




Victor Trabucco ran freight wagons for his brother's store. He'd haul freight to Merced, with many stops in the middle. Hauling the heavy loads uphill required him to disconnect the second wagon and return for it after the first was safely up the grade.

Chapter 4: Mariposa County — Mariposa, Coulterville, Hornitos, Yosemite and vicinity

[Mariposa County was one of the original counties of California, created at the time of statehood in 1850. While it began as the state's largest county, over time the territory that was once part of Mariposa was ceded to twelve other counties: Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Mono, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, and Tulare. Thus, Mariposa County is known as the "Mother of Counties."

The county's name came from Mariposa Creek, which was named by Spanish explorers in 1806, when they discovered thousands of butterflies ("mariposas" in Spanish) in the area.

During the Gold Rush large quantities of the glittery substance was found. Placer mining was used initially, but from lack of water in the area, hard rock mines quickly took over.



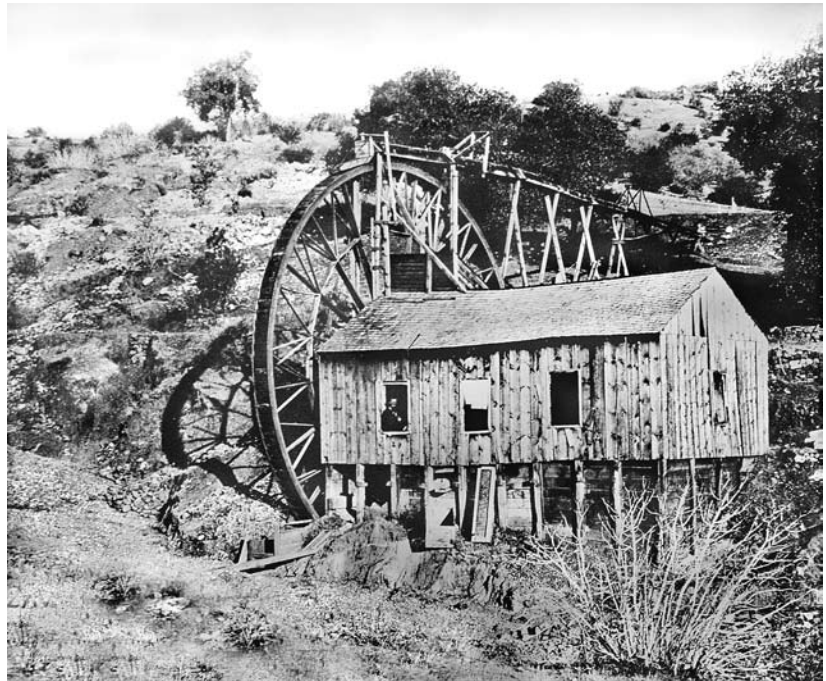
Soon after dinner we fell in with four or five broken-down-looking fellows on foot who were returning from the mines, and they gave us some rather discouraging accounts. They told us that they had been there some five or six months without being able to make anything, and that hundreds were there working for their beard alone. This did not in the least abate our bright anticipations and we are determined to go and see for ourselves.

Enos Christman,
March 14, 1850



Got up about half past five this morning all having slept pretty good — there being no donkeys and very few fleas. We had to carry some along with us from the Flats for company sake. We don't get started till about seven o'clock. The Chinaman is to remain here until the stage passes — with his big two horse wagon it would be rather difficult to pass or get out of the way of a six horse stage. Ida and Mr. Stroby are on horseback this morning. Aggie and Mr. Sax, Jack and Addie, Doc and myself in buggies. We are driving along at full speed when the folks ahead call out stage. Doc is in a very bad place to turn out, but Mr. Stroby gets down and lifts the buggy around.

Tillie Daulton,
June 24th, 1880
en route to Yosemite



Courtesy Mariposa County Museum and History Center

Mariposa Mine's stamp mill was water powered. It was the first hard rock mill in California since water was scarce and hydraulic and placer mining generally not viable options.

John C. Fremont had claim to a Mexican land grant but had to fight for his claim for many years. In 1855 the US Supreme Court finally ruled in his favor. As a result, the area was resurveyed, giving Fremont areas that already contained several productive mines.

The discovery of gold brought thousands of white men into the area. It wasn't long before hostilities with the Indians led to the Indian War.

In 1851, Major Savage led two Companies of men to an Indian stronghold in what is now called Yosemite Valley, the white man's discovery of Yosemite, Mariposa's real gold.


With no narrative history written in the 19th century, the stories are told exclusively through available newspaper articles, photos, diaries and journals.]

1863. DEATH OF COLORADO JACK. The Indian Desperado closed his career of crime on Saturday last. His whereabouts was discovered through his sending a message to his squaw by a Yaqui Indian named Poncho, who was traced to Jack's place of concealment in a gulch near Colorado. A party well armed immediately started for his den, which proved to be a small drift in the bank of the gulch. Upon their approach Jack came out

and faced the enemy – drew a pistol and fired – then threw it away and fired one shot with a shot-gun. – A shot, followed by a whole volley from the party, “settled his hash.” He died game. There is no doubt that he was lying around in that neighborhood for the purpose of getting even with some of the party who attempted his capture on Bear Creek. The community is rid of a very dangerous Wally.

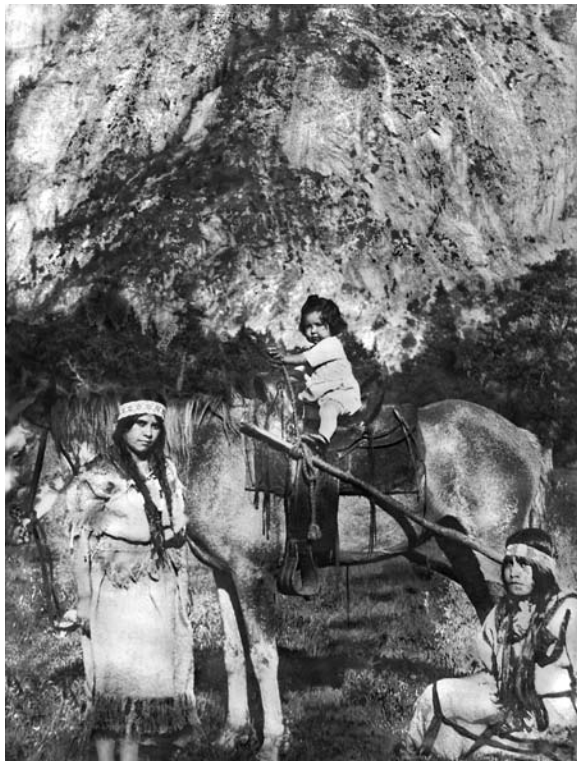
FOUND DEAD. Saturday last — man named Peter Testor, was found dead about a mile above Merced Falls, yesterday afternoon. When the body was found, it was lying under a cliff of rocks, with a large stone, supposed to be at least 200 pounds weight, lying upon the breast, and the skull bone was mashed. It is supposed that the deceased was walking upon the edge of the cliff, and that the stone gave way, precipitating him to the bottom together with the rocks.

MYSTERIOUS MURDER. A Mexican came into town a day or two since and gave the following particulars in relation to the murder of his brother. He say that about the 2d of February, the two were working and camping together in the neighborhood of the Cunningham Toll Road, on Green’s gulch — that his brother left very suddenly, that he thought nothing of it at first, but afterwards got uneasy and made search for him,



The Valley was originally tenanted by a small tribe of particularly unwashed aborigines of some five hundred persons. They eschewed the pursuit of large game, and lived chiefly on scenery and fish. One day, while one of these sheep-hearted braves was employed in trouting at Mirror lake he heard a sort of ursine chuckle behind him. Desisting in his search for a fresh bug amid his capillary bait-box, the Indian turned and beheld an enormous grizzly in the act of choking down his entire string of fish. Being entirely weaponless, the noble redman made haste to scramble to the top of a large boulder, conveniently at hand. While engaged in frantically blowing his police-whistle from this vantage ground, the bear began to climb up also. As his enemy was swarming up the slippery granite, the Indian espied beside him a heavy, loose stone. This he dumped upon the rock-hugging head of the brute with such emphasis as to crack its skull between the two boulders. The Indian then returned to his people, covered with perspiration and glory, and they, thunderstruck at the prowess of a brave who had slain a bear with his naked hands, at once dubbed him “Yo Semite”—that is, “The Great Grizzly.” In course of time this deed became so vaunted among the coast Indians that the tribe referred to gradually adopted the appellation as a distinctive title.

Frank Harrison Gassaway, 1882



Mi Wuk Indians in their native dress. Early 1900s.