

WHITLOCK, MARIPOSA CO., CALIFORNIA

East of San Francisco and a little south, sandwiched between Tuolumne and Madera Counties is Mariposa Co. Most people would know it as the home of Yosemite National Park. Back issues of the Mariposa Gazette from the 1880's give us a picture of the area's mining past.

June 3, 1882 "The Whitlock Consolidated Mining Companies Mines, Consisting of the "Margaritha," "Golden Fleece" "Bessie Collins," "Fortuna and GoodmanMines."

The above named mines, formerly located by Fritz, Snyder & Co., situated near the head of Whitlocks Creek, about five miles north of Mariposa, in this county, have recently been surveyed and platted by R.B. THOMAS, Deputy U.S. Mineral Surveyor, and relocated by John HIGMAN, George H. SCHOFIELD and others, with a view to further developing said mines, which have lain idle for the last 18 years. These mines were opened and considerable labor and money expended by the original locators from 1854 to 1861. During that period a large amount of rich ore was extracted and crushed at the companies steam

power quartz mill conveniently located at the mines. It is a well established fact that the rock yielded sufficient to pay a handsome profit with reasonable expenses; but at that early period, when labor and materials were immensely high, or about three to one of the present, together with extravagance or inexperienced superintendents, besides the crude machinery used in attempting to save the gold at the time, reasonably accounts why the mines, as well as as many others similarly situated, did not enrich their owners and become a permanent source of revenue for an indefinite period, for the veins are large and inexhaustible. Subsequent to the year 1861, the property fell into the hands of Mssrs. HIGMAN and SCHOFIELD, who not only had the advantages of later experience in mining, than their predecessors, but of a moderate reduction in prices of labor and machinery, and the works were being carried on most favorably and profitably; when in the fall and winter of 1863-4, there came a unexpected flood of water caused by the heavy rains, which washed away about 1,000 tons of sulphurettes valued at \$250 per ton, and extensively damaged the reduction works works and mine. This calamity at the time was a irreparable loss to the owners, who sought to retrieve their fortunes elsewhere, and by other pursuits, and have allowed the property to remain idle ever since with the exception of maintaining their rights of ownership. Mr. HIGMAN's accounts shows that the last lot of ore- 100 tons - taken from the mine and reduced yielded a profit of \$1,200. The last work done in the Goodman Mine by J. HIGMAN & Co., the rock yielded from \$40 to \$50 per ton. The vein was about 15 inches wide, but for the need of proper machinery to keep out the water the work was suspended."

Jan.27,1883 Letter from Dr.Bunnell, old pioneer and discoverer of the Yo Semite Valley. "Homer, Minnesota, Jan. 15th, 1883

Editor Gazette:- Your article in the Gazette of the 30th instant, entitled "The Mines," brings to mind reminiscences of my pioneer experiences in Mariposa county, as a miner, which, if not entirely agreeable, are, from the distant view of them, instructive. As early as 1850, I knew of the existence of gold-bearing quartz veins or lodes on Sherlock's and Whitlock's creeks, but as my Mexican and Chilean miners were giving me good returns from the placer claim I had bought from the Texas company, I was but little interested in the repeated declarations of my Mexicans that the veins were rich. Finally, at the conclusion of the Indian War of 1851, a party of Mexicans came up to work for me, and camped opposite my log cabin by the outcropping of what is known as the DILTZ mine. Those men were experienced miners, and finding rich pocket specimens disintegrated from the vein, they traced it over the hill into Sherlock's Gulch, finding "color" in nearly all the dirt taken from the vein. They further declared their belief that it was the mother vein of supply to the rich diggings in the gulch itself. Another party came later, and induced me to turn out all my men, some thirty at the time, to hunt for a "cavern of gold," as it

was described, said to have been found on the south side of Sherlock's Gulch, but lost again in the dense thicket, in fleeing from the grizzlies. The tale seemed a little cranky, but my men appeared to believe in the honesty of our boy informant, and we toiled up and down that mountain side in line of battle, taking close observation till every foot of the surface was explored. Our search resulted in the discovery of a vein of quartz, running nearly parallel with the gulch, but no pit, hole or cavern, and when the non existence of such a place was made evident to all of us, our Mexican youth with a simplicity to be found only among the gamins of our large cities, said: " Well, you have earthquakes in California, and the hole must have been filled up." Sometime afterwards I had the vein recorded, as it was gold bearing. The Mexican encampment at the Diltz mine, divided their force, some of them working for me in the placer claim, while others left for Saxton's creek, where they found ounce diggings, and the quartz vein, afterwards known as the Snyder vein. A few only remained to prospect the Diltz mine, which was done by erecting an arasta and grinding out the "pocket" they had discovered. When they left, another party of Mexicans, headed by a monte dealer from Quartzburg, found the vein on the lower Saxton's creek trail, a little north east of the Diltz mine. Champlin H. SPENCER, had a small party of Mexicans from Sonora, working for him, who first attracted his attention to the Spencer vein. Dr. John M. CREPELLE, also had Mexicans working for him on Sherlock, who reported the quartz vein better than many worked in Mexico. Some of the doctor's men became dissatisfied and left him. In order to keep the others employed until diggings could be found, I allowed the Dr. the free use of a small piece on my claim, out of which his men took the largest piece of pure gold (as far as known) ever taken from the southern mines. It weighed 9 pounds avoirdupois, while that taken out by Paddy M'CANN and Pat HUSSEY, weighed but six. Sometime previous to the quartz era inaugurated by "Quartz JOHNSON," Thomas J. WHITLOCK with a party of men from Missouri had been persistently mining near the head of Sherlock's creek, but finding the lead run out, as they supposed, prospected the gulches tributary to what is now Whitlock's creek. WHITLOCK's men found rich diggings up the creek, and tracing "float" or ragged gold to the WHITLOCK vein, were convinced that it afforded the gold of their newly discovered placer. Taking the hint from this suggestion, outcroppings were traced over the ridge into the Fremont Estate, and at the foot of the hill along the trail to Mariposa, the same quality of gold was found, and in many instances after a heavy rain, gold was picked up from the surface. The WHITLOCK men finally made a record of their discovery, at which date your county records will show, but finding the cost of machinery too great for prudent investment of their hard earned gold they sold out their mine to me, and left for Missouri. About that time there was a quartz furore encouraged by the remarkable assay furnished us by the foreign and native Professors of San Francisco. Some of these assays proved that we had mines that would in some instances, yield us thousands of dollars per ton. One instance I well remember where a metallurgist afterwards connected with the U.S. Mint at San Francisco, reported to me a yield of 12 1/2 cents per pound, for rock I never found a color in, nor could my expert Mexican miners discover any. A probable solution of the mystery was, that by some error, another specimen had been substituted for the one sent by myself."

In *California Gold Camps* by Gudde it states that "About three and one half miles northwest of Mariposa. Around 1850 there was extensive placer mining in the Whitlock Gulch and lode mining followed soon afterwards. In 1858 three mills with twenty-six stamps were in operation.(State Register, 1859). The Annual Mining Review. 1876 (p.21) mentions a 12-stamp mill having been built in 1863. The Register, 1903, lists three stamp mills in operation. Among the most productive mines was the Whitlock Group, which produced an estimated 500 thousand dollars by 1942, and Spread Eagle Group, which produced 425 thousand dollars by 1939 (Mining Bureau, LIII, pp. 183 ff.170ff.) Other mines, including the Farmers Hope, the Nutmeg, the Permit, and the Geary are listed and described in Mining Bureau XVII, p. 96.; LII,pp232 f.) and US Bulletin, 434 (pp. 135ff).
The post office was established March 15, 1899 and discontinued October 31,1910."

The California Division of Mines Bulletin #193 gives an estimate of the yields of the mines in Whitlock

District. "MINES: Buffalo, Champion, Colorado \$50,000, Diltz \$750,000 to \$1 million, Geary, Golden Key \$154,000+, King Solomon, LANDRUM, Nutmeg \$180,000+, Chance, Permit, Schroeder \$200,000 to \$300,000, Spread Eagle \$425,000, WHITLOCK \$500,000."

The Thomas J. Whitlock mentioned in these articles appears in the index to the 1850 census of Mariposa Co., California as age 41 born in North Carolina. We do have a Thomas Jefferson Whitlock born Nov.20,1809 in North Carolina in our records but he was living in Robinson, Green Co., Missouri in 1850 so can't be the one in California. There is an Anthony Whitlock age 35 also from North Carolina living in Mariposa Co., in 1850. Hopefully with additional research we will determine if there is some connection between these two persons and what part of the family they descend from.

Our thanks to William Disbro, Ruth Skewis and Carolyn Feroben for providing this detail and of course to Chuck Rockett for asking them all the questions.

Sources: R263/13; X914/33; X3279-83; X3345