## The John Thompson Building

The building on the corner of Main and Sheep Ranch Road was erected by John Thompson in 1860. In 1852 the property was owned by Robert N. Benson and James Pierce, and was called the "*Cottage House.*" The Cottage House was sold to John F. Faxon in 1854[1] to satisfy a judgement against Benson and Pierce. Faxon kept it until the end of 1858, when he sold the building to Peter L. Traver[2] who owned a store on the lot to the east. The land where the Cottage House stood fronted on Main Street forty-seven foot, and had the barber shop of George Leonhard on the west. After the Cottage House was destroyed in the 1859 fire, Traver sold the lot to John and Joanna Thompson.[3] Thompson, who was a stone mason, erected a stone store on the lot, building it against the west wall of the Traver Store.

John Thompson was married to Joanna L. Brown and they lived in Murphys Camp by at least 1856 when Thompson built a stone store building for P.L Traver. The Thompsons purchased a home on Main Street from P. L Traver in 1859.



**The Thompson Building on the left, as it looked in 2007**

Thompson does not appear to have run a business in this building himself, but rented it to different people. In the 1859 property tax records Bertha Meyer, an aunt of the well-known physicist Albert Michelson, was taxed for merchandise kept in the building owned by John Thompson and she was running a clothing and boot store in the building in 1862.[4] Bertha's husband Oser Meyer and his son in law and partner Herman Freidlander ran a retail store there in 1863 and 1864.

The store building was deeded to John Dignan in 1862 and the property was taken over by Dr. William Jones in 1863[5], with the tax bills going to Dr. Jones until 1869. In 1869 Dr. Jones and his wife deeded the property to Joanna Thompson for a price of five dollars. Possibly the deed to Dignan was a mortgage that was later taken over by Dr. Jones, who frequently lent money on real estate.

John and Joanna Thompson had four children. Their first child, Mary, died on February 14, 1860 at the age of seven months. The Thompsons named another child Mary after the baby that had died, and she married Charles DuRose. Their daughter Bessie married local butcher Adam Keilbar. The Thompsons also had a son, James Newton Thompson.

The last record of John Thompson living with his family in Murphys Camp was the 1870 census. The Calaveras Great Registry of Voters shows his name as "*removed*" on August 11, 1873, and it also shows that he previously registered to vote in Contra Costa County in 1871. Voter records show John Thompson, who was born in New York and worked as a brick mason, registering to vote in Contra Costa County on September 1, 1873 and he continued to be in that county registry through at least 1886. On November 12, 1887, John Thompson died in Contra Costa County and was buried in the Martinez, Contra Costa County Alhambra Cemetery in a pauper's plot. Possibly John and Joanna separated rather than divorcing, since they were both of the Catholic faith. Joanna Thompson and her children remained in Murphys and Joanna was the person named on property tax bills after 1867.

Joanna Thompson continued to rent out the stone building to different people, including a Mr. Abraham who occupied it as a dry goods store. In 1887 Joanna Thompson deeded the store building to her son James Newton Thompson, "*In consideration of love and affection*." Joanna Thompson died in 1898 and her son James Newton Thompson died at the age of forty in 1901 after an illness of several months They are both buried in St. Patrick's Catholic Cemetery. Joanna's daughters, Bessie Thompson Keilbar and Mary Thompson DuRose, are buried in Buena Vista Cemetery with their families.

The Clampers installed a "*Wall of Comparative Ovations*" on the west wall of the Thompson Building.





End Notes- Block 10, Lot 2

1. Calaveras County Deed Book A, page 631. Gilman to Faxon
2. Calaveras County Deed Book D, page 100. Faxon to Traver
3. Calaveras County Deed Book E, page 194. Traver to Thompson
4. Calaveras County Deed Book H, Page 96. Thompson to Dignan
5. Calaveras County Deed Book I, page 135. Dignan to Jones
6. Calaveras County Deed Book R, page 327. Jones to Thompson
7. Calaveras County Deed Book 15, page 401. Joanna Thompson to James N. Thompson