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CALAVERAS RANCH FAMILIES

One of the best known ranch families in the county undoubtedly is that of the descendants of Joseph Whittle. The Whittles have been actively working their lands and grazing leases for three generations since the first Joe Whittle came to Calaveras. Ida Whittle (Vergara) Pierce wrote this interesting family chronicle some ten years ago, and presented it before the Society. Today Ida and her brother Clenn are the only survivors of their generation of the Joe and Lilly May Whittle family. There are a number of other descendants of the first Calaveras Whittle, however, here and elsewhere in California. We are pleased to print the Whittle story in this issue, illustrated with some of the family pictures.

Our second article concerns another Calaveras pioneer, Frederick William Mentz, and the Mentz Ranch on Love Creek, now owned by the Elsworth Alford. Grace Alford gave the Mentz history for us at our March meeting in 1978, and Dale Clifton, a Mentz descendant, kindly loaned some of the family photographs.

THE WHITTLE FAMILY

by Ida Vergara Pierce

In the year 1849, when the call of California gold was echoing around the world, a number of people from Australia answered this call. One of these was Joseph Whittle of Sydney, who, with his family, emigrated to California. They came to San Francisco and on to the Sonora area. At that time there was much placer mining for gold along the Stanislaus River, so the Whittles moved down onto the river below the present town of Melones.

A son, Joseph (Jr.), had been born in Sydney in 1843. He grew up along the Stanislaus, where he met and married an Irish girl, Mary Ann Quigg, in 1868. The Quigg family were homesteaders on the Calaveras side of the river near the little settlement of Bostwick's Bar. They had emigrated from County Cork, Ireland, to California by way of New York. Mary Ann had two brothers, Henry and Mike, and a sister Kate. The latter worked later on for the Fair family of Virginia City fame, in New York.

Early in 1896, young Joe Whittle struck a rich pocket of gold near Albany Flat. He used part of this to purchase Isaac Nantz's 160-acre homestead which Nantz had proved up about six years earlier. Joe paid him \$300 plus \$6.00 in back taxes and \$10.63 in court costs. Some stock was also included in the purchase.

This parcel, about three miles south of Angels Camp, is now known as the "Old Whittle Ranch". At that time, the adjoining ground was owned by the Brunner family. The ranch has both gentle slopes and some rocky hillsides. Below where the first home was built was a spring and small reservoir for stock-watering and garden use. The Whittles raised stock mostly for their own use. Joe also bred and trained a few head of trotting horses, much in demand at that time for buggy horses.



THE WHITTLE SURREY

**Don Whittle, Bill Reyes,
Harry Whittle and Mr.
Hodges are off to town.**



JOSEPH AND LILLY MAY WHITTLE

They were married in 1897 at Lemoore.

Joe and Mary Ann were the parents of six living children, Henry, Elizabeth, Kate, Joseph, Mary Ellen, and Addie. In addition, triplets were born, but died soon after birth. All the children were born at the ranch.

While the children were still small, Joe worked for the county on the roads and also as a road and poll tax collector. The story handed down affirms that he was conscientious in his job, such as the time he stopped a friend who refused to pay toll. Joe walked up to the wagon, unhitched one horse and led him away before the astonished eyes of the owner, saying, "I'll keep the horse until you pay toll." The friend, bowing to the lessor of two evils, paid the toll.

It was on October 7, 1886, that Joe Whittle, known for his exceptional strength, suddenly became ill and collapsed. He died a few hours later from internal injuries caused by lifting a wagon stuck in the mud. This left his widow, Mary Ann, to raise the six children alone.

One way Mrs. Whittle brought money into the household was by walking the three miles into Angles Camp to do housework. She was also called out around the community to act as midwife and to care for the mother and

babies. The children helped at home by doing the gardening and tending the livestock.

When there was need for a new house, Mary Ann, with the help of her good neighbors, laid the floor. Then she gave a public dance to finance the purchase of the lumber for the rest of the house. In no time the house was finished.

Then tragedy struck the family. The children all came down with typhoid fever, and were all very ill. Mary Ann was beside herself. Not one of the neighbors would come near her. They were afraid of this dread disease. The children were too ill for her to leave and go for supplies. A family of Indians, named Dixie, lived nearby. Their son, Joe, who had had typhoid fever earlier, came and stayed to help her nurse the children back to health. Her son Joe was always grateful to Joe Dixie saying, "If it hadn't been for his help, I never would have survived." The Indian boy had cared for him day and night.

Henry (Harry), the eldest son, became a carpenter and worked in and around Angels Camp all of his life. He married Lizzie Albers, but this marriage lasted only a short time.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Whittle married Frank Reister and raised a family of six children, Mary, Frank, Ann, Kate, Charles (Bud), and Louella. They purchased a farm west of Altaville on the Copperopolis road, where they ran a dairy for many years.

Kate married William Carpenter. Of this marriage there were four children, Mary, Jack Lewellyn, and Addie. The Carpenters spent some years in Angels Camp and then moved to the San Jose area.

Mary Ellen (Mamie) married Daniel O'Toole of Plymouth. They lived in Amador County for awhile, and then moved back to Angels Camp. There were five children, Lanthe, Daniel, Lillian, Clarence, and Ella. The O'Tooles later moved to Stockton where they lived for a number of years. After Daniel's death, Mamie moved back to Angels Camp.

Addie married William Beyer of Angels Camp. There were no children of this marriage. The Beyers moved to Stockton and lived their remaining lives there.

Joseph Whittle (the third) married Lilly May Battenfield of Lemoore, in Kings County. Lilly May had made a visit to Angels Camp with her cousin, and there met Joseph. He went down to Lemoore where they were married on December 21, 1897, by Reverend Reeve Wright, an uncle of the bride. They came to Angels Camp to the ranch where they built a house. There they spent all their married lives. There were seven children born to Joe and Lilly May. Earl Warren, their first child, passed away at the age of two years. John Donald, Harry Wesley, Joseph Loren, Winter Mills, Ida May, and Glenn Warren were the other children.

Joe Whittle (the third) was the only one of the children of Joe and Mary Ann who took an interest in ranching. He worked part time in the mines, but his first love was



**JOSEPH WHITTLE
RANCH**

This was the old ranch
where Joe and Mary Ann
lived.

Grandpa and Grandma
(John and Pauline Batten-
field) come to visit, and
pose with Harry, Ida,
Don, Joe, and Winter.





OLD WHITTLE RANCH

Joe and Lilly May on the porch.

the ranch. In 1908 he had accumulated more stock and took twenty pairs of cows and calves to the mountains in the Beaver Creek area along with the Herman Cordes herd. Somehow during that summer his twenty head, the only ones out of all the cattle in that area, got into poison. Joe lost all but a couple of cows and calves. After that blow, the Whittles couldn't go to the mountains for a few years until they had built up their herd again.

In 1913, Joe and Lilly May homesteaded 160 acres on Bear Mountain near Fowler Peak. Later they purchased another 160 acres of land from the Peri Estate, nearby, which bordered on the Bacialupi Ranch.

In 1925, Joe and his oldest son, Don, bought cattle from Herman Cordes and took over his mountain range permit. It was not until this time that the "J.W." brand was officially registered with the state to comply with Forest Service regulations. In 1924 they had rented the Gerber Ranch which was located on the Stanislaus River and Angels Creek, not far from the home ranch. Don Whittle still rents this ranch.

Soon after this, Joe and Don got a permit for the Beaver Creek mountain range. Don dropped this range in 1962 to take over the Pacific Valley range. He had a permit for 468 pairs and ran them on 18,000 acres rented from the Pickering Lumber Company and approximately 20,000 acres rented from the Forest Service. During a period of some forty years, the rent on this mountain range had raised from four to eight cents an acre!

In 1940 an opportunity came to buy the Bacigalupi Ranch on Angels Creek. Don, still retaining his one-half interest in the "J.W." cattle, and his younger brother Clenn bought the 1960-acre ranch for approximately

\$12.50 an acre. Soon after, in 1943, they purchased 75 pairs from an Adams estate in Tuolumne County and took over the Adams mountain permit in that county for 150 pairs. This range encompassed what is now the Dodge Ridge Ski area. Clenn continued on this range until 1961. Since the deaths of Joe and Lilly May Whittle in 1957 and 1960, Don Whittle has run his cattle with the "J.W." brand, and Clenn runs his with the "Quarter-circle W" brand.

In 1953, Don Whittle's son, Don R., who had been raising a few cattle since before his high school days, was discharged from the Air Force and started ranching with his father. His brand is "Y Quarter-circle", which his father and Clenn had registered for him in 1950. In 1958, Don (Sr.) was offered a chance to purchase a one-fourth interest in the 3700-acre Pyle Ranch near Copperopolis for approximately \$40 an acre. He and Don R. bought this interest and have since rented the rest of the ranch.

The history of the "J.W." brand, first used in 1869, had a slow start for the Whittles, like so many others that came to this area in the mid-1880's, were primarily interested in gold mining. It was not until the gold fever had run its course that the Whittles turned to ranching for a living. Of the children of Joe and Mary Ann Whittle, only young Joe took up cattle-raising. Of his children, only Don and Clenn followed ranching. In the younger generation there are two Whittles raising cattle, Don R. and Clenn's son Loren (who also works for P.G. & E.). The land the Whittles acquired over the years has remained in the family. Don now owns all but a 1/24th interest in the "Old Whittle Ranch". The rest is divided among other rela-

tives. Lilly May deeded the homestead on Bear Mountain to her grandson, Don R. for his help with the cattle. The Peri property was deeded to Don and Clenn.

Of the children of Joe and Lilly May, Herry married Opal Ellis of Bakersfield. He left at the age of eighteen to work in the oil fields and has followed the drilling of oil wells. His work has taken him to Iraq, to Africa, and around the world. He is presently living in Sacramento. There is one daughter of this marriage, Elizabeth Jane.

Joe Warren was married to Margaret Volf of Angels Camp. Joe passed away in 1934, leaving two children, Alberta and Joe.

Ida May married Dolph J. Vergara of Sonora. They are the parents of Glenn Allen and Dolores Marilyn. They make their home in Angels Camp.

Winter married Myrtle Dillon from the Lemoore area. They had two children, Gene and Irene. This marriage ended in divorce. Winter later married Gladys Hendrickson of Murphys. Winter has had a butcher business and at present runs the trailer park in Altaville.

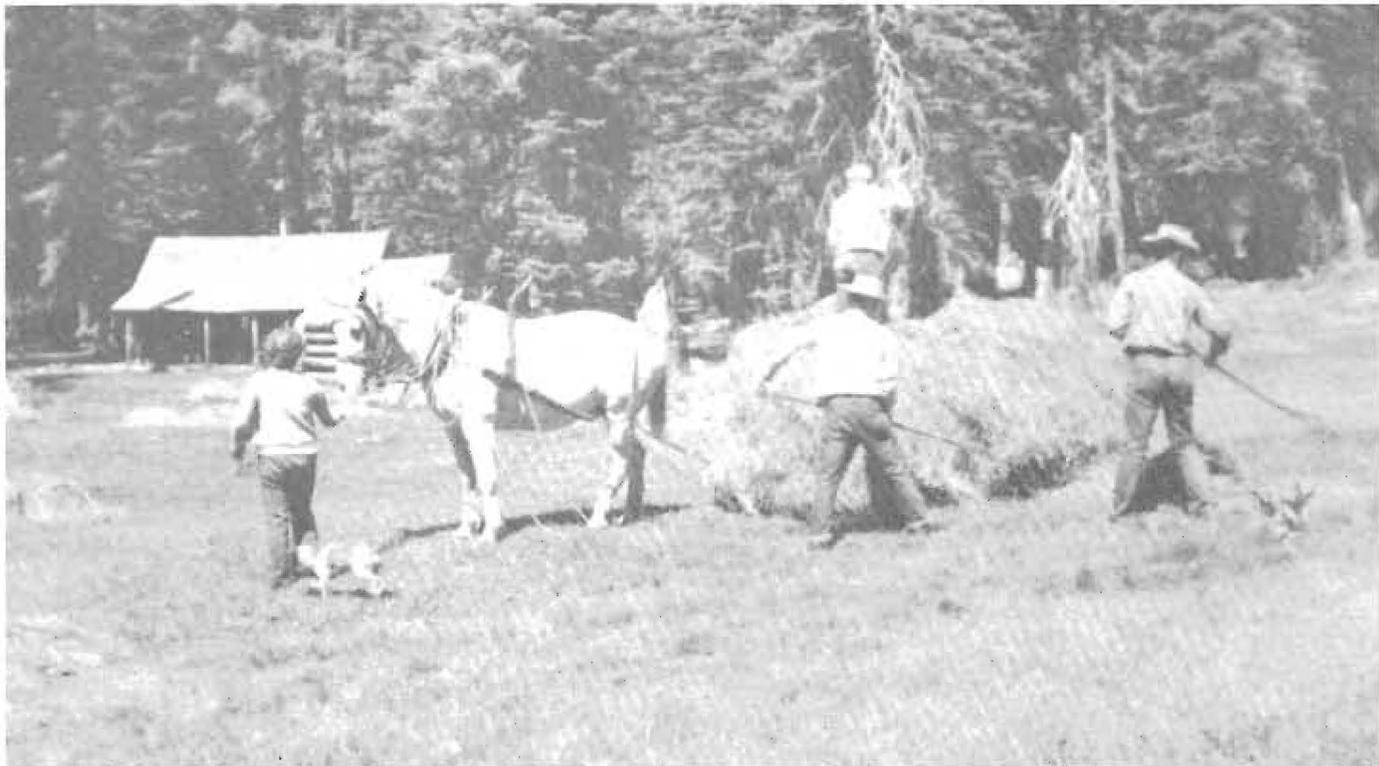
Clenn married Angelina Antone of Jamestown, and they have two children, Loren and Clenn, Jr. They are ranching at present in the Angels Area.

Donald married Marie Vassasa of Oakland. They have

two sons, Raymond and Donald Rex.

This brings the history of the Whittles up to the present day. It has been said that never a person who came to the Whittle Ranch over the years, not matter what the color or creed, was ever turned away. The hand of hospitality was always extended and an invitation for food and lodging, whatever it might be, was given whole-heartedly. This was the way of life among most of the pioneers of this area. Many a weary person stopped at the ranch — Chinese with basket-laden shoulders, Indians, cowboys, miners, and young boys without homes. The welcome sign was always there with the extended hand and family love.

Note: In the decade that has elapsed since Ida Whittle Vergara wrote the above, she has remarried. Her brothers Harry, Winter, and Don have passed away. She and Clenn have both retired in Angels Camp. Don R. and Loren are the ranchers of their generation, although Loren still works for P.G. & E. The Gerber Ranch, which Don used to rent, is now partly under the waters of New Melones. Tragically, Clenn Whittle, Jr., a jet pilot in the Air Force, lost his life when only 24 years old, in a plane crash.



HAYMAKING

Don Whittle, Donnie Ward, Tudy Anderson, and Marilyn Vergara Fiscus Haying at Upper Rattlesnake Cow Camp.