

TAPE #49

GLADYS SPINETTI

Taped: July 1979

(Specifically, lets talk about the mines.)

I lived at the Fremont Mine when ~~she~~ they put up that steel gallis frame. We would go over in the evening and watch the workers throw those hot rivets through the air.

It was simple things in those days; now everything is so complicated. My dad worked at the Gover Mine. It was just across from the Fremont Mine. That is where my dad forst worked when he came to California with his father, but his family was here before he was.

And we made all our good times, you know. Those were the days of singing around the piano, and things like that. And we had parties on any occasion; didn't matter if it was valentines or thanksgiving or Christmas, we'd have a party. We had hard time parties where we dressed up in old patched clothes.

(What were some of the little towns that were in the county years ago.) Black Hills; it was just a little community like the Fremont. There was a mine in there too. That was just beyond the Gover Mine. Right around the hill the Gover is on, and you get into Black Hills. And there was quite a little village in there when we first moved to the Fremont.

(Is there anything left of it now?)

I doubt it; some blackberry vines and rose bushes. That's about all. It's just like New Chicago.

(What about Rancherie?)

They had quite a little town in there. I remember the big robbery they had over there.

(What was that?)

Well, they took the safe, the robbers did, and took the safe out of the store using a horse and wagon. The miners would keep their gold there for safekeeping. This was in the 20's, I believe. Well, the robbers took the safe way down between Ione and Sutter Creek and broke it open and stole all the gold! They were never caught, and that's the big Rancherie robbery. I think the town was called Quartz Mountain then, not Rancherie.

(Is the town Rancherie or Rancheria?)

It's on Rancheria Creek, but there was quartz there, and I think the town got its name from that. Also, there is Upper Rancheria Creek and Lower Rancheria; this was Lower Rancheria. To get there, you go over to where the Fremont was, and you follow that road right around. If you keep on it it brings you out right on the Sutter Creek Road.

Well, in Amador City there is an old road that takes you right over to Rancherie; you can also go that way. I used to take people all over that country. And you can go up clear into Fiddletown on that road too.

(Are there any other old spots of interest that you think of?)

The old Grammar School in Sutter Creek, which is now torn down.

We used to go over to that spot and have picnics. I can remember some of the buildings that were there when I lived at the Fremont. Now, all that is left there are the graves.

(Were you living in Jackson when the town was closed down in 54 or 56?)

Oh yes. I moved to Jackson in 1948, so I was here all through that.

(What happened to the town?)

It was a dead town after that! From the very beginning of the town they had brothels and gambling, and then it stopped.

I'll tell you when the town was very very wild, and that was when they were putting in Salt Springs Reservoir. The town was full of construction work~~ans~~, and everythings~~was~~ busy then. They came in town by the busloads.

(Do you remember much about the Argonaut Mine disaster?)

Yes, I was here then. My father was very experienced in mining, and he was one of the consultants during the disaster. He didn't have the book learning, but he had the actual experience, because he had worked in the mines for all those years. They got all these ~~foremen~~ foremen and superintendents together, and they held a meeting, and they got each ones opinion. And when my father came back from that meeting he was sick. He said, "You know, not one of those men is gonna be alive." He was very upset about the way things were being ~~handled~~ handled.

(What was your dad's full name?)

Samuel Hopkins. And his dad came here in 1869, and he worked in the mines. He came from Cornwall.

(Can you tell me something about your mother, and her side of the family?)

My grandmother's husband was killed in one of the Sonora mines. She had sold all her things in England, and she was ready to come here when she learned of her husband's death. Her husband was actually going to go to England, to Cornwall, to get her. And she couldn't rest until she brought her two little children out here.

And she had a very hard time because there wasn't any welfare; there wasn't any money. You had to earn every penny, and it was kinda hard, this coming to a new country. She spent four years in Brazil, Indiana before she came to California. Well, she finally got out here, and she ran a little boarding house over in New Chicago, right by the Govern Mine, until she had raised her children. Then my mother married, and my grandmother went to live with my mother. But she finally married again after 17 or 18 years. Think how brave that little woman was, coming out to the West with a couple of small children! She knew when she left Cornwall that she didn't have enough money to go back if she didn't like it. (Did she keep a diary?)

No. She told me these things. My mother talked about it a lot too. She also talked about the Indians coming down and sitting on the porch of the boarding house. She would, grandma that is, make soup and she'd give the Indians a bucket of soup. So they would come down at mealtime and sit on the porch waiting for their food.

(How did your grandma get here?)

She sailed. I can't remember the name of the boat.

(How did they cross the continent?)

By train. But first they were in New York City. And she said that the strangers she met got her a place to live and did everything they could for her. People then aren't like they are today; they were out to help you. Well, they got her a hotel room, and she said she wanted to go to Brazil, Indiana, and so they got her on the train.

(Why did she pick Brazil, Indiana?)

Because she had a sister there. Then she found that she couldn't live with her sister, it's hard to live with a sister sometimes, and and so she decided to head for California and see her husband's grave. He was buried in Sonora. They took the train to Sacramento, and they came up here by stagecoach. They landed here in 1890.

So she started a boarding house, and many of the guests were Cornish too. It wasn't very big; she only took what she thought she could take care of.

Then we moved to the Fremont when my sister was a year old. And she's 69 years old now. That was 68 years ago.

(What can you tell me about the Indians?)

When I was a girl the Indians used to come around, but not a lot of them. Wanting something to eat, mostly. They had their reservations, but they probably thought they could get more edible foods somewhere else. They were a very quiet people, and they would never ask for anything. They would just come and sit, and when you gave them something they would get up and leave.

Mama told me of a funeral she went to, an Indian funeral. This Indian lady died, and she was wrapped in a blanket and sitting up in this grave. And everything that they needed to take to the happy hunting ground was placed in with them. All their possessions and little things that they liked. There is an Indian cemetery over at Quartz Mountain, but I don't think I could find it again.