

# HUMBOLDT COUNTY

1905

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## SOUTHERN HUMBOLDT COUNTY

monument to his memory, anyway.

**STONE HOUSE VALLEY** - We crossed a low ridge and were in the Stone House Valley. The scene presented is not the most beautiful in the world, for it is simply a wide expanse of sage and greasewood, with quite a good deal of good grass for stock. Hon. Thomas Nelson, whose home ranch is at Stone House, owns 160 acres of land, a few acres of which are in alfalfa. Mr. Nelson uses the place as a sort of way station in carrying on his big sheep business. At this season there is nothing there but a cabin and a little green spot. The Stone House Valley is about thirty miles in length. Mr. Nelson owns all the water in the valley and in that way controls the outside range. Leaving Stone House Valley to the northeast we crossed another divide. It is not the "divide" that separates this world from the next, but seems the next thing to it. Coming on top of the hill and looking east on Buffalo Valley one sees a large expanse of nothing but sagebrush with one exception, and that, a little ranch owned by Mrs. Smelser. As we drove to her door we looked about for a flock of chickens, a cow or two or something that would prove a family lived in the little house. A dog and a little child was all we saw. Knocking at the door quite an aged lady answered the summons. After the call at the Smelser place we took our departure with a feeling of sympathy for the poor woman whose lot has been cast in this barren part of Buffalo Valley.

**ALEX EASON** - Mrs. Smelser's son-in-law, J. A. Gomes of Golconda, and Henry Smelser have quite a promising galena mine in Cherry Creek Canyon six miles south of the Smelser Ranch. They have just made a shipment of a ton of the ore to the Selby Smelting Works at San Francisco and if the returns are as good as they hope for, much work will be done on the property. Mr. Eason has also made a recent discovery of a gold prospect four miles northeast that shows the color in pan, and Mr. Eason is in hopes he will soon have the world where he wants it. He may and may not be disappointed, but if disappointment falls to his lot he will not be the first prospector who has found it so in the past and others probably will in the future, so long as time shall last. About 3 o'clock our troubles began afresh for we pulled out of Smelser's yard and took a wrong road. After driving through the sagebrush for thirty or forty minutes we "got wise" and took the "lower road" for the Jacob Hoffman place, situated at the mouth of Perry Canyon, fourteen miles south of the Smelser place. The snow began falling about 4:30 and we faced the worst storm I have ever been out in. The last four miles was up hill and the horses' feet became balled up with the "Beautiful" and went skating about like hogs on ice. Mr. Guthrie lost his usual good nature and it was my lot to "pour a little oil" into the snow and talk my best to keep him down anywhere within the range of good fellowship. After doing a little talking "straight from the shoulder" and keeping the snowbank "shoveled" from our laps, we made Mr. Hoffman's barn a little after six. It was storming so hard that even the dog did not see us. Mr. Guthrie reined up and I asked him if he was going to unhitch before going to the house. "You can bet your life I am and going to get out of this as soon as I can." He piled out of the buggy and as soon as I could pull my game leg together I followed him, but found after getting on my feet that I was very cold. We put the horses in the stable and made our way to the house.

**THE HOFFMAN PLACE** - Without being announced we found Mr. Hoffman in the kitchen with Wm. Meager of Battle Mountain and J. G. Miller,

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from the State of Washington. They had made us feel that we owned the ranch, so cordial was his greeting. He soon had a hot supper ready and we sat up to the table and ate and ate. After supper I pulled out my old machine and commenced my write-up of what I have seen today. After getting this far last night I "laid off" and we went to bed. This morning the weather is stormy and cold, but before starting out to face the storm I will finish this letter. Mr. Hoffman owns four ranches and his home place is truly an oasis in a great expanse of the country that makes good range for cattle and sheep. He has a comfortable house, good barns, a few cattle, a few horses, a good wife and a new baby. Mrs. Hoffman is now in Battle Mountain, but Mr. Hoffman will bring her home and the future joy of his household in the person of a sweet little daughter in a few days. At the home ranch Mr. Hoffman has 200 acres under fence, 70 acres of which are seeded to alfalfa. He cuts from 130 to 150 tons of hay and grows everything in the vegetable line known to the temperate zone. Strawberries, currants, gooseberries, grapes, and Mr. Hoffman says babies too, and he will have proof of it here when we come again. He has a fine orchard with 120 fruit trees, 100 of them now in bearing, and from the dish of apples Mr. Hoffman set out last evening the trees bear fine fruit. The place has an abundance of water from Perry Canyon Creek. The supply could be increased tenfold by the expenditure of a little money in the construction of a storage reservoir in the canyon. The reservoir would make it possible for Mr. Hoffman to double his acreage and make as fine a farm as there is in Humboldt County. He does his trading in Battle Mountain. Mr. Hoffman is hardworking and is making a success in life. His little home has all the comforts of a happy household, or at least will contain them after Mrs. Hoffman and the new baby arrive. Six miles down the valley Mr. Hoffman owns 240 acres of pasture land, 160 acres of bottom land that is all in natural grass, and produces quite a goodly yield of hay. Three miles further on he has 640 acres under fence and 300 acres of it pasture and the balance is sagebrush and buffalo brush. He calls it the Buffalo Ranch. West of that at the foot of Mount Tobin that is usually snow-capped the whole year, he has 70 acres in alfalfa and he puts up more hay on that place than he puts up on his home place. The water for irrigating the place runs from Mount Tobin Canyon and is more than he needs for his present acreage.

**A MINING PROSPECT** - One half mile from Mr. Hoffman's home place in Perry Canyon, William Meager has a good copper prospect, carrying gold and silver. The property was formerly owned by Salt Lake people, who failed to do the necessary assessment work and Mr. Meager relocated the prospect and hopes soon to develop a mine of great value. The present showing of the zone of the copper showing is 400 feet in width. From what little development work that has been done Mr. Meager is unable to fully satisfy himself about its value. The belt follows the Tobin Range of mountains through the Summit Range and the Rock Spring Range clear to the foothills of the Humboldt. Mr. Meager is very desirous of interesting capital to develop his property. He has every confidence in his ability to show capitalists that he is not dreaming when he says he has a valuable property, and from talking with him, the *Silver State* man is confident he will be able "to make good" any representation he makes. The property has plenty of water and is easy of access any time in the year. The assays Mr. Meager has had made, run very high in copper and he thinks the ledge carries enough gold and silver to pay for developing. The mine is

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admirably adapted for doing work, being so near the splendid ranch of Jacob Hoffman that supplies may be landed cheaply right on the ground. Mr. Meager is expecting parties to look at the property most any day now and capitalists can make any arrangement with him and on any terms. What he wants more than anything is to see the property developed. Mr. Meager is a most thorough miner and his knowledge of other things makes his opinion valuable. He also has a fine group of mining claims in Galena that he hopes to be able to show the world in a few months. He is independent, not owing any man on earth a dollar.

It is now 10 o'clock and we are about to face the storm for another drive.

*Hoffman Ranch, Wednesday, April 19, 1905.*

Today the *Silver State* publishes another communication from its "County Office" situated in Assessor Guthrie's buggy. The letters have caused much favorable comment and in their entirety will be a valuable history of Humboldt County.

**BUFFALO VALLEY** - We have covered another 31 miles of our journey today and a part of the drive was made this morning in a snowstorm. The rest of the day was cold and cloudy and when the day's drive was over we were cold and a little tired. Twenty miles of the journey was the finish in Buffalo Valley. The drive, like that of yesterday, was an uninviting one. After leaving the Hoffman place at 10 o'clock this morning and for 20 miles the only things seen were sagebrush, rabbit brush, buck brush, common brush, one jack rabbit, a flock of sage hens, nine horses, four horses, three patches of alfalfa, a great number of sheep tracks made last winter (for Buffalo Valley is a great winter range for the wooley tribe) and one coyote.

**ABEL RANCH** - After crossing a low divide, we entered the head of Jersey Valley and for the next ten miles we traveled through Jersey to the ranch of Mr. and Mrs. John F. Abel. The valley is covered with brush underlying which is native grass in abundance, making of it a fine winter range for stock and is largely used by flockmasters as a winter range. Mr. and Mrs. Abel have a ranch at the mouth of Old Town Canyon and it consists of 160 acres and a five-acre mill site. He has about ten acres in alfalfa and in garden truck land. He has a fine orchard and grows all the hardier fruits, besides grapes, peaches, all kinds of berries, etc. He also runs quite a bunch of cattle. He has a flock of thoroughbred game chickens which he takes much pride in and said to the *Silver State* man, "Come and I will show you an Irish gray hen that can lick anything that ever wore feathers." Mr. and Mrs. Abel live 50 miles from a postoffice, Battle Mountain being the nearest office. They get their mail when any one coming their way from Battle Mountain brings it to them. Mrs. Abel says seven weeks often passes without their getting any mail and Mr. Abel added, "Yes, but when it does come we get a gunny sack full." Mrs. Abel says they were invited to a neighbor's 40 miles distant, to take Thanksgiving dinner with them and they did not receive the invitation until the 11th of January. Mr. and Mrs. Abel are very cordial people and make one feel at home as soon as he drives to their door. They live at a point in

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Humboldt County that attracted much attention in the 70's when Jersey was a town of 500 busy men developing.

**THE JERSEY MINE** - which at that time promised to startle the world as a bullion producer. The mine was discovered by a young man riding the range after stock, Trimble by name, in "72 or 73". George Lambertson, an old pioneer in Humboldt and a man well acquainted with the camp's history, and now living near Kennedy, tells the following about the early day history of Jersey, which in "72" promised to be the leading town in the county: The mine is in the eastern part of Humboldt on the western slope of the Fish Creek Mountains. The mine was leased by a company and development work was done, grades made, a smelter put up and a town with many buildings and 500 souls sprang into existence as if by magic. After running the smelter for about a year it blew up and the town went down as quickly as it had gone up. The superintendent, Sevenoaks, came near meeting his Waterloo, for the enraged miners were left unpaid with nine months wages due them. They procured a rope and were going to string Sevenoaks to the rafters of one of the thatched-roof houses that had been erected in the camp. The company tried to do too much with too little money and went to pieces as quickly as a ship will go to pieces on a reef of rocks. After the explosion of the smelter and the spiriting away of the money left in the ruins, the town went down, but not until after the mine had produced three-quarters of a million and a million had been spent. The mine finally fell into the hands of the late J.A. Blossom, who together with John W. Abel, owned it at the time of his death. Mr. Abel has done the assessment work for the past three years with out any help from Mr. Blossom's heirs. Mr. Abel ran a tunnel into the hill for a distance of 266 feet and did it with no help from Mr. Blossom. The business between Mr. Abel and the Blossom heirs has never been adjusted, but probably will be before many months and the old mine may yet prove to be of great value. There is considerable prospect work being done in the Fish Creek Range and the people of Humboldt may not be surprised to hear of a good mine being uncovered any day, for the wealth is here and only awaiting the right stroke of the pick to prove to the world the truth of what the *Silver State* has always contended, that Humboldt will be the scene of great mining activity very soon.

**ANOTHER MINE** - The Blue Lead Mine, situated in Blue Lead Canyon, in the south end of Mount Tobin Range of mountains is an old property to which a United States patent has been issued. For many years it has been left alone, the owners feeling safe with a United States patent in their pocket and knowing that it was theirs whenever they saw fit to claim it. About two years ago one Borland leased it and is now working it and it is said that new discoveries have been recently made. Borland and his partner have just taken a load of provisions to the mine and from indications they are well satisfied to bide their time for their reward.

**MRS. W. T. JENKINS** - Mrs. W. T. Jenkins, the widow of a prominent flockmaster, is a business woman of marked ability. She owns a small ranch in Buffalo Valley and three in Jersey Valley and counts her sheep on a thousand hills, and in at least two valleys. She cuts in Jersey Valley, about 250 tons of hay, but her home ranch is in Lander County, and she only uses her Jersey and Buffalo Valley properties for winter use. Jersey Valley and Antelope Valley, six miles distance from Mr. Abel's ranch, is the winter range for fully 150,000

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sheep. On one of her Jersey places she runs quite a bunch of cattle.

*Jersey, April 19, 1905*

A MIRAGE - Thirty miles more of our journey has been covered today and in at least one respect it has been the most interesting of the three and a half days. I left Mr. Abel's farm in Jersey this morning and struck out across the valley. After traveling a distance from Mr. Abel's place, I cast my eyes southwest towards the Humboldt Salt Marsh, and much to my surprise I saw a sight that I will never forget. Ships under full sail were plainly seen floating before me (and I had not been drinking either.) On the "beach" was a city with high buildings and streets that nature had photographed on the "salt sea" and the "coast line". I could imagine myself crossing the Bay of San Francisco. It was a wonderful sight -- the mirage. It would pay one to travel a thousand miles to witness it. Later in the season, when a hot day comes, the sight would be still more interesting, for the "ships" and "city" would be much better "photographed". I feel myself well repaid for the trip by that wonderful picture alone. Mr. Guthrie tells me that a similar sight may be seen any hot day in July. He says he has seen mule teams and almost everything else pictured on the salt marsh that one can imagine and I am now prepared to believe anything any one tells me about the wonderful mirage. We stopped the team and watched the "moving picture" for several minutes and at last it disappeared; a cloud changed the rays of the sun and the "photograph" was gone. Humboldt Salt Marsh is in Churchill County, just over the Humboldt line.

After feasting our eyes on the beautiful mirage, we continued our way across Jersey Valley and entered Posy Canyon and a ride of twelve miles brought us to a little patch of grass at Posy Springs, where a little house, a shed and a willow-thatched stable hurried my mind on to the next century, for I wondered and wondered what I could see a hundred years hence could I come back and take the same ride. I tried to picture the condition the county would be in in the year 2000. In the present, every spot where there is water has been taken up and shows that some human being has his eye on some spot where something besides horned toads will mature, and I tried to picture how many homes would be built within the next hundred years on land that at this day and age is good for nothing but grazing purposes and some of it is absolutely worthless. As I stood at the bars leading to the little house we were at, I could see nothing; I could hear nothing but the chatter of a woodpecker, and he was talking to himself. W. H. Hillyer, who owns the little place, is at Kennedy with his family. He will go there a little later for the summer.

HON. G. F. TALBOT - Going over a low ridge in the mountain and passing on a few miles down a canyon we came to the ranch of Hon. G. F. Talbot of the State Supreme Court. The place contains quite a tract of bottom land running down a narrow canyon. The place produces about 125 tons of natural grass and alfalfa hay. Frank Wiggins the man in charge was plowing up an acre or more to plant potatoes. Besides Judge Talbot's Golconda ranch, he has possessory claim to a 160 acre tract in Buffalo Valley. Several acres at

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X { the side of the mountain as luxuriantly as if it were cultivated in some prosperous man's lawn in the city. Mr. Riley is assessed for 15,280 acres of land. There are 1,500 acres in native meadow and alfalfa and his outside range comprises the remainder. What range land he owns and Government land he controls by virtue of owning the water makes the Riley ranch and range one of the choice spots in Nevada. The buildings are modern and well kept. His barns, corrals, wagon shed, tool house, blacksmith shop and other out buildings are as neat as can be and convinces me that Mr. Riley has a valuable man in Mr. McReynolds.

Mr. Riley is one of the leading cattle men in Nevada. Cecil Riley, a son of A. W. Riley, is here from Santa Rosa. I say he is here: he is with Mr. McReynolds on the horse round up. He makes the "Double O" ranch his home. I did not ask him, of course, but think he will fall heir someday to one of the most valuable pieces of property within Nevada's confines and is probably here getting his hand in, as it were. He is young and has bright prospects before him and should, and, probably will, improve his opportunities and become one of Nevada's leading men. It may be something of a loss to California but Nevada needs all the young men she can get - that is young men with good leather in them.

Tomorrow we go to Disaster Peak and vicinity to look after sheep; that is, Mr. Guthrie does, and I go along with him. We go on horseback, for it is over too rough a country to go with a buggy. The job of assessing Humboldt County is hard and particular work, and it is a job that I would not take for three times the salary paid, and could not find my way to all the little places we have visited in a month of Sundays. Mr. Guthrie seemingly knows every bridle path in the County. It would take a stranger half a lifetime to know what he already knows, but his job is not a picnic, and if any one thinks it is, let him make one trip with him as I have done, and he will find out before going one hundred miles from the County seat in any direction. We have traveled close to 1,000 miles and the work is not half done yet. I started in to make a complete tour of the County and will stay with it if I live but it is a mighty hard work.

X { I forgot to mention that while traveling up Cottonwood Canyon we passed eight small ranches and some of them nice little places. The houses were all built of willow poles and mud, with dirt roofs, and on many of them wild mustard was growing like weeds, in a garden, but as they were all in Oregon and I am not writing up that state, I passed them up for some other fellow to tackle. I don't think I have overlooked a single ranch, green spot, mine, range or prospect hole in any section I have visited. I have tried too, to present them truthfully and as I saw them, I think I have given the section traveled over a most thorough over-hauling and hope I have succeeded in relating some things that were not known by many people. But I am tired and will now go to bed and start afresh on the morrow.

*The "Double O" Ranch, Saturday, May 13, 1905.*