

Third Section

San Jose Mercury

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, SUNDAY

GHOST TOWNS OF THE SAN JOSE MOUNTAINS



Wright's Station, as 'The Tunnel', Riotous Place in Early Days

Remains of Early Woodcutters' Shacks Replaced by
Roaring Construction Camp as Railroad in Seven-
ties Bores Through Mountain to Finish Line.

CHAPTER VII.
WRIGHT'S STATION,
By JOHN V. YOUNG.

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Early history of Wright's station is lost in the obscurity
that too often veils the rise of a boom town from a wilderness
to a thriving shipping center in a half-decade.

When the railroad arrived at the northern portal early in
1877, the only buildings present were the crumbling remains
of an early woodcutter's shack. But this deficiency was soon



WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 13, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



Sunset Park Develops Into Favorite Picnic Resort of Mountains

**Established at Wright's Station Late in '90s, and
After Turn of Century Reaches Its Hey-day With
Crowds Numbering Four to Five Thousand.**

Cruz mountains, and they had been extinct for nearly 10 years.

However, Wright's was an important shipping center, serving the entire Loma Prieta region, Wright's ridge, Summit and the district north to Alma station. Hundreds of cars of fruit, grapes and freight were shipped out of the station every season, wagons lining up for the distance of city blocks in every direction at "train time" in the summer, and filling the flat in the middle of the village.

But it was the picnic idea that gave the place its real impetus and put it definitely on the map to remain until prohibition times.

SUNSET PARK.

Sunset park was abandoned along about 1910, partly because of competition from other parks, and partly, alas, because of the habit of trains of those days of stopping to allow their passengers to pick flowers along the wayside.

Ranchers of Campbell and the Vasona district protested bitterly, and whether it was their protest that did the trick, or whether the railroad officials were planning to abandon the park anyhow, it WAS abandoned, and Wright's went to pot.

With the decline of Wright's station as a summer resort passed one of its most colorful institutions: the famous Wright's rifle club.

paired as workmen's shanties, a large wooden shed sprang up here and there.

It was along about this time that O. B. Castle, foreman over the gangs of Chinese that numbered as high as 2500 at time on the job, built his famous saloon, and "The Tunnel," as the place was known, was off to a flying start.

WILD SCENES OF REVELRY.

The brief years of construction prior to the opening of the road in 1880 brought wild scenes of revelry to the saloon, home of Castle's famous "Discovery."

According to Herbert Martin, native of the mountains, who visited the place as a boy, The Tunnel made the Barbary coast look "like a Sunday school picnic by comparison." Sinter tales of workmen waylaid for their wages still drift down, but lack verification. Women of the camp made repeated prays a la Carrie Nation, armed with chairs and brooms, and leaned out the barroom whenever the celebration therein approached the riot stage.

Castle's "Discovery," a panacea for all mountain ills, was famed for much of the disturbance, which is explained in its formula: "Dilute one gallon of whisky (mountain dew) with four tablespoons of water, and down it at one sitting."

"JUMPER" SERVICE.

Stages picked up passengers at the Tunnel from the South Pacific coast railroad, which ran a "jumper" service over a hair raising road to the Felton terminus, while the main tunnels were being completed, adding to the diversified population of the place.

George Colgrove, who later became a conductor on the railroad, operator of an early stage service over the San Jose Turnpike, sold out to the railroad and drove stage on the "jumper service" until the line was completed. His partner was Henry Ward, whose interest passed to Chris Coffin, a stage driver on the Almaden run in later years.

With the opening of the railroad, the scene changed somewhat, as Wright's station, as it became known, lost some of its wildness and began its rapid development into one of the leading towns of the mountain region.

By 1882 the town consisted of a store, hotel and saloon, and a blacksmith shop. Judge S. P. Hall was the store-keeper and postmaster; Charles Grant, who bought out

Castle and improved the hotel, was owner of the leading (and only) hostelry, while a man named Woodruff was the town blacksmith and a very busy man. All was on the east side of the bridge.

WHOLE TOWN BURNS.

Then one Fourth of July, in 1885, an overheated stove set fire to the hotel and the whole town burned to the ground. This was shortly after A. J. Rich, a capitalist, had acquired all the property in the village, and it was A. J. Rich who rebuilt it, this time on the west side of the bridge.

Ralph Thompson erected a store in a collection of shacks after carrying on business for a while after the fire, in a box-car parked on a siding, and automatically became postmaster, a job which went with the store.

Ed. Cottle ran the hotel from 1886 until 1888, when Antone Matty came into the picture. Matty rented from Rich until he bought him out entirely in 1896 to operate the hotel, livery stable and saloon. The title has remained in the family until

Scenes from Wright's station when it was a booming mountain metropolis. Above (left), crews repairing the Wrights-Glenwood tunnel after a storm and slide had filled the north portal in 1893; (center) looking out of the tunnel at Wrights from the north portal after it was rebuilt and concreted; (right) a busy day at the railroad station in fruit season.

Antone Matty, one of the towns most prominent residents (upper) and F. H. Bremer, an active member of the

the present time, when it is owned by Anna J. (Matty) Squire and Alice F. Matty, although a long line of hotel keepers have rented the establishment since.

The son of Francois and Teressa (Colombet) Matty, Antone Matty was born in 1840 in the Maritime Alps of France. His mother was a sister of the late Clemente Colombet, a pioneer of the Santa Clara valley.

Matty arrived at Mission San Jose after crossing the plains with an uncle whom he met in the east on coming to America as a boy of 12. He remained with another uncle, Clemente Colombet, builder of the Warm Springs resort, until 1855, when he engaged in business in San Francisco.

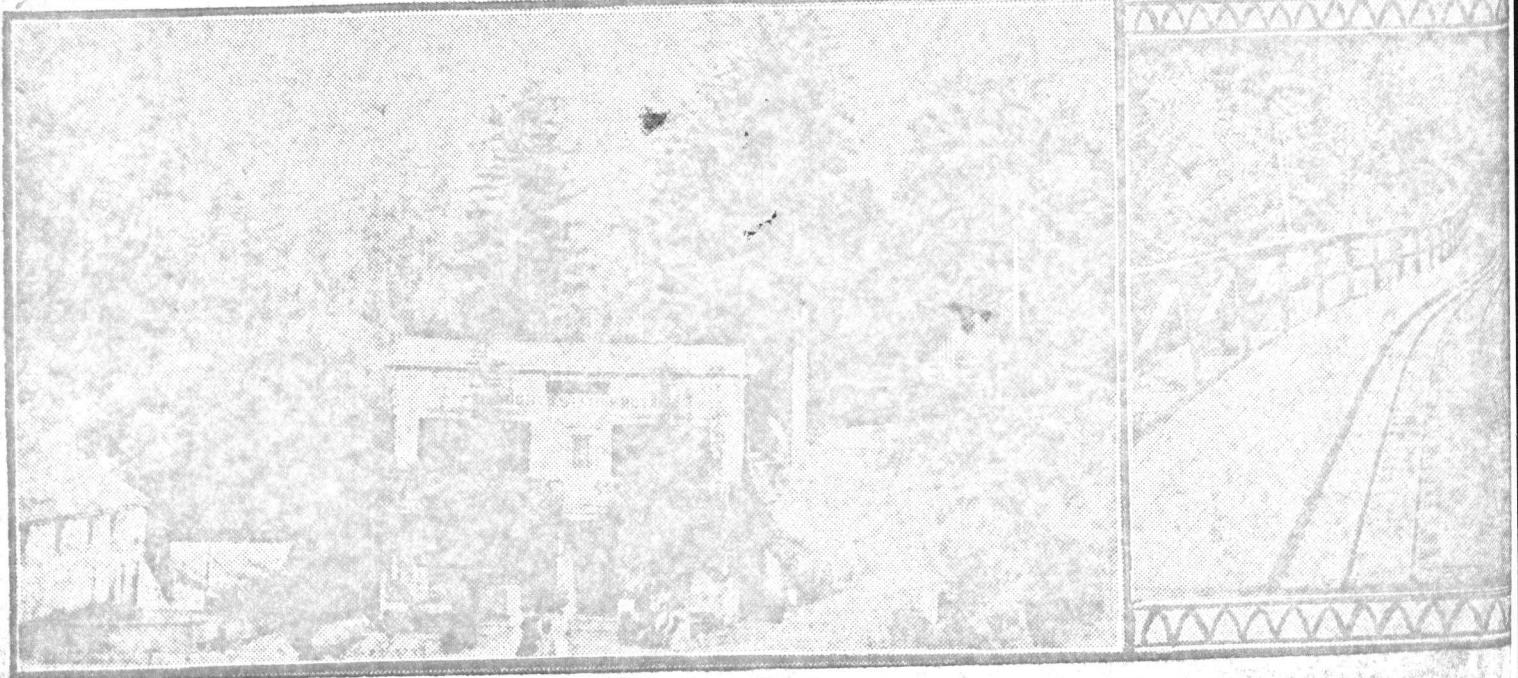
He was married in 1896 in San Jose to Miss Sarah Slomon, an Irish girl, who died in November, 1903, a few months after their son, Louis, had perished tragically while fighting forest fire near Wright's.

Their other five children were Teresa, who was accidentally killed at the age of 18; Frank, who married Katherine Goodman; Thomas C., who died when he was 26, and Annie (Meyer) and Alice Matty, who still reside at Wright's.

Matty was organizer of the Wright school district and a member of the Santa Clara Pioneer association. He was also a member of the Semper-virens association and is one of a small group of members credited with having saved the Big Basin redwoods. He died April 12, 1922, when he was 82 years of age.

GIRL STATION AGENT.

When she was still a young girl, Alice Matty became station agent at Wright's, the fifth agent of the railroad depot. E. B. Green was the first agent, followed by Frank L. Donahue, W. J. Van de Mark, Clare Hunter, Miss Matty, W. H. Harrison, Jack Malone and finally W. H. Crichton, who remained from 1906 until the station was closed under



Wright's rifle club, are also shown above, besides a general view of Wrights in 1895.

Below, left, is a view of Wrights as it looked in September, 1889; center, what the earthquake of 1906 did to the railroad bridge in Wrights—this bridge was perfectly straight before the 'quake; right, the store and hotel at Wrights, 1906 to 1920. (Photos courtesy of Miss Alice J. Matty, Wrights.)

protest from the residents July 18, 1932.

M. A. Martin is the present postmaster, last of a line that started with Judge S. P. Hall in 1883, Ralph Thompson in 1887, James A. Squire in 1893, John Garrity in 1900, and Charles Squire in 1906.

An asthma suffered, Charles Henry Squire came to Wright's to clerk in the store, then run by Ralph Thompson, in 1892, where he worked until his brother purchased the place two months later. In 1901 James A. Squire sold the store to J. H. Garrity, and Charles Squire was placed in charge until he bought out his employer in 1908. Ruined by the earthquake which struck only a few days after he had bought the store, Squire saved a few odds and ends from the wreckage and started in again.

He became postmaster in 1906, and held the office until 1923, when he moved away. He was married in Los Angeles to Miss Elizabeth Mat-

tern. He was a trustee of the now defunct Wright school district.

CHAPTER VII. WRIGHT'S STATION

"WRIGHTS—A small village but an important shipping point, the depot for the extensive fruit growing sections of the surrounding mountains. About 3200 acres of bearing trees and vines are in the vicinity.

"Wild game and deer are numerous, and occasionally black bears (!) are seen. Quail are plentiful, and trout are in every stream. . . . The Hotel Jeffries is a prominent resort, and the Summit hotel, kept by Mrs. A. N. Nichols, another."

This note from an old county history published in 1893 gives an interesting view of Wright's before its hey-day had really begun, doubly interesting in reference to the black bears, inasmuch as only grizzly bears were ever found in the Santa

gave the place its real impetus and put it definitely on the map to remain until prohibition times.

SUNSET PARK

Sunset Park, one of the most famous of California parks in its day, was established by the Southern Pacific company late in the 90's, and within a very short time was attracting hordes of visitors on Sundays, holidays, and even week days.

As many as four to five thousand people flocked to the village on some occasions during the period from 1900 to 1908, 1909 and 1910. The Native Sons, Foresters and other lodges and organizations held annual outings attended by delegations from all over the state, rendering the quiet of the secluded village with their merriment for days at a stretch.

Picnic tables, barbecue pits and cabins furnished the camp, and their remains today offer only a sorry remnant of tattered glory that was theirs for a brief space in the mountain history they helped to make.

Wright's station and Sunset park soon became "the" place to come for picnic parties, week-end camps and summer outings. The hotel did a land-office business, cottages and homes blossomed on the mountain-side.

The railroad ran three and often four sections from Los Gatos and Santa Cruz both to accommodate the throng of visitors, while the stages and later wheezing early-day automobiles raised a huge pall of dust over the winding mountain roads.

But the story of other mountain resorts and boom towns was the story of Wrights—came the automobile, the growth of the valley fruit industry, of other mountain resorts, and then as a final blow, came prohibition.

Not only did prohibition close the saloon, but it wrecked the grape industry, one of the principal means of support of many a mountain family. The automobile carried the customary horde of visitors to hitherto more inaccessible points—to Tahoe and Yosemite, to the coast and to the interior valley.

With the decline of Wright's station as a summer resort passed one of its most colorful institutions, the famous Wright's rifle club, numbering among its members world famous marksmen.

In existence from 1905 until about 1917, when the World war shattered its membership, the club was organized and first headed by John Utschig, president of the Austro-German colony in Austrian gulch, himself at one time holder of a world's record for rifle shooting.

The range, of 200-yards distance, was situated on a hillside near the schoolhouse, where "shoots" took place on the second Sunday of each month, with impromptu tournaments at other times. The club was devoted to target shooting with rifles, and often saw on its range masterpieces of gun craftsmanship, equipped with all sorts of gadgets from telescope sights to patent shoulder rests.

BLASSE RECORD HOLDER

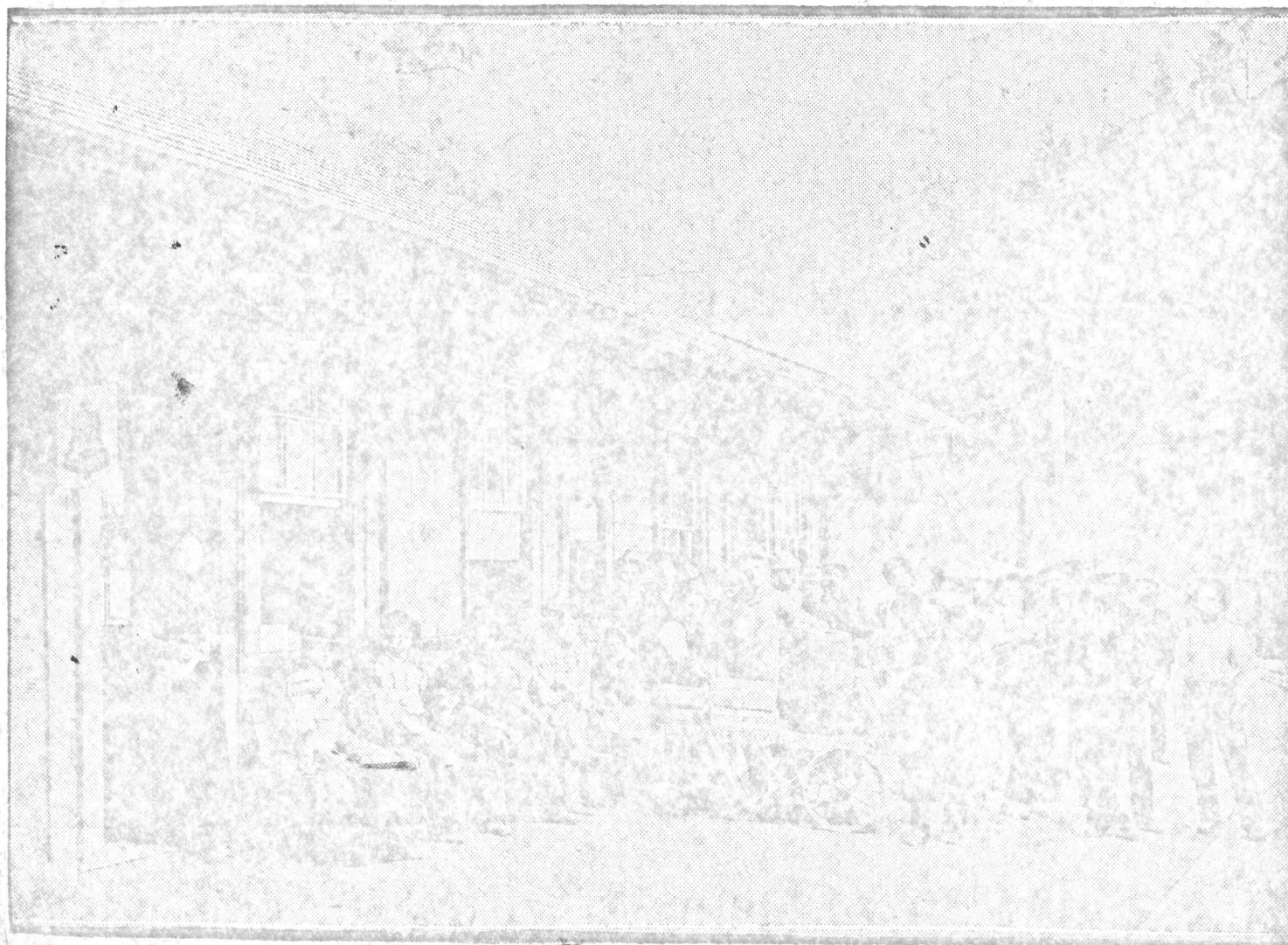
Holder of the 100-shot record was W. F. Blasse, San Francisco police marksmanship instructor, who with his brother, Martin, was a frequent visitor at the range.

Another famous character was W. G. Hoffman, San Francisco diamond setter whose hand was so fine, it is recorded, that on one occasion he engraved the Lord's prayer on a pin head.

The old records, minutes of the meetings and newspaper clippings of the activities of the club are now in the hands of Emil Meyer, who was a popular member along with his father; Jack Smith, Bob Borella and others of the mountain region.

Next Sunday: The railroad comes to the mountains, the story of the South Pacific Coast railroad, of James Fair and Alfred E. Davis, the Felton & Santa Cruz narrow gauge railway; Wright's tunnel, the seven-day wonder on which as many as 2000 Chinese coolies were at work at one time; and the 'quake of 1906.

In The "Good Old Days



RESIDENTS OF WRIGHTS shown in the days when this railroad station in the Santa Cruz mountains was a thriving little village. Taken on October 7, 1898, this picture shows Miss Alice J. Matty, still resident of the town, standing in the door on the left. She was southern Pacific station agent then. Her sister, Annie, is the woman sitting on the extreme right end of the bench. The third man to the left of her, the top of his head just showing, is the late Antoine

Matty, her father, Wrights' leading citizen and operator of its hotel. Leaning on the truck handles is the late Louis Matty, a brother, later burned to death in a forest fire. The young man holding the keg of ginger ale is Herbert H. Bunds, then assistant agent under Miss Matty. When this picture was taken the station was located at the north portal of tunnel No. 2, but was later moved to its present site a half mile north. Photo loaned by H. H. Bunds.