

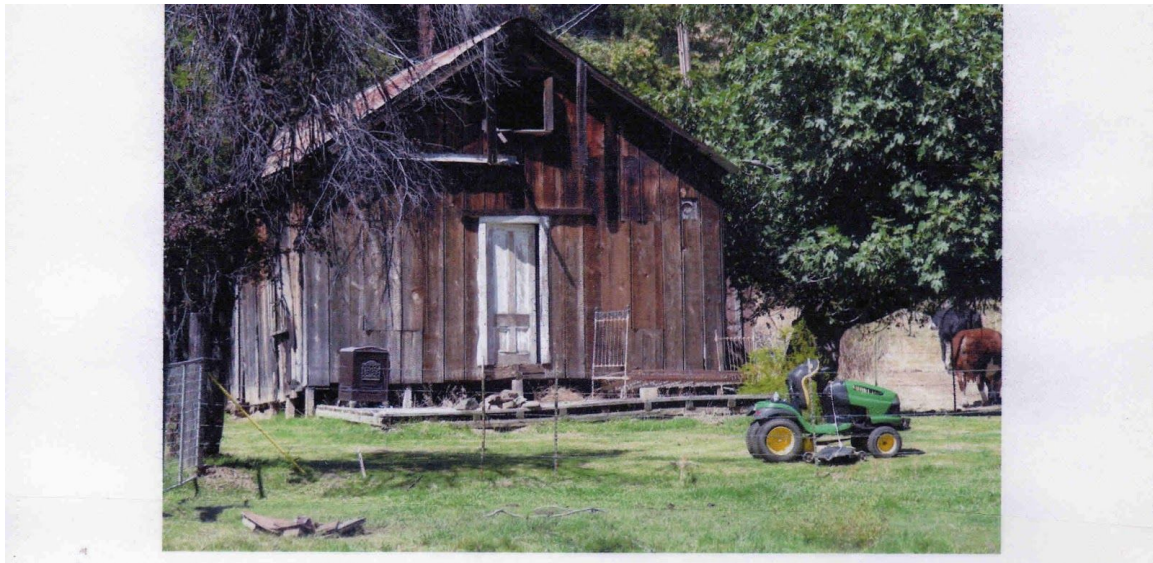
The monthly newsletter is a service to the community and our members. We welcome requests to research specific topics from the public and accept articles on local history. Please note that the Society reserves the right to accept or decline any article or material at its discretion. The Society is not responsible for the loss of or damage to any submitted material so please keep a copy for your records. Please include a note authorizing Anderson Historical Society to publish the material. We need two things from all members or those interested in local history: please be sure the Society has an updated email address and please spread the word to friends and neighbors about the Newsletter. Please contact us at: www.andersonhistorical.com.

John and Ruth Miller House

The house sits on the east side of Rainbow Lake Road about one mile above the junction with Platina Road. The property is now the residence of the Sandifer family and owned by Norman Bailey. It was probably built by Stephen Riley Miller (born 3 February 1831 in Springfield, Illinois) and his wife, Julia Ann Simmons (born 31 December 1835 in Jackson, Ohio) who settled along then Sunny Hill Road in 1890. The house next passed to their son J.J. (John Jackson) "Jack" Miller and his wife Pearl until age forced them to move to Redding. The property then passed to Ruth Lucille Boswell (born 27 January 1888 in Ono) the grand-daughter of Stephen Riley Miller and Julia Simmons. Her mother was Adeline Viola "Addie" Miller born on 1 October 1859 in Wapello, Iowa.

This is where things get confusing: "Addie" married John Franklin Miller who was born in 1881. His father was also a Stephen Riley Miller born in Wapello, Iowa on 16 December 1848. The second Stephen Riley married Laura Ellen Wakefield (born 25 December 1861 in California).

Both sides of John and Ruth's family had come by wagon train from Iowa in 1863. They both found work in the silver mines of Nevada before moving to Tehama County and then Shasta County. With the death of Ruth in 1957 and John in 1961 the property passed out of the family.



Breslauer Way

Breslauer Way runs east from Highway 273 to the Shasta General Hospital in the area known as Canon City (Canon Bottom, Canyon City, the Milk Ranch among other names). The area was the first settlement in Redding at Canon Gulch where the California-Oregon Road branched off to Shasta. It is not known if the hospital land had anything to do with the Breslauer family but they were active in real estate in 1900 when the hospital was moved from Shasta to Redding. The hospital operated as such until 1934 after which it was converted to other County uses.

The Breslauer family were early Jewish merchants in Redding who took an active role in the development of the city. It is not known which Breslauer the road was named for as both Daniel and Nathan were active in real estate and many in the family were active in civic affairs.

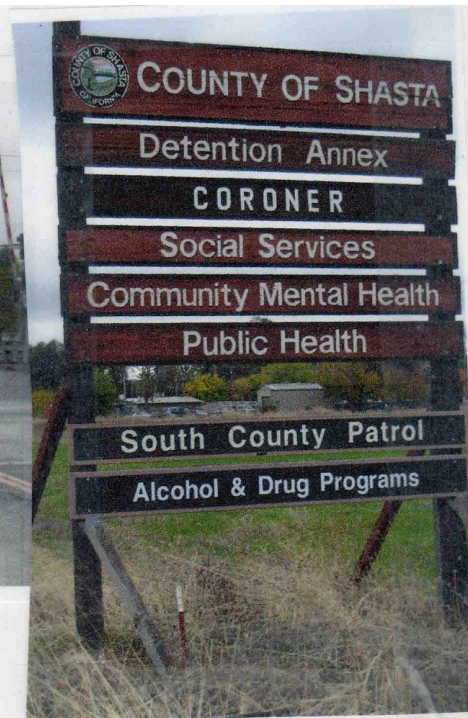
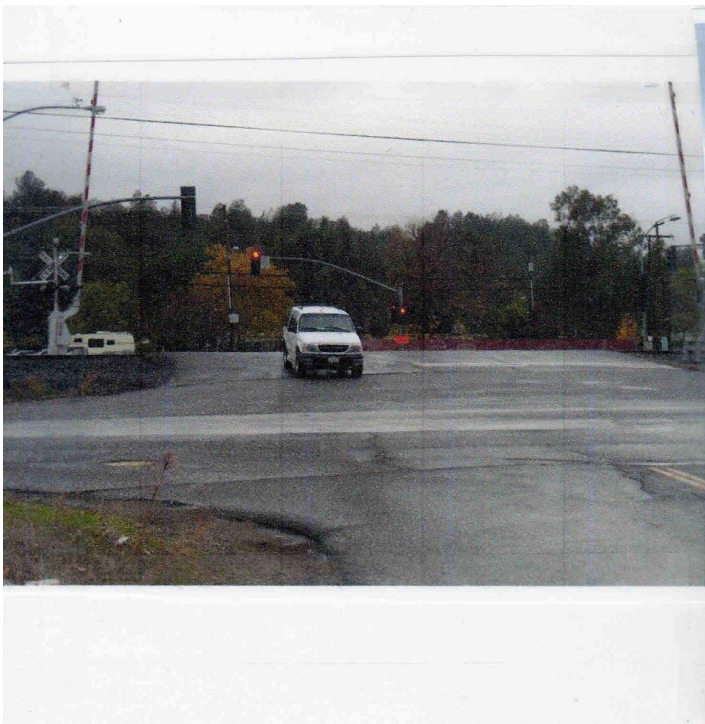
The family patriarch seems to be Abraham "Bernard" Breslauer born about 1815 in Nordrhein, Westfalen (Germany) and married Neuchah born about 1815 in West Prussia. The couple had six children: Daniel B. Breslauer born in 1844 in West Prussia, Manuel Mendel Breslauer born in 1846, Lena Helena Breslauer born in 1851, Herman J. Breslauer born in 1851, Mary Breslauer born in 1853, and Isadore Breslauer born in 1856. Neuchah died in 1865 in West Prussia. Abraham immigrated to New York in 1886 before moving to San Francisco in 1890. Abraham was crushed by a cable car in San Francisco in 1895. His obituary stated that his son Manual, who had died in 1891, had been a wealthy owner of a dry goods store at New Montgomery and Mission in San Francisco.

It would seem that some of the children immigrated to the United States prior to their father as Daniel resided in Oregon, Butte County, in 1870. Many of the text cited that Daniel had a brother, Nathan, which is almost correct. Nathan Breslauer married Lena H. Breslauer so he was Daniel's brother-in-law. Nathan immigrated to the United States in 1868. Daniel was naturalized in 1869 so he probably entered the United States in 1864 or before.

Daniel Breslauer opened up a general merchandise store in September 1872 just after the railroad opened up the town of Redding. Breslauer & Company, a merchandise store, was formed with Charley Weil on California Street. At some point prior to 1880 Nathan also opened a separate merchandise store on California Street. In the great fire of 1881 Daniel and Nathan's stores burned. Nathan lost \$13,000 with only \$7,000 insured. Daniel lost \$17,500 with only \$11,500 insured. After the fire Daniel and Nathan consolidated their businesses.

Daniel also had opened up a store at Furnaceville on Ried's Toll Road in 1875. The town was about one mile northeast of Ingot and was thriving from the copper boom and smelter.

Both Nathan and Daniel were interested in real estate. One of their transactions was to open up a twenty-block subdivision in Redding known as the Breslauer Division. Some of the family seems to have relocated to San Francisco but the business name continued in Redding through Nathan's oldest son, David, who ran the Breslauer Clothing Store on Market Street until 1979.



There are three articles for the month of March 2019: 1) Graves Miller Store in Ono, 2) The California 100, and 3) 1852 Gold Half Dollar Coin

The Grave-Miller Store in Ono

Lilian Edell provided some information on the Graves-Miller Store in a letter to Shasta Historical Society in 1994. She states, the old store was built by my paternal grandfather, Richard B. "Dick" Graves (Richard Benjamin Graves, the son of David Rice Graves, born in 1857 in Nevada and husband of Ida May Barber). He ranched and mined near Trinity Center, and wintered his stock at Ono on land leased (later purchased from CPRR (Central Pacific Railroad)). He liked Ono and decided to move his family there. From a deed dated 2 February 1912, he bought the property where he built the store, from Frances E. Baker, daughter of William McCormick. My grandmother, Ida Graves, took their son Rolla and daughters Nellie and Ione to Sacramento for several months so Rolla could go to business school and learn how to run a store. (Ida Graves nee Barber was born in 1862 in California. She and Richard Benjamin Graves had seven children of whom Rolla born 1893, Ione born 1897, and Nellie born 1899 were the youngest.)

When Ida and the kids returned from Sacramento, she bought property across the street from the store property by deed dated 23 December 1912, from my maternal great-grandmother, Sarah Taylor. (Rolla Graves married Cora Ellen Taylor, born in 1895, in Ono who was the daughter of William Alanson Taylor and Hettie Elizabeth Webb.) This is the property west of the present store, where there is a two story house. A copy of the 1909 map of Ono showing the Baker and Taylor properties are attached.

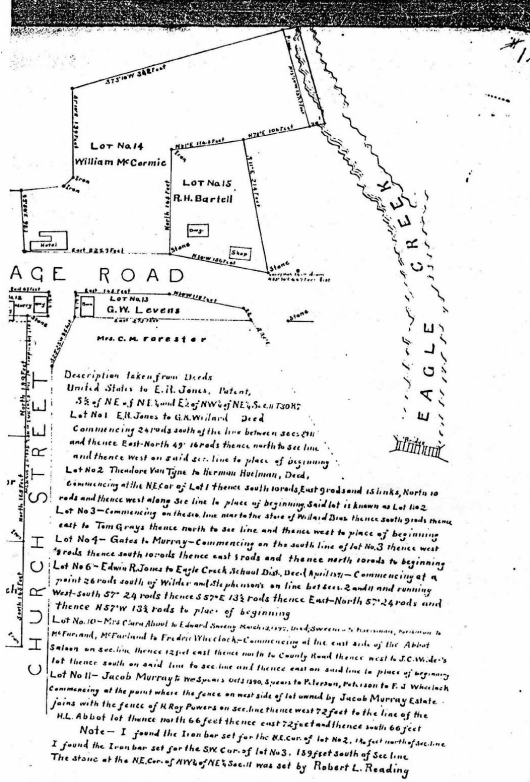
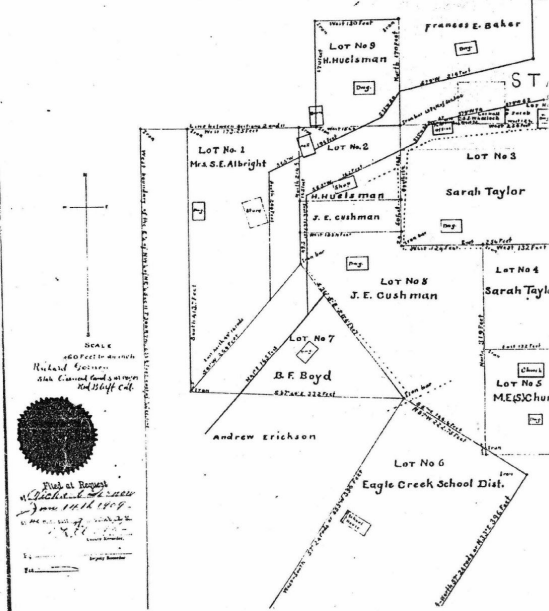
Rolla Graves married my maternal aunt, Cora Ellen Taylor. Rolla's brother, C. R. "Doc" Graves married Cora's sister Nora May Taylor – they were my parents. (C.R. is Chester Roy "Doc" Graves born in 1888 on Dry Creek in Tehama County.)

Cora told me that the ranchers used to park their wagons and teams in front of the store, hand the storekeeper their list, and then go to Uncle Will (William) McCormick's saloon (in the Ono Hotel) for refreshments and news, while their orders were being filled.

The store property and the other property were sold to J. J. Miller per order entered in the matter of the estate of Richard B. Graves. (J.J. Miller is John Jackson Miller, the son of Stephen Riley Miller born in 1831 in Illinois and Julia Ann Simmons born in 1831 in Ohio.) Afterward it was operated by Dave Miller and his wife, Olive Taylor Miller (Olive Hettie Taylor), who was Cora and Nora's sister. (Dave Miller was the son of Stephen Riley Miller born in 1848 in Iowa and Laura Wakefield.)

In another letter to Mabel Foster she states that Chester R. "Doc" Graves contracted the work on the "tunnel. This is presumably the cold storage tunnel at the rear of the old store and all that remains today. My cousin Claire Miller told me that Dad had a powder-man working with him, who was an Indian named Rolla Raines (Rollin Raines 1862-1936).

MAP OF THE TOWN OF
ONO





Remains of cold storage for the Graves-Miller Store in Ono

The California 100

In a previous article we reported on Civil War volunteers that enlisted in Shasta County and mentioned that some units were raised in California but were credited to other states. Aside from individuals that made their way east to enlist, there were eight companies of the 1st Regiment Washington Territory Infantry Volunteers, five companies of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers, four regiments of Pennsylvania's California Brigade (69th, 71st, 72nd and 106th Regiments of Infantry) and one regiment of New York (32nd Regiment of Infantry). It was thought that those who served under the quota of other states wore the uniform of that state without distinguishing marks. In reviewing a book on the U.S. Cavalry the attached picture of a trooper serving for Massachusetts was found. It showed that Company A, 2nd Mass. Cavalry wore a title "Cal 100" above the Massachusetts regimental badge. Company A had the official title of the California One Hundred and served in the California Battallion, 2nd Mass. Cavalry Volunteers.

All five companies of the California Battalion were enlisted in San Francisco, California prior to mustering into federal service. The California 100 began the process in late 1862 when a group in California communicated with the Governor of Massachusetts volunteering to form a cavalry company. The Governor agreed under the provision that the unit supply their own uniforms, equipment and sea-passage to Massachusetts. The unit members were provided the state enlistment bonus that helped to cover the costs. Company A was enrolled between October 28 and December 10, 1862 and mustered into federal service on December 10, 1862 in San Francisco. It was the first to sail east for Boston via the Isthmus of Panama. Upon arrival in Boston the unit was transferred to Camp Meigs at Readville just outside of town for initial training. Company A consisted of three officers and 101 enlisted men of which eight deserted in Massachusetts during training (making the effective strength 96 officers and men).

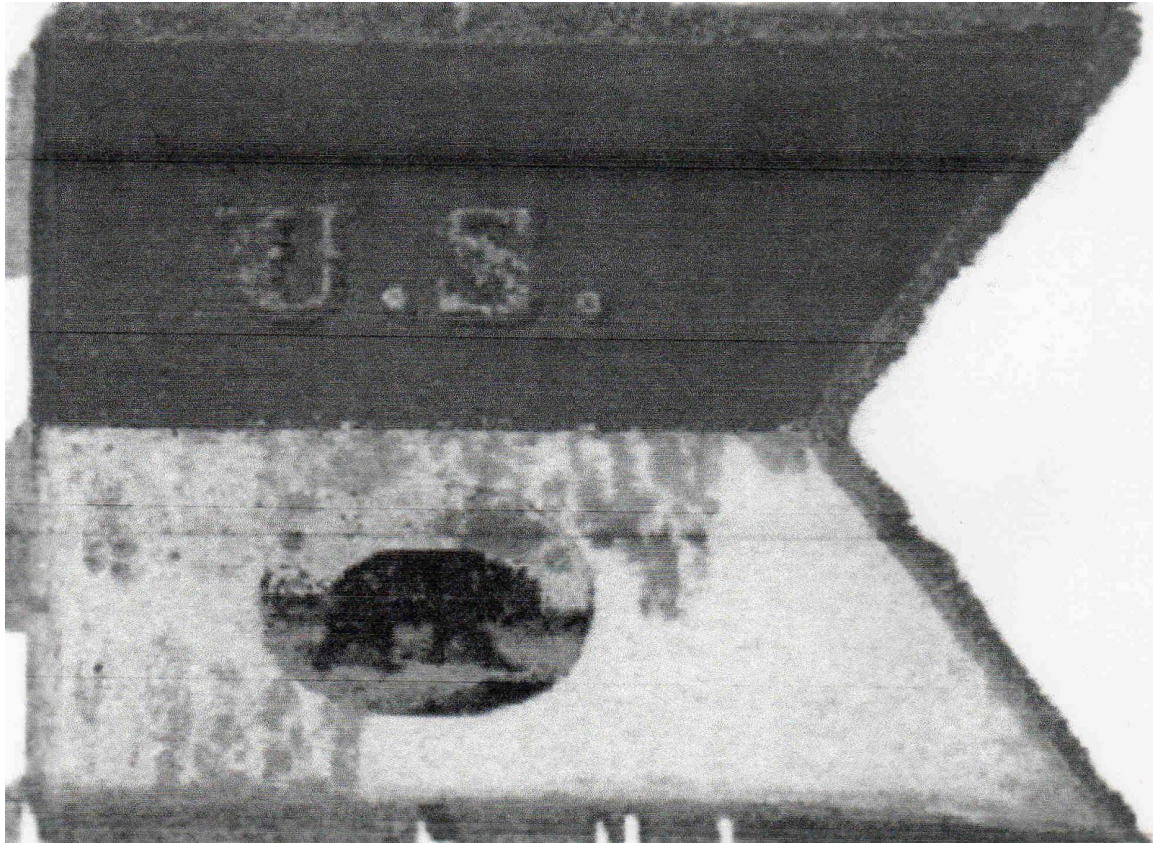
In February 1863 the unit was transferred to the Virginia Peninsula at Gloucester Point. In August all five companies of the California Battalion were reunited at Centerville, Virginia where their mission was to counter Colonel Mosby's guerilla raids. In July of 1864 the battalion was assigned to protect Washington, D.C. during the siege of Confederate General Jubal Early. When that threat ended the unit went on the offensive as part of General Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah. The battalion participated in the Battles of Winchester, Luray, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek. In the early spring of 1865 the battalion was moved to the choking point of Petersburg, Virginia. When the siege was broken the battalion took part in the pursuit of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The goal was to prevent General Lee from linking with General Albert S. Johnson and the unit fought at Dinwiddie Court House, Five Forks, Sailor's Creek and finally Appomattox Court House.

The California 100 participated in the Grand Review in Washington, D.C. on May 23, 1865. The company was released from federal service on July 20, 1865 at Fairfax Court House, Virginia. The now state unit was transported to Camp Meigs, Massachusetts for final pay. On August 3, 1865 the California 100 were discharged. A large portion of the officers and men opted to remain in the east rather than return to California.

The following statistics are provided to show the real conditions of service rendered by the California 100. Of the 96 members assigned to combat in Virginia in 1863, 36% were killed, wounded, disabled or held as prisoners of war. In the annals of the Civil War many units lost more but in the perspective of later wars where 10% was considered high it showed they definitely performed their combat role. After their assignment to combat there was only one desertion in 1863 while other units were plagued with high desertion rates. The manpower report from the Records of the War of Rebellion 1861-1867 is attached so the names of the 15 members who died, 14 wounded or discharged for disability, and 6 POWs can be remembered. The records list muster sites not homes of record so it is not known if any of 104 initial members were from Shasta County. If anyone finds a connection to our area please let us know so we can do more research.



Trooper of the California 100



Flag of the California 100

ROLL OF THE CALIFORNIA HUNDRED AND BATTALION.

| NAME. | Remarks. |
|----------------------------------|---|
| FIELD OFFICER. | |
| 1. Major DeWitt C. Thompson..... | In command of the battalion from January 15 to July 15, 1863. In command of cavalry camp near Alexandria, Va., from July 15 to August 16, 1863. In command of battalion in the field from August 16 to September 16, 1863. In command of "Cavalry Forces, Upper Potomac," from September 16, 1863, to August 9, 1864, embracing posts at Edwards Ferry and all troops between Washington and Point of Rocks, Maryland. Joined Army of the Shenandoah, August ninth, with detachments of 620 cavalry, which were ordered to their respective regiments. Resigned and honorably discharged by General Sheridan, August 9, 1864. |

THE CALIFORNIA HUNDRED.

COMPANY A, SECOND MASSACHUSETTS CAVALRY.

| NAME. | Remarks. |
|---|---|
| COMMISSIONED OFFICERS. | |
| 1. Captain J. Sewall Reed | Promoted Major. Killed in action with Mosby's Guerrillas, at Dranesville, Va., Feb. 22, 1864. |
| 2. First Lieut. Archibald McKendry..... | Promoted Captain Co. G; subsequently promoted Major, and mustered out as Colonel commanding Regt. |
| 3. Second Lieut. John W. Sim..... | Discharged by S. O. of War Dept. at Vienna, Va., May 4, 1864. |
| PRIVATES. | |
| 1. Armstrong, Hugh | Promoted to 1st Sergt.; then to Lieut.; then to Captain. Mustered out as Captain of "California Hundred." |
| 2. Ackerman, Charles H. | Promoted Corp.; subsequently Sergt.; subsequently 1st Sergt. "California Hundred." |
| 3. Ackerman, James B. | Killed in charge at Hallowtown, Va., Aug. 20, 1864. |
| 4. Allen, Henry W. | Transferred to Invalid Corps from Camp Windham, Va., July 20, 1863. |
| 5. Allen, E. Henry | Wounded in action at Rockville, Md. Died of wounds through neglect of Surgeon, in hospital at Washington, D. C., Aug. 16, 1864. |
| 6. Allan, Charles | Promoted Sergt.; subsequently 1st Lieut. 5th Mass. (colored) Cav. |
| 7. Anderson, George..... | |
| 8. Anthony, William G. | Promoted to Corp.; subsequently to Sergt. Co. C. |
| 9. Burdick, Joseph B. | Killed in action at South Anna Bridge, Va., June 23, 1863. |
| 10. Benjamin, Charles E. | Promoted Sergt. Co. A; subsequently transferred to Non-Commissioned Staff as Com'y Sergt. |
| 11. Barnstead, Thomas D. | Promoted to Sergt.-Maj., July 27, 1865. |
| 12. Balcom, Darnly O. | Transferred to Co. G; promoted to Sergt.; subsequently to 2d Lieut.; and subsequently to 1st Lieut. |
| 13. Burlingham, Henry G. | Promoted 1st Sergt.; subsequently 2d Lieut.; then to 1st Lieut. and Adjt.; and mustered out as Captain Co. G. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 14. Bumgardner, William H. H. | Promoted to Corp. Died at farm house of wounds received in action with Mosby's Guerrillas at Mount Zion Church, July 6, 1864. |
| 15. Balke, Charles | Promoted Corp., July 21, 1865. |
| 16. Baker, A. Frank | Deserted from Readville, Mass.; returned; restored to duty; deserted again from Falls Church, Va. Went home to Canada on furlough from Hdqs., Washington, D. C., and failed to return. |
| 17. Beach, Nathan A. | |
| 18. Briggs, Charles P. | |
| 19. Blake, Josephus | Discharged on account of bad eyesight, in Boston, Mass., Sept. 1, 1863. |
| 20. Campbell, Edward B. | Promoted Corp., July 21, 1865. |
| 21. Carey, Jeremiah J. | Promoted Corp., July 1, 1865. |
| 22. Collins, William W. | Promoted 2d Lieut. 10th N. Y. Cav. |
| 23. Corbett, Samuel J. | Promoted Corp.; reduced to ranks; promoted Sergt. Regtl. band; reduced to ranks, July 18, 1865. |
| 24. Cunningham, William | |
| 25. Chalmers, John M. | |
| 26. Chandler, William S. | Discharged from hospital at Washington, D. C., July, 1865. |
| 27. Crum, Henry | Promoted Sergt.; reduced to ranks; subsequently promoted Corp.; then Sergt. |
| 28. Crumpton, Wesley R. | Promoted Corp.; reduced to ranks; subsequently promoted Corp.; then Sergt.—1st Sergt. of the company; promoted 2d Lieut., July, 1865. |
| 29. Davis, George F. | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; subsequently 2d Lieut. 4th Mass. Cav. |
| 30. Dewey, Charles S. | Deserted from Readville, Massachusetts, Feb. 27, 1863. |
| 31. Dearbourn, Valorus | Promoted Corp., Feb., 1864. Killed in action at Opequan Creek, Shenandoah Valley, Va., Sept., 1864. |
| 32. Dempsey, Cyrus F. | Taken prisoner by Mosby at Coyle's Tavern, Va., Aug. 24, 1863; exchanged and returned to Co., May 19, 1865. |
| 33. Doane, Gustavus C. | Promoted to Sergt.; reduced to ranks; subsequently promoted to 1st Lieut. Mississippi Marine Brigade. |
| 34. Elliott, Richard S. | Wounded in action at South Anna Bridge, Va. Promoted from hospital at Gloucester Point, Va., to Lieut. Mississippi Marine Brigade. |
| 35. Forbes, Alexander C. | Killed by accidental discharge of pistol, at Halltown, Va., Aug. 9, 1864. |
| 36. Freeman, James | Deserted from Camp Windham, Va., Aug. 1, 1863. |
| 37. Fillebrown, Henry H. | |
| 38. Fletcher, John | Promoted to Corp.; then to Sergt. Captured in action at Opequan Creek, Va., August 10, 1864; subsequently exchanged and returned to company, May 21, 1864. Promoted Lieut., July, 1865. |
| 39. Gibbs, Byron D. | Promoted Corp., March 23, 1865. |
| 40. Goulding, George W. | Captured in action at Rockwell, Md., July 13, 1864. Exchanged and returned to company, May 2, 1865. Promoted Corp., March 23, 1865. |
| 41. Hall, Frederick | Promoted Corp., Nov. 1, 1864. Promoted Sergt., July 18, 1865. |
| 42. Hanson, Samuel | Promoted Corp. Killed in action near Mount Zion Church, Va., July 6, 1864. |
| 43. Hammerburg, William | Deserted from Readville, Jan. 26, 1863. |
| 44. Hill, Charles W. | Promoted at Gloucester Point, Va., to his old command—1st Lieut. 1st Mo. Cav. |
| 45. Hill, John A. | Discharged for disability at Vienna, Va., April, 1864. |
| 46. Hilliard, William H. I. | Promoted Corp.; subsequently Sergt.; then 2d Lieut. Company B. |
| 47. Holt, George I. | Discharged from hospital at Annapolis Junction, Md., June 10, 1865. |
| 48. Hunt, James A. | Discharged for disability at Gloucester Point, Va., May 10, 1863. |
| 49. Hunter, John L. | |
| 50. Hussey, William H. H. | Promoted to Corp.; then to Sergt.; subsequently to 2d Lieut. Company C. Mustered out as Captain. |
| 51. Johnson, George M. | |
| 52. Knowles, Frank | Deserted from Readville, Mass., Jan. 26, 1863. |
| 53. Kinnie, Charles M. | Promoted Sergt.; then Lieut.; subsequently to Captain and A. A. G. Reserve Brigade, 1st Div. Cav. |

COMPANY A—Continued.

| NAME. | Remarks. |
|--------------------------|--|
| 54. Loughton, Alfred L. | Died of fever in hospital at Washington, D. C., July 25, 1862. |
| 55. Lee, Alfred | Company Bugler. Died of brain fever in hospital at Vienna, Va., May 1, 1864. |
| 56. Legier, Charles | |
| 57. Loane, Abraham | Captured in action with Mosby's Guerrillas, at Mount Zion Church, Va., July 6, 1864. Subsequently exchanged, and discharged from hospital at Readville, Mass., June, 1865. |
| 58. Libby, Frank O. | Promoted Corp.; subsequently reduced to ranks. |
| 59. Locke, Benjamin | Promoted Corp., and subsequently Sergt. |
| 60. Mazy, Henry | |
| 61. Merriam, Jonathan | Captured at Rockville, Md., July 13, 1864. Exchanged, and discharged from hospital, at Readville. |
| 62. McCarthy, John | Killed in action at Coyle's Tavern, Va., Aug. 24, 1863. |
| 63. McCarthy, John D. | Promoted Hospital Steward. |
| 64. McIntosh, Isaac R. | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; subsequently Lieut.; then to Captain Co. F. |
| 65. McNeil, William H. | Promoted Corp. Discharged by Special Order A. G. O., June 20, 1865. |
| 66. Magary, Alfred | Deserted from Readville, Mass., Jan. 26, 1863. |
| 67. Nellis, E. | Deserted from Readville, Mass., Jan. 26, 1863. |
| 68. Nelson, H. | Transferred to Co. B. Killed by bushwhackers while at a house near King and Queen's Court House, Va. |
| 69. Nixon, John | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; then 2d Lieut. Accidentally shot himself through the foot, and was discharged from hospital, May, 1865. |
| 70. Owen, John W. | Discharged for disability from hospital at Frederick, Md., June 4, 1865. |
| 71. Pelham, James W. | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; subsequently Lieut. 4th Massachusetts Cavalry; and afterwards Captain. |
| 72. Percy, William | |
| 73. Pool, Melbourne Z. | Promoted Corp.; subsequently Lieut. 5th Massachusetts (colored) Cavalry. |
| 74. Parker, R. M. | Promoted Sergt.; subsequently reduced to ranks. Promoted Corp., July 21, 1865. |
| 75. Powers, Charles H. | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; then 2d Lieut. Mustered out as 1st Lieut. "California Hundred." |
| 76. Plummer, George | Promoted Corp.; subsequently reduced to ranks. |
| 77. Quant, Frederick J. | Deserted from Readville, Mass.; subsequently arrested and discharged from hospital, Washington, D. C. |
| 78. Rice, Hamilton | Promoted Sergt.-Major; subsequently Lieut. and Adjt. |
| 79. Robinson, William A. | |
| 80. Ross, Joshua C. | |
| 81. Rone, Carlos | Transferred to Invalid Corps; subsequently discharged from hospital, at Philadelphia, Pa., for disability. |
| 82. Samuels, Richard C. | |
| 83. Schrow, Henry | Promoted Corp. Discharged from hospital at Washington, June 20, 1865. |
| 84. Sherwin, Henry C. | Promoted Corp.; subsequently Sergt. and Q. M. Sergt. of company. |
| 85. Sivalls, Benson | Discharged for disability; from hospital at Alexandria, Va., June, 1865. |
| 86. Smith, Samuel, Jr. | Promoted Corp., and subsequently Sergt. |
| 87. Speaight, C. L. S. | Captured by Mosby's Guerrillas, near Berryville, Va., Aug., 1865. Died in prison at Danville, Va., Feb. 25, 1865. |
| 88. Starr, William E. | |
| 89. Sterling, Edward R. | Promoted Corp.; then Sergt.; and subsequently Lieut. 4th Mass. Cav. |
| 90. Towle, George W. | Promoted Corp., Oct., 1864. Promoted Sergt., July 18, 1865. |
| 91. Tubbs, Henry S. C. | Captured in action at Rockville, Md., July 13, 1864. Exchanged, and returned to company, May 21, 1865. |
| 92. Thompson, George | Promoted Corp., July 1, 1865. |
| 93. Verick, George W. | Promoted 2d Lieut. 96th Regt. N. Y. Inf. |
| 94. West, Wells W. | Died of wounds received in action at Coyle's Tavern, Aug. 24, 1863. |
| 95. Wheat, James L. | Promoted Sergt.; then 2d Lieut. 6th Massachusetts (colored) Cavalry; subsequently Captain. |
| 96. White, Peter E. | Promoted Sergt. and Chief Bugler. |
| 97. Williams, J. H. | Discharged for disability at Boston, Mass., Oct., 1863. |
| 98. Winship, John | |
| 99. Woodman, H. F. | Promoted Corp.; then to Sergt. Co. G; and subsequently to Lieut. Wounded in action at Waynesboro, Va., Sept. 24, 1864. Died of wounds at Mount Jackson, Va. |
| 100. Woodward, E. W. | Promoted 2d Lieut. 25th New York Cavalry; subsequently Captain. |
| 101. Watson, James | Promoted Corp., Nov. 1, 1864. Promoted Sergt., July 18, 1865. |

1852 Gold ½ Dollar Coin

While doing cleanup in Igo what looked like a small gold coin was found along with a pile of rusted chain links and other rusted metal. The coin is in the attached picture magnified at 300%. The obverse has a portrait of Miss Liberty surrounded by twelve six-point stars. There may have been a thirteenth star but the coin has been altered by a hole just above Miss Liberty's crown. On the reverse of the coin is the date 1852 in the middle surrounded by a wreath. Outside of the wreath is the text HALF DOL. CALIFORNIA GOLD. The coin is not from the U.S. Mint although many were made to appear so by the use of Miss Liberty or an Indian head. The coin was minted privately to relieve a scarcity of small coins during the Gold Rush. California was considered a hard currency state where gold and silver were trusted and paper currency was discounted if you could get anyone to accept it at all for payment. Most circulating paper currency prior to the Civil War came from a plethora of state and private banks, many with little real backing. Even when the federal government created a national currency and mandated its acceptance at the beginning of the civil War, our legislature refused to accept the notes until about 1864. California was initially denied a U.S. mint in 1850 although it was allowed an U.S. Assayer's Office. A functioning U.S. Mint could have resolved the needs of California for small change.

Small change was expensive to transport so alternatives were sought. Probably the first was the use of gold dust. A pinch of gold dust was often accepted as one dollar. The problem was that one man's pinch was often different than another's. It was no wonder that men with the biggest hands were quickly hired as bartenders or clerks. Foreign coins circulated freely in early California: French, British, and Mexican coins were common. Newspapers often gave the value of foreign coins circulating in California. The problem is one has to know the exchange rate and in rural areas it was often guess work. The federal government introduced fractional currency, as the Civil War quickly drove gold, silver and even copper to be hoarded in the East. The fractional currency received the same dubious reception as the national notes when they arrived in California.

With gold dust being impractical, paper unacceptable, and foreign coins often an unknown the solution was to turn to private mints. Gold was valued at \$17.00 an ounce and private mints could convert raw gold into coins of various denominations with a consistent purity (usually ten karat). Although coins were produced up to \$20.00 with the same weight proportion as legal tender, it was the much smaller denominations of twenty-five cents, fifty cents and one dollar that were needed for daily commerce.

Production of what became known as California coinage covers three eras and nearly 500 different varieties are known. In the first period, roughly 1852 to 1856 the coins represented a legitimate need for small change in California. Production stopped after the San Francisco Mint, opened in 1854, and produced a sufficient supply of small coins to meet local needs.

Private mints in the second period from 1856 to 1882 continued to produce coins but they were not to meet a commercial necessity. Many of the coins were used as gaming pieces. In 1864 private coinage became illegal although production continued until 1882 when the U.S. Mint and Secret Service began active enforcement. Coins up until 1882 used denominations in cents and dollars.

Private mints continued to produce coins from 1882 until the 1920s but now they had to put the denominations as California Gold so it could not be confused with federal coinage. The coins of this last period are considered tokens made for the souvenir trade.

The value of a specimen is based on rarity, desirability and condition. The first area of private coinage has the highest value, followed by the second era. The token issues sell for far less than the first two eras. The specimen we found was in extra fine condition whereas many examples are very worn from rough use. The coin is listed as K11.3 and dates from the first era of production but the hole detracts from the value. In its current condition the coin is valued between thirty-five and fifty dollars. The coin was obviously modified to be worn as jewelry, probably years after the 1852 date. There is no way date when the coin was lost or by whom but you never know there could be more.



1852 half-dollar at 2 ½ times enlargement