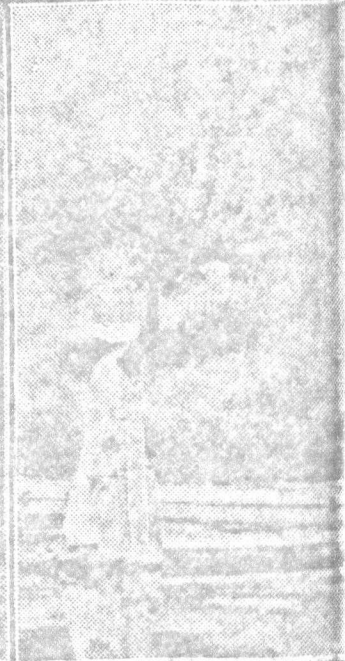


Third Section

San Jose Mercury

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, SUNDAY

GHOST TOWNS OF THE SA



TEVIS ESTATE IN OLD DAYS KNOWN AS 'FISH FARM'

Famous Showplace First De-
veloped By Capt. Knowles
Of Vigilantes Fame.

CHAPTER XIX

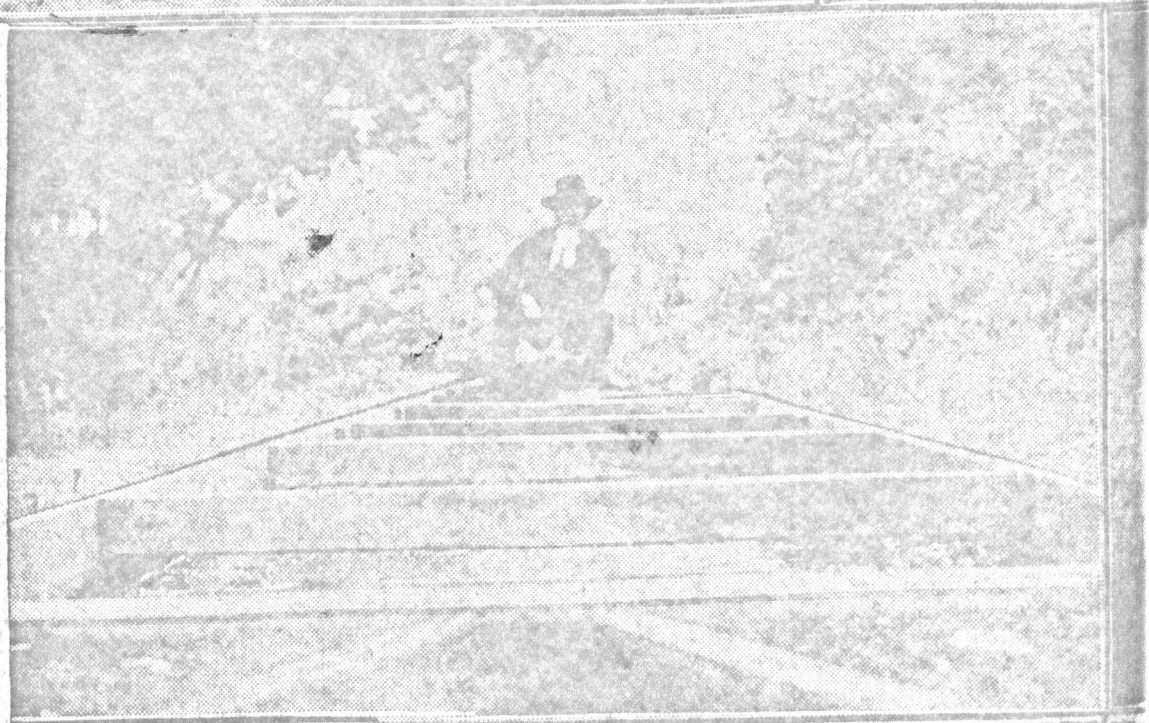
ALMA AND ALMADALE

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By JOHN V. YOUNG

Scarcely deserving the name "ghost town" because of the present-day activity centered about it, Alma boasts among its proudest possessions the wide expanse of the Tevis estate, formerly owned by the late James L. Flood and now the property of the Jesuit order.

To the old-timers of the region the place was known as the "Knowles ranch," and earlier still as



His daughter, Miss Francis M. Knowles, who died early this year, inherited most of his vast estate, but lost her fortune in Goldfield, Nev., when the mining boom collapsed.

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 15, 1934.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS



FORTUNE LAVISHED BY JAS. L. FLOOD ON ALMA RETREAT

Son Of Bonanza King Creates
Magnificent Establishment
From Knowles' Ranch.

left for California in 1849 to join the gold rush in which he was fabulously successful.

With James G. Fair, John W. Mackay and William S. O'Brien, Flood became one of the "big four" of mining history who opened the great Comstock lode, and later discovered the famous Consolidated Virginia, at one time worth more than \$160,000,000. Flood died in Germany in 1899.

This was the fortune which fell into the lap of James L. Flood and his sister, Cora Jane. The son died in 1926, leaving an estate valued at \$18,500,000, still a goodly amount for most.

TEVIS ACQUIRES PROPERTY.
Early in 1906 the estate passed into the hands of Dr. Harry L.

tion in Los Gatos and in maintaining an easy balance of floating coin

"The precise scope of Flood's plans is not known, but the broad scheme of improvement suggests that he proposes to make Alma Dale second to no suburban residence in the country. He spends several days

the "fish ranch," the latter designation probably arising from the excellent trout to be found in its streams and natural ponds.

Sweeping up from Los Gatos creek to the crest of Castle Rock ridge back of the town, in a well-watered, beautifully timbered swale, the place was well settled long before it became any of the names more recently applied.

KNOWLES OF VIGILANTES FAME.

First to appreciate its possibilities as an extensive estate, however, was Captain Stillman H. Knowles, the famous Captain Harry Knowles of San Francisco Vigilantes fame in 1856, and a millionaire mining associate of James Clair Flood, the Bonanza King.

Knowles made his stake in Oregon, however, at the famous old E. & E. mine at Baker City. He returned to California, bought up 49 acres at Alma from Wilbur Wilcox, acquired water rights from Ben Rankin and others, and prepared to reproduce here his ideal, a reminiscence carried from boyhood of his grandfather's home in New England.

He erected a large and picturesque home, and clearing away a number of tule ponds in his "front yard," established ten trout lakes, in which he propagated splendid rainbow trout with the intention of building up a commercial fish farm.

The idea was not new—the region was noted for its fish, and others had previously thought of commercial trout raising without doing much about it, although Ben Rankin a decade before had attempted propagation of German carp, then a sporting game fish, on top of the ridge.

SELLS OUT TO FLOOD.

But the plan didn't go over so well, for some reason or another, and Captain Knowles finally gave it up and sold out to James L. Flood, son of the bonanza king, in 1894. Knowles died three years later, leaving behind him many recollections of his vigorous activity and anecdotes of his career.

One of Captain Harry's chief delights was in road racing with his apparently ancient and decrepit nag, "Old Bill," a large white horse on whose hipbones a straw hat could be hung with ease.

With Bill hitched to a cart, Knowles ambled leisurely down the road until some gay blade in a shining new dogcart, out with his best gal, attempted to pass in a swirl of dust. Then Captain Harry would apply the whip, "Old Bill" would unlumber his ungainly joints and the gay young blade with soon be lost behind, wondering if his horse had been hitched to a tree.

Such is one of the many stories told of Captain Harry and "Old Bill"—mountain legends now more indicative of the spirit of the man than of the veracity of the accounts in their present form.

HOST TO NOTABLES.

A wide circle of acquaintances flocked to the ranch during the brief stay of Captain Knowles, including many famous characters in San Francisco history.

She was an inveterate grayhound racer and was known as one of the organizers of the sport in California.

In a blaze of glory which accompanied his lavish expenditures, James L. Flood arrived on the scene as Knowles departed, buying up large blocks of land from the little ranches all around, acquiring title to some of the larger holdings of Louis Hebard, the San Jose Water company, the Minnis family, the Rundells, John O'Day, the Sheffers and others until his holdings ran into the hundreds of acres.

From a contemporary account may be obtained an excellent picture of the estate as it then appeared, when Flood began pouring into the place the benefits of his millions in an apparent effort to reproduce at Alma a "wee bit o' heaven."

"PARADISE AND PERFECT REST."

(From San Francisco Chronicle, November 3, 1895.)

"James L. Flood is transforming a bit of the Santa Cruz mountains into a paradise for his wife and a perfect rest place for himself.

"In July of 1894 Mr. Flood, to gratify his wife, bought Alma Dale, a pretty place of 50 acres. S. H. Knowles had owned it seven years, and had done much to make it attractive. The Dale included the most commanding points of observation in a big pocket of the mountains along the South Pacific coast railway north from Alma station. Knowles had built a roomy house and a barn for 15 horses, besides planting a choice vineyard and an orchard, in which was everything from olives to apples.

"A strong mountain brook traversed the tract, and at every available site a dam was built and a pond created—nine ponds in all—and into each a good supply of rainbow trout was turned.

"For views, salubrity, convenience of access and possibilities in the way of development, Alma Dale seemed desirable to the Floods. Every day since they took possession has been marked by some advance in beauty or substantial addition in the way of buildings or permanent improvements.

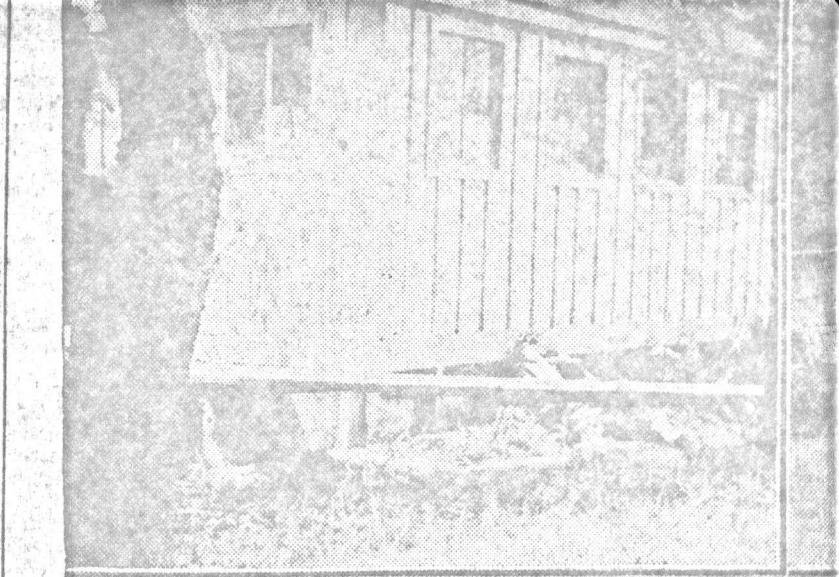
BUYS 800 ACRES.

"When Mr. Flood began his work he found the tract originally purchased to be too small, and he at once set about adding to it, until at present he owns more than 800 acres, including the whole watershed of the Alma brook, as well as a number of springs.

"A more than ample supply of pure water is insured for all time, and is carried by gravitation to the grounds near the residence.

"The Knowles residence has been reconstructed into a handsome villa of 40 rooms, with broad verandas and every luxurious fitting that San Francisco furnishers and decorators could provide.

"The house stands on a shoulder of the mountain two miles above Alma, a site from which a fair sweep of many miles of forest, canyon river, rock and purple deer brush can be enjoyed in all the varying lights. The Los Gatos river winds



Much attention has been drawn of late to the recently acquired estate near Alma, where extensive remodeling and improvement of the church, or even Dr. Tevis, gained possession of the land it was deeded to man Knowles, San Francisco Vigilantes captain of 1856, who came from the ranch as it was in Knowles' time.

Upper left is the first residence built by Knowles; upper center Knowles family playing croquet.

Left center is Stillman Knowles himself, looking over one of his lower floors of the large home built by Knowles. Below are a fish

along its tortuous rock bed below Alma Dale. Cavanaugh brook tumbles down the mountain across Los Gatos canyon. The stillness is at intervals broken only by the train whistle from far below. As for all the near points of beauty, the lands are part of the Flood barony.

"In revamping the place, Mr. Flood's attention was first given to modernizing the stables. All the unemployed carpenters about Los Gatos were employed, together with gardeners and laborers—a merry force of 20 men, who were carried to and from their work in a four-in-hand each day.

\$15,000 STABLE.

"In the place of the big, old-fashioned barn that stood for Mr. Knowles' idea of equine comfort, there is now a structure that cost \$15,000 and in which every appointment is superb. Flooring, box stalls and all the finish of the stables are polished in native wood. There are brasses in profusion, and elegant glass, rooms for harness, whips, robes and the dozen or more vehicles already in use. Water piped under high pressure is everywhere about the stables, and throughout are labor-saving devices which enable a small force of grooms to care for the 25 animals now in use.

"Beside a stud of saddle horses, Mr. Flood has teams for carriage use, others for the road wagons and carts in which mountain driving is most commonly done. Then there are heavy draft horses for the work of the place; all in their kind superior and kept in perfect condition.

"Mr. Flood's notions of comfort are altogether abreast of the most

advanced. Besides the rich villa, elegant as any city house, he has built in cozy spots about his grounds, little rustic pavilions in which to lounge, with hammocks, divans and other invitations to repose.

"GROWLERY."

"In a bit of rough, rocky canyon, a rifle-shot from the residence, a "growlery" has been placed, to which the gentlemen who chance to be guests may go for billiards, bowls, or merely "growl," smoke and taste the quaint brews of mint and other essences which the host has the reputation of concocting in surpassing excellence.

"The soil of the Flood preserve is rich and warm and will produce in perfection all the fruits and nuts which can be grown in the most favored parts of California. Flowers grow riotously, and beside the finer sorts the tract flourishes with blooms of the kindred colors and shades, which make an open mountain slope in the spring a study in chromatics.

"But to the owner, the glory of his new home is in its rare offerings in the way of sport. At his door is a lake, seven acres in area, fringed with willows and azaleas. It is as placid as a mountain sky, except when a grasshopper or a midge is blown into the pool. Then a dozen busy trout break the calm in a struggle for the morsel. The upper lake is like the several others on the preserve, in being full of eager fish ready at any moment for a bout with a fly-rod, and if need be, to grace the table of a hungry angler.

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"But in the Dale. sort is both



acquired property of the Jesuit order and the Sacred Heart novitiate of the old Tevis ranch is under way. But long before the was developed into a magnificent estate by Captain Harry Still, who came to the mountain in 1886. All of the above scenes are er center is the pond in front of the main house; upper right is the one of his trout runs; right center is a side view of the second and are a fish hatchery and trout pond built by Knowles.

"In a corner where a cool spring bursts from a rock hillside into the middle pond a fish hatchery has been built of such capacity to make the production of a half million trout a season possible, a number far beyond the needs of Mr. Flood or any number of fishermen likely to be offered the privilege of the place.

VARIETY OF GAME FISH.

"The former owner of the Dale was an enthusiast as to trout and stocked the waters with the rainbow fish common to all California streams. There are now to be native trout in one lake, eastern trout in another, bass in a third and such additional game fish as seem likely to thrive.

"The conditions under which the ponds are supplied are most favorable. Flood owns the brooks from their sources and can prevent fouling of the fountain heads or poaching. The water comes from the cool depths of the canyons at the best temperature for the fish, and brings with it a considerable supply of natural food for the fish.

"It is trouting idealized to stand in the early morning or in the twilight by one of the Flood ponds and flip small fly-hooks over the broad lakes. A strike is certain, and the fish is sure to be a big, strong fighting fellow, to land which will test alike the skill and the nerve of the angler.

QUAIL IN ABUNDANCE.

"But trout form only one feature in the sporting ensemble of Alma Dale. Quail shooting of the finest sort is to be had on the preserve, both birds of the valley sort and

for the big piping fellows of the mountain variety. Such preservation as Flood proposes to enforce with the means adopted for the feeding and increase of his stand of quail will in two or three seasons give him an unlimited supply.

"He is to introduce pheasants and brown quail, there being much land just suited to those birds. Besides the quail and the trout, the Flood tract is fairly stocked with deer, which will rapidly increase under proper protection.

"Plenty of browse covers parts of the preserve, and the deer are to be allowed to enter the fields unmolested, a practice which will attract them from all the surrounding open country. Three years of quiet freedom from molestation on the Flood preserve will so crown that demesne with good deer as to make it possible to enjoy the finest of still hunting and to have good venison at will without affecting the supply.

"The Bear Creek county road passes the Flood mansion, but in common with the roads of the locality, is rough and dusty. To avoid both discomforts Flood is building a private carriageway from his home over his own property all the way, winding down the canyon to Alma station.

\$250,000 EXPENDED.

"A low estimate of the expenditures involved in the purchase and establishment of the place is \$250,000. Mrs. Flood gave employment to the mechanics of the neighborhood by preference, and the weekly payment of wages to them during the 15 months of their labor having gone far toward preventing priva-

plans is not known, but the broad scheme of improvement suggests that he proposes to make Alma Dale second to no suburban residence in the country. He spends several days of each week at the place with increasing interest, and is willing to increase his landed possessions 3, 1901. Note the curious misspelling of "Alma Dale" to "Alma there as suitable offers are made."

SEVEN YEARS LATER.

Seven years later another writer penned the following picture: (From San Francisco Chronicle, September Vale.)

"Alma Vale," James L. Flood's beautiful country home in the highlands above Alma, is one of the most extensive and picturesque estates acquired by California millionaires and promises to be one of the most important in point of improvement and cultivation. It is a veritable mountain park, comprising 800 acres of lovely dells and vales, pasture land and orchard, noble forests, fertile fields, splendid canyons and rugged heights, pleasant meadows and dancing mountain streams, a great tract which is not only fitted for a rich game preserve but is capable of immeasurable development in the way of culture of semi-tropical growths and products, as well as the staple fruits for which the state of California is celebrated.

"Alma Vale" lies adjoining and just above the station of Alma, which is along the line of the narrow-gauge railway within the gateway of the Santa Cruz mountains three miles above Los Gatos. The land ranges from 800 to 2000 feet in altitude, extending to the summit of the range and dipping over the crest, and comprises a number of pretty little fruit farms purchased from their owners, whose deserted cottages scattered here and there on slightly knolls or in protected glens present a pathetic sight. None of the original orchard are neglected, however, but are being subjected to scientific culture in the hands of skillful agriculturists. The stables and poultry houses are on an elaborate plan and scale, the grounds immediately surrounding the house are exquisitely kept and large artificial ponds and splashing fountains add to the attractions.

FORBIDDING ASPECT.

"The house, which presents a somewhat staring white front to the front entrance gates, where a forbidding sign is mounted, warning trespassers, viewed from another point across a wooded gulch and against a background of purpling hills makes a pretty picture, for it is then seen to be a long and rambling structure, garlanded with green and set in a bed of bloom."

Incidentally, although James L. Flood, owner of the estate, has been frequently referred to in the press and elsewhere as "the bonanza king," it was his father, James Clair Flood, who established the family fortune and who is entitled to the royal appellation.

James Clair Flood, a San Francisco saloonkeeper, born on Staten Island, New York, in 1826, received only a limited education before he

in 1920, leaving an estate valued at \$18,500,000, still a goodly amount for most.

TEVIS ACQUIRES PROPERTY.

Early in 1906 the estate passed into the hands of Dr. Harry L. Tevis, retired San Francisco physician, who resided there the last 25 years of his life, adding to the land holdings until they totaled 2500 acres, and erecting new buildings.

A permanent staff of from 25 to 100 servants and ranch hands aided him in the maintenance of a huge experimental farm, renowned dahlia and rose gardens, and extensive stables where he made a study of horse breeding. Soon after he purchased the estate it was brought into the public eye when Dr. Tevis opened his doors to an entire grand opera company, refugees from the great fire in San Francisco.

Dr. Tevis died July 19, 1931, in San Francisco, leaving an estate valued at \$5,818,700, one of the largest ever probated in the Santa Clara county courts, which he distributed by will among his few surviving relatives, friends, employes and charitable institutions. His ashes were scattered over the highest point on the ranch, his favorite spot, in accordance with a dying request.

His palatial home, gardens and equipment were estimated to have cost in the neighborhood of three-quarters of a million dollars, including a magnificent library of 7000 volumes, extensive acreage in rare flowers in his gardens, and a private water system ample for a small city.

SOLD TO NOVITIATE.

Last April a major portion of the property including the residence and grounds, was sold to the Sacred Heart Novitiate of Los Gatos and the Jesuit order, to be transformed into a theological college with vineyards to be planted on a large part of the land.

At present 30 acres have been cleared for grapes, and an additional 30 acres will be similarly treated this fall. The main residence has been converted into an administration building for the novitiate, while a large 52-room dormitory is being erected near by in the Swiss chalet architecture of the residence. Dr. Tevis' library is being remodeled for a chapel.

Although famous up and down the state for its horses, the estate had been forgotten by the public at large until the opening of the Constance May Gavin case in 1926.

Well remembered by Alma residents, some of whom appeared as witnesses in the case at Redwood City from time to time, Mrs. Gavin played as a girl at Alma Dale, where she was commonly believed to be an adopted daughter of James L. Flood, whom she claimed was her father. Settlement of her suit against the estate for \$1,200,000 out of court was greeted with interest at Alma.

NEXT WEEK: The world's largest madrone tree, a patriarch when the town of Alma started, now a gigantic spreading tree that covers a spread of 96 feet, and measures 32 feet, 10 inches at the narrowest point on its massive trunk, is described among other historical spots of interest about Alma.