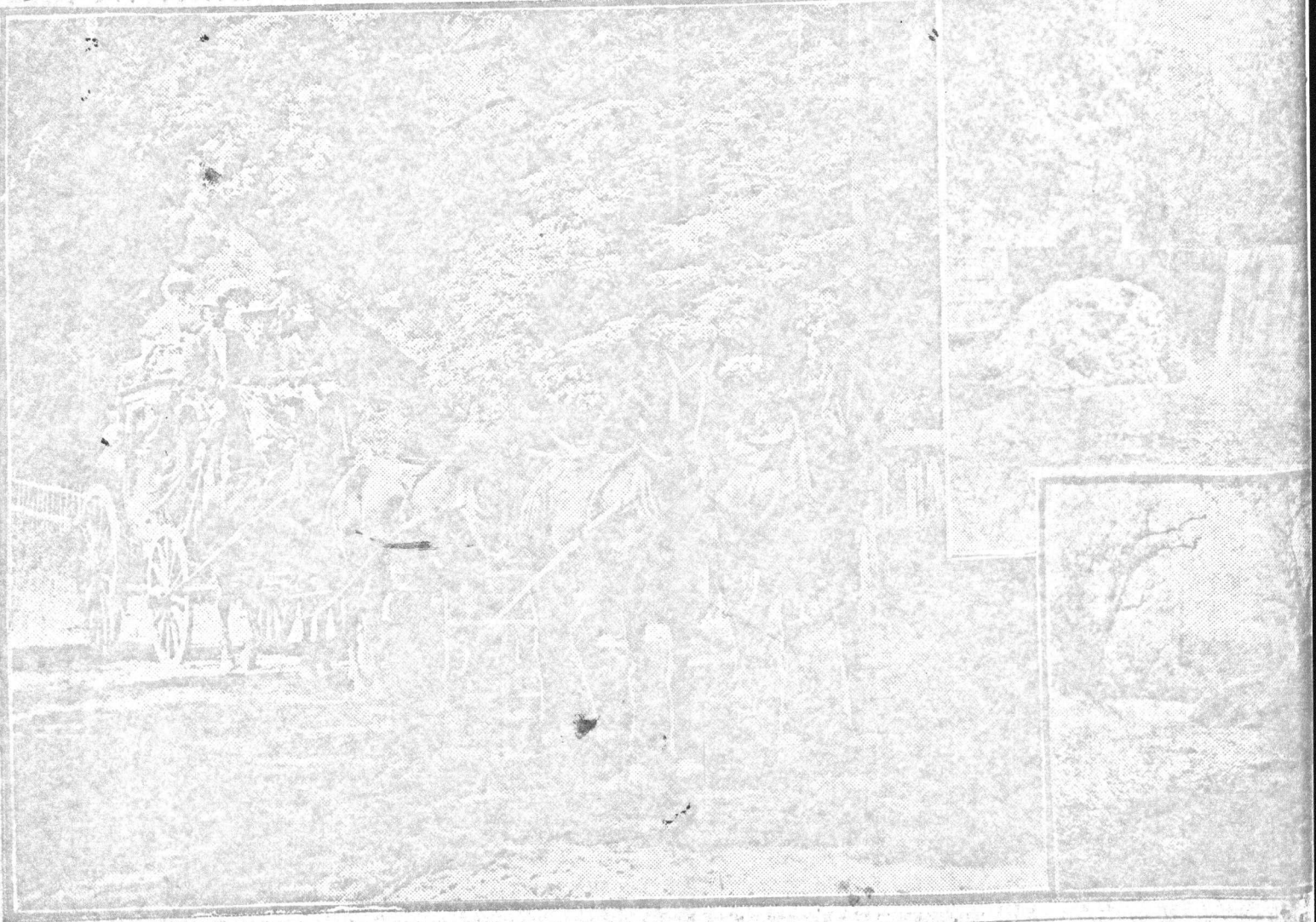


GHOST TOWNS OF THE SA



'Buffalo' Jones Among First to Find Abode in Santa Cruz Mountains

Believed "Squatter" at Time of Captain John C. Fremont's Historic "Topographical Expedition" in February of 1846.

Scorned Homestead, Appropriated All Available Territory and Timber, and Erected Saw-Mills to

wood and are now converted into beams and posts for private dwellings. In California this tree is called the 'Palo Colorado' redwood.

(Note: Fremont confused the *Sequoia Sempervirens* of the coast with the *Sequoia Gigantea* of the Sierra, and both with a variety of cypress, a separate species of tree.)

TAN-BARK OAK.

"Among the oaks in this mountain is a handsome, lofty evergreen tree, specifically different from those of the lower grounds, and in its general appearance much resembling hickory. The bark is smooth, of a white color, and the wood hard and close-grained. It seems to prefer the north hillsides, where

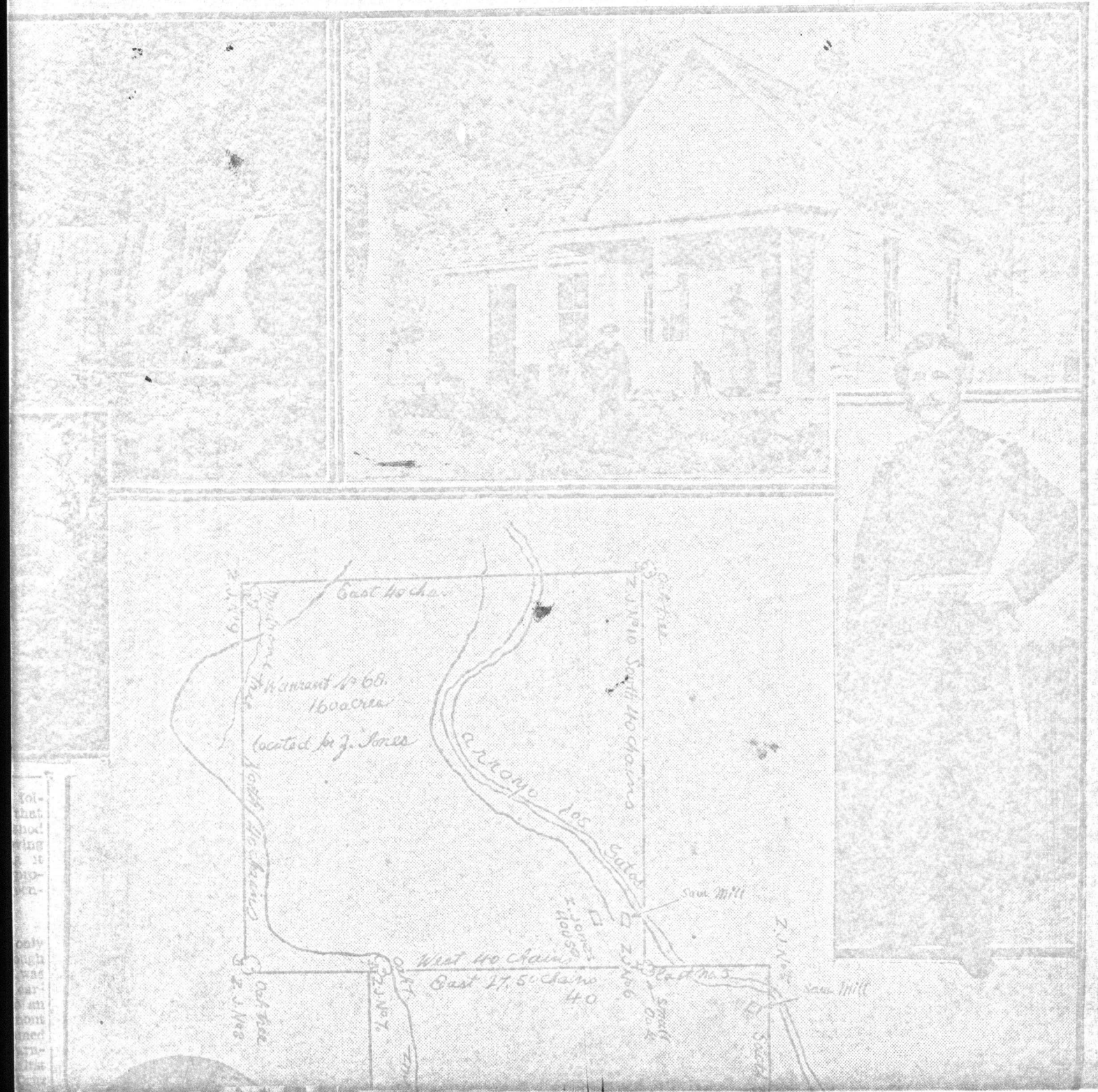
men alike. The bull teams that followed and the stage coach that came later with their iron-shod wheels did little toward improving the route, simply transforming it into a pair of parallel ruts that provided a hair-raising ride for venturesome travelers.

THE ONLY ROUTE.

But it was Jones' road, the only pass, over the mountains through the ridge of cats, and so steep was it that only half-loads could be carried on each trip. According to an account written by Mrs. Fremont Older in 1925, the pass was named Farnham's pass for a Mrs. Farnham, said to have been the first woman to cross the Santa Cruz

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



By JOHN V. YOUNG.
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Chapter XV.

BUFFALO JONES—THE ROADS

It was not because he had shot

so many buffalos that Zachariah Jones was known as "Buffalo" Jones—it was because he looked like a buffalo and roared like one when he spoke.

A character whose story has become almost pure legend in the passage of nearly 90 years, since he first arrived near the present site of the village of Lexington, Jones was without doubt one of the first Americans ever to set foot in the Santa Cruz mountains. Certainly he was the first to "squat" on the lands, although he never attained the status of a settler as did Mountain Charley McKiernan.

PRECEDENT FREMONT.

That Jones was here when Fremont came in February, 1846, appears likely, although "The Pathfinder," as the notable American officer was known, makes no mention of him, and some accounts place Jones' coming two years later.

Jones, who was in all probability illiterate, left no record, hence it is to Captain John C. Fremont, in his extensive diary of his travels, that we are indebted for one of the most complete descriptions ever written of the mountain region, and the first recorded account of the region about Lexington that appears in history.

Just where Fremont stopped is a matter of conjecture—a certain large oak at Alma claiming the glory of having provided shade for the party, while above Lexington, in the vicinity of Idlewild, is an equally attractive grassy flat that also claims the honor:

RELICS FOUND.

It was at the latter spot, less than 20 years later, that Louis Hebard, who came in 1857 to Alma, found a rusty spur and remains of a saddle beneath a huge madrone—relics that he treasured as mementos of the Fremont expedition.

This was Fremont's second crossing of the range on his so-called "topographical expedition," which was in reality but a thinly veiled bit of opportunism on the part of the United States to take a look-see at this magnificent territory that all the world knew Mexico could no longer hold.

But "topographical" or frankly aggressive, his descriptions are minute and present a vivid picture. Of this region he says:

WHAT FREMONT FOUND.

"Resuming the work of the expedition, on the 22nd February we encamped on the Wild-Cat Ridge on the road to Santa Cruz and again on the 23rd near the summit. The various character of the woods and shrubbery on this mountain, which lay between my camp and the Santa Cruz shore, was very interesting to me, and I wished to spend some days there, as the spring season was now renewing vegetation, and the accounts of the great trees in the

forest on the west slope of the mountain had aroused by curiosity.

"Always, too, I had before my mind the home I wished to make in this country, and first one place and then another charmed me. But none seemed perfect where the sea was wanting, and so far I had not stood by the open waves of the Pacific.

"The soft climate of the San Jose valley were very enticing and in the interior I had seen lovely spots in the midst of the great pines where the mountains looked down, but the sea was lacking. The piny fragrance was grateful, but it was not the invigorating salt breeze which brings with it renewed strength. This I wanted for my mother. For me, the shore of 'sounding sea' was a pleasure of which I never wearied, and I knew that along this coast the sea broke deep against the gold rocks or shining sands.

IN MOUNTAIN CAMP.

"All this I had reason to believe I would find somewhere on the Santa Cruz shore. We remained on the upper portion of the mountain several days. The place of our encampment was two thousand feet above the sea, and was covered with a luxuriant growth of grass a foot high in many places.

"At sunrise the temperature was 40 degrees; at noon 60 degrees; at four in the afternoon, 65 degrees, and 63 degrees at sunset, with very pleasant weather. The mountains were wooded with many varieties of trees, and in some parts with heavy forests. These forests are characterized by a cypress (taxodium) of extraordinary dimensions, which I have already mentioned among the trees in the Sierra Nevada as distinguished among the forest trees of America by its superior size and height.

NOTES HUGE TREES.

"Among many we measured in this part of the mountain a diameter of 9 or 10 feet was frequent, sometimes 11 feet, but going beyond 11 only in a single tree, which reached 14 feet in diameter. About 200 feet was a frequent height. In this locality the bark was very deeply furrowed and unusually thick, being fully 16 inches on some of the trees. It was now in bloom, flowering near the summit, and the flowers consequently difficult to procure.

"This is the staple timber-tree of the county, being cut into both boards and shingles, and this is the principal timber sawed at the mills. It is soft and easily worked, wearing away too quickly to be used for floors; but it seems to have all the durability which anciently gave the cypress so much celebrity. Posts which had been exposed to the weather three-quarters of a century, since the foundation of the missions, showed no marks of decay in the

prefer the north hillsides, where they are nearly four feet in diameter and 100 feet high.

(Note: This was probably the tan-bark oak (lithocarpus densiflora) which provided a source of revenue for mountain people for half a century and is still used to some extent.)

"Another remarkable tree of these woods is called in the language of the country madrona. It is a beautiful evergreen with large, thick and glossy digitated leaves; the trunk and branches reddish colored and having smooth and singularly naked appearance, as if the bark had been stripped off. In its green state the wood is brittle, very hard and close-grained; it is said to assume a red color when dry, sometimes variegated, and susceptible of a high polish. The tree was found by us only in the mountains. Some measured nearly four feet in diameter and were about 60 feet high."

This was the verdant scene that greeted the eye of Buffalo Jones whenever he came, and this was the scene that he did much to destroy, as he made his living out of fence posts, and shingles, and tan bark and cordwood.

RECORD OBSCURE.

Where he came from, and where he went when the place became crowded with a handful of people later on, is a complete mystery. He lived with C. C. Martin at his Glenwood ranch, after Martin had built for him a small sawmill in 1852-53, where the San Jose Water works dam now crosses Los Gatos creek above Alma.

Never bothering to take up homesteads, Jones simply "squatted" on all available territory and laid claim to all the redwoods in sight.

He was a familiar sight in the mountains in the early years of the white settlement, but after spending a few years with the Martins, he pulled up stakes one day and moved on, and that was the last that was ever heard of him.

Jones told both C. C. Martin and Louis Hebard, as well as others, that he had come in 1846 over a bear trail from the valley, the same route over which he later packed in lumber and supplies for his lonely shanty that stood in the Lexington flat.

ROUTE OF PADRES.

This "bear trail" was undoubtedly the Santa Cruz branch of El Camino Real, the route of the padres in their travels between the missions, and before them the trail of the Ohlones Indians for at least three centuries.

Swinging up over St. Joseph's hill of today, where the Sacred Heart novitiate crowns the rise directly to the southeast of Los Gatos, the trail dropped precipitately down the south side of which is still known as Jones' hill into Lyndon gulch, emerging just above the junction of the gulch with Los Gatos creek, and crossing it to enter the flat where Lexington stands, two miles above Los Gatos on the Santa Cruz highway.

Steep, rough and in the summer time a wonderful place for dust, the trail in winter time was a dangerous place for pack-trains and

woman in a wheeled vehicle. Residents of the valley finally petitioned the county board of supervisors to build a new road, and two expeditions were sent out the following year—one over the mountains eastward into the San Joaquin valley, and the other over the Santa Cruz mountains.

"Uncle Ike Branham, famous hunter, and his pack of hounds spent a couple of weeks on the eastern route, and returned to report it impracticable.

Then Sheriff John Murphy, a fine horseman, explored the Santa Cruz gap with a party, reporting that it would cost \$10,000 to build a road from Jones' road to the county line, and advising the purchase of Jones' road.

AN IMPASSE.

This plan was turned down, and the county found itself at an impasse, for the statute then in existence, which had been passed March 12, 1853, contained no provision for toll road building, but simply read, "An act to authorize the formation of a corporation for the construction of plank or turnpike road."

Under the statutes of 1857, however, the act was amended to grant powers as follows: "All companies formed or hereafter formed have power to bridge any stream and determine all matters touching construction, such as width, manner, style, etc., but shall only be allowed to keep toll gates and collect tolls as fixed by the board of supervisors in each of the counties through which the roads pass, tolls to be fixed from year to year."

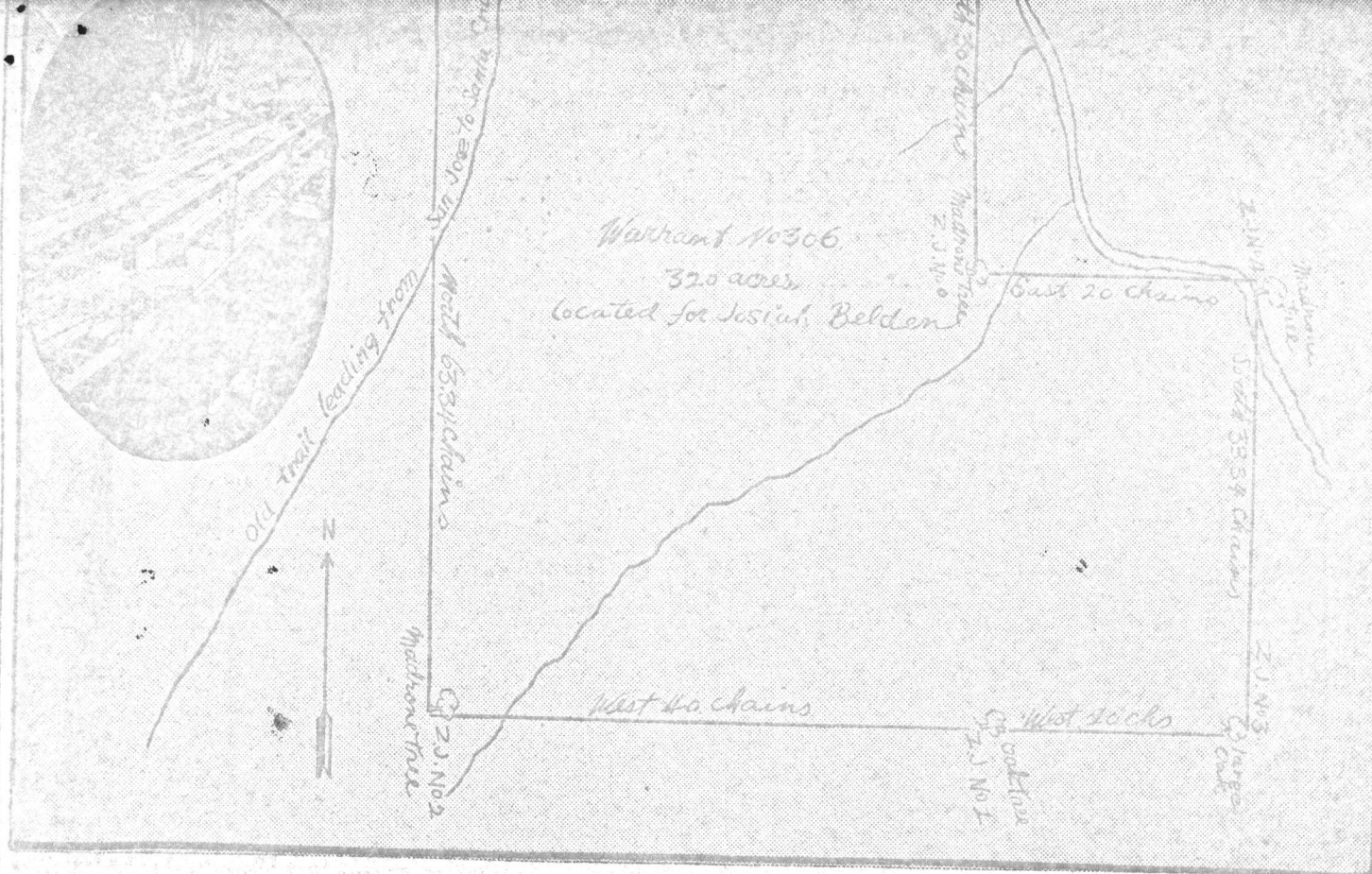
ROAD COMPANY FORMED.

With this power in hand, the supervisors granted to the Santa Cruz Gap Joint Stock company, incorporated November 1, 1856, with a capital stock of \$20,000 by Adolph Plister, president; D. B. Moody, secretary, and L. A. Whitehurst, E. H. Evans, R. S. Smith, A. S. Logan and J. Y. McMillin, permission to build a toll road from Los Gatos to the summit. In 1857 the company secured an extension of corporation to November 18, 1867, and on October 18, 1862, was granted additional rights by the board of supervisors under an act of legislature approved April 22, 1861.

The new road was first put into use May 5, 1858, when Joseph Johnson and Peter Davidson piloted the first wagon over the new route, Mrs. Older records. At this time the directors of the company included J. A. Quinby, V. D. Moody, H. M. Hervey, R. F. Herrick, S. J. Easley, H. M. Howe, Eli Evans and J. S. Faber.

This was the road that first traversed the western side of the canyon out of Los Gatos, following approximately the same route as the present highway as far as Alma, where it branches off past the old Forest House site, where a fire ranger station is now located, followed Aldercroft road for a short distance before emerging again on the highway, then meandered in and out of canyons, taking the line of least resistance.

All was not yet serene, however—the first winter rains that came in



Early formal record of the mountain scene is contained in an old map on file in the county surveyor's office, showing school lands surveyed in 1853 for Josiah Belden and Zachariah (Buffalo) Jones. Note the "Old Trail from San Jose to Santa Cruz" where the present highway now runs through Lexington and Alma.

Upper left is one of the old stages on the San Jose-Santa Cruz run, stopping at Lexington for a change of horses. Upper center is a picture taken in 1893 of the falls on Los Gatos creek, where the San Jose Water company still maintains a pumping station, at the site of an early mill dam, the uppermost of the two saw-mills indicated on the old map. Upper right is the old toll-house at Los Gatos at the northern end of the Santa Cruz Gap Joint Turnpike company's toll road. The toll gate was torn down by angry teamsters when the company refused to relinquish its franchise after the county abolished all toll roads. Portions of the toll house still stand included in the more modern buildings at the edge of Los Gatos.

Inset above is a scene on the old Jones' hill road from Los Gatos (then Forbes' Mill) as it appears today; a reconstructed bridge on the same road is shown in oval to the right. Inset at right is of Captain John C. Fremont, "Pathfinder" of early California history, who camped with a party near Lexington in 1846.

along washed out the new road, and to cap matters Jones continued to operate his road in opposition. But lawsuits and prolonged wrangling wearied him, and he finally sold out his rights to J. P. Henning and S. Thomas.

IN LEGAL TANGLES.

Jones' peculiar methods, never clearly explained, of acquiring lands, brought him into trouble quite often as later settlers disputed his titles. On one occasion, the complete history of which is recorded in the county clerk's office in San Jose, Jones filed complaint (May 26, 1853) against Samuel Gummer, Edwin French, and John Stewart in one suit, and against Lafayette Jones, William Biddle, Eli Hopper, Dudley Wells and Isaac Bird in another, charging that the defendants had trespassed on his lands, cut his red-woods and committed other damages to the tune of \$1000. He sought an injunction against their operations as well.

In his claim he set forth that the

defendants had already cut 100 trees on his mountainous lands valued only for timber, on which he (Jones) had "erected sawmills and graded roads at a cost of \$18,000." He charged in particular that on May 10, 1853, French and Hugh E. Steele, the latter not a defendant in the suit, "entered on his land and cut timber and worked it into posts and rails which were later sold to Hansen and Howk" (probably Howe).

JONES' TITLE DEFICIENT.

The defendants denied Jones' claim to ownership of the lands except a sawmill and mill dam and house with 10 acres adjoining, declaring that all other lands were public lands of the United States. The two suits involved a total of 160 acres.

The suit hinged on title to the lands, which Jones sought to establish by means of school land warrants. But when he attempted to introduce them in court, the defense objected, and the objection was sus-

tained on the grounds that the surveys on which the warrants were based were "not made in accordance with survey laws."

The surveys, it was revealed in an old parchment map, were based on corners which were trees—a large madrone, a small oak, etc.

The school land warrants, a curious form of land deed, were issued August 24, 1853 (320 acres) and June 3, 1852 (160 acres), under "an act to provide for the disposal of 500,000 acres of land" granted to the state by act of congress approved May 3, 1852, to William Walker, and by him assigned August 27, 1853, to Josiah Belden. The second tract was issued June 3, 1852, to Charles Hunspeith, and by him assigned to Zachariah Jones September 22, 1853. Considerations in the deals do not appear, and it is not known whether the state deeds to Walker and Hunspeith, and their assignments to Jones, were sales or outright gifts.

Attorneys in the suit were Wal-

lace Ryland and A. S. Rhodes for the defendants, and Williams, Voires & Archer, a law firm, for the plaintiff.

ROAD STILL IN USE.

A portion of the old route is still in occasional use by crews from the San Jose Water Works maintaining the flume line that follows it, and by students from the Novitiate.

A sheep trail led up Lyndon gulch to swing around to the east side of the hill and emerge in the area known as Oak Hill subdivision, near the southeast corner of the Los Gatos city limits. It was traveled by a Robert "Bob" Swane, brother of Richard Swane, and had been used from time to time as an alternate wagon road, but proved too hazardous even for the rugged drivers of the time, who feared nothing in the way of trails, and was soon abandoned.