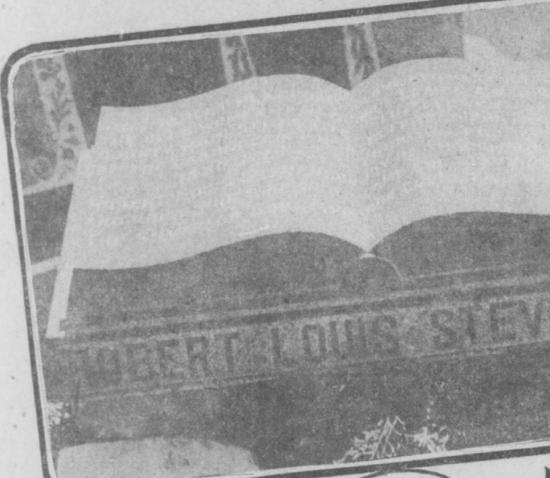


A NEW MONUMENT to ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The Clubwomen of Napa County Have Placed a Tablet Upon Mt. St. Helena, And a Pilgrimage Has Set in of the Lovers of "St. R. L. S." to the Scenes Of "The Silverado Squatters"



THE STEVENSON MEMORIAL, ERECTED BY THE CLUB WOMEN OF NAPA COUNTY AT THE SITE OF STEVENSON'S CABIN ON MT. ST. HELENA



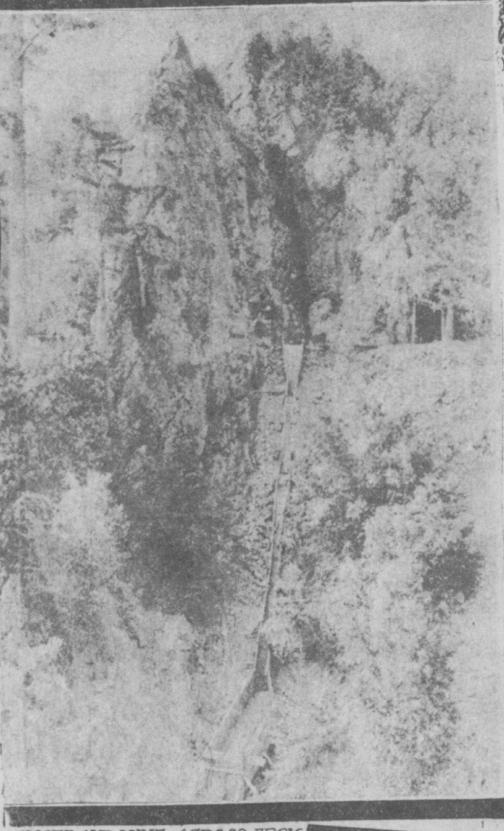
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



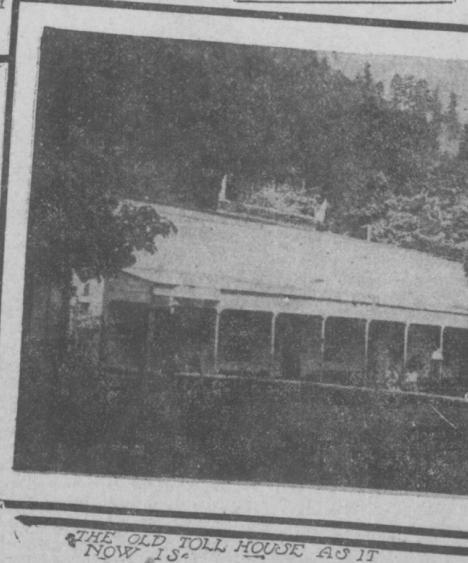
MRS. P. F. POWERS, CHAIRMAN OF HISTORY AND LANDMARKS SECTION OF THE NEW CENTURY CLUB



MRS. PERCY S. KING, WHO ORIGINATED THE IDEA OF THE NEW STEVENSON MEMORIAL



SHAFT AND MINE ACROSS FROM THE CABIN WHEN STEVENSON WROTE "THE SILVERADO SQUATTERS"



THE OLD TOLL HOUSE AS IT NOW IS

By Vivian Pierce

HERE is a new Stevenson monument in California, of which lovers of "St. R. L. S." from far over seas have already heard and to which they are making pilgrimages. It is peculiarly fitting, both to those who knew Stevenson and to that great army who know him only through his books and peculiarly intimate letters, that this monument should be set among the pines and wildflowers on soaring Mount St. Helena, where Robert Louis Stevenson for a brief season loved and suffered and recorded the flying days in one of his most typically Californian books, "The Silverado Squatters."

There are few lovers of Stevenson who do not quote this book to prove the man's understanding and appreciation of California, and few who have not wished to visit the spot itself. It was because of the devotion of these unknown literary pilgrims that the idea of the monument grew up in the minds of the clubwomen of Napa county. It seems that not very long ago a band of these pilgrims from over seas, anxious to follow up and understand the writer's California passion, made the journey from San Francisco to Calistoga in quest of people who still remember that, brilliant eyed stranger who lived so brief a time among them. In vain. They asked in Calistoga where the Silverado squatter cabin was. No one knew. They asked if any there remembered the famous man once so near them. No one knew even his name. A trifle bitterly, the strangers blazed their trail up that austere, beautiful mountain and rediscovered for themselves the ruined platform, the deserted dump, the caved in tunnel Stevenson himself has described. But they looked in vain for the cabin of the "Silverado squatters," long since a tumbled ruin of stones and rotted timbers.

When the travelers returned to St. Helena they told the editor of the St. Helena Star the story of their sad-happy pilgrimage into the past. He was one of the few persons they met who knew and loved "St. R. L. S." He was moved to write an editorial on Calistoga and forgetful Napa county, which so soon had let slip the memory of their most distinguished guest of those summer days in the eighties and had been unable to guide these countrymen of Stevenson to the spot where he had lived and written.

The club women of Napa county were moved by that editorial. In a way it hurt. They loved Stevenson. They knew the old road over the red flower-decked trail. They determined then and there that the pilgrims of the future should know they had not forgotten. Mrs. Percy S. King, then president of the New Century club of Napa, set on foot the movement that urged the women of the clubs of Napa county to mark the spot where the great stranger had lived, and every club in Napa county responded to the call. The Napa study club, the Calistoga civic club, the Brown's valley woman's improvement club and the Napa new century club, which, captained by Mrs. King, had started the movement, all fell in line. And it is owing to the women of these clubs, under the direction of Mrs. King and Mrs. P. F. Pow-

ers of the landmarks section of the New Century club, that after two years, the considerable sum of money was raised that blazed the forgotten trail for the Stevenson lovers up the precipitous sides of Mount St. Helena and at the end of this broad cleared road erected the monument now marking the spot where the three story cabin of the "Silverado Squatters" 30 years ago perched against the pine clad sides of the great mountain.

The monument, set on a rough granite base, is in the form of a great desk that supports an open book. The book is cut from rosy Scotch granite and is polished. It bears, besides the dedicatory inscription "To Robert Louis Stevenson and Bride," a stanza from his "In Memoriam," which, in the light of his early death, seems especially fitting: "Doomed to know not winter, only spring— a May; / From the flowery April blithely for a while; / Took his fill of music, joy of thought and see- / Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased / To smile."

Of Stevenson's stay at Mount St. Helena we know more than of any other period of his days in California. He was better in health and spirits in those magical days of the first flush of his honeymoon, and he has left an incomparable record of the moon filled nights, the great fogs that filled the valley below, the succession of California wild flowers; the very neighbors, most of them long since in their graves, unsparingly observed and unflinchingly recorded in all their whimsicalities and loutishness. From the start we can follow his trail, as so many have now begun to follow it literally, since the monument has been completed, and, with his book in our hand, see how California in those dead days threw its spell over him. A few weeks ago the shop keepers in Calistoga admitted to inquiring strangers that they had never heard of "The Silverado Squatters," which now bids fair to become the classic of Napa county, for sale even at the outlying country shops, where the proprietor and his friends sit around on barrels, and all the countryside comes once a day for mail.

We found on the day the monument was dedicated that Napa county had changed little since the old days. Mount St. Helena is still the dominating figure, "it is the Mount Blanc of one section of the Coast range. It looks down on much intricate country. It feeds in the springtime many splashing brooks. From its summit you must have an excellent lesson in geography, seeing to the South San Francisco bay, with Tamalpais on the one hand and Mount Diablo on the other; to the west and 30 miles away the open ocean; eastward and across the cornlands and thick tule swamps of Sacramento valley, to where the central Pacific begins to climb the sides of the Sierras; and northward, for all I know, the white head of Shasta looking down on Oregon. Three counties, Napa, Lake and Sonoma, march across its cliffy shoulders. Its naked peak stands nearly 4,500 feet above the sea. Its sides are fringed with forest, and the soil, where it is bare, glows warm with cinnabar. . . . Life in its shadow goes rustically forward."

So Stevenson wrote in 1850, and it is

the same today. What struck this California lover was the cosmopolitan character of the people. It strikes the outsider still. On his first day in the shadow of the mountain, Stevenson met three Scotsmen and one of them tried to steal his household possessions, a little eccentricity he forgave for the sake of hearing the voice of the tramp, which smacked of Aberdeen. In all his bright days of exile he never forgot that grim mother country. "There is no special loveliness in that gray country," he writes from the heart of California bloom, "with its rainy sea-beat archipelago, its fields of dark mountains, its unsightly places, black with coal; its treeless, sour, unfriendly looking cornlands; its quaint, gray castled city, where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls and the salt showers fly and beat. I do not even know if I desire to live there now; but let me hear in some far land a kindred voice sing out, 'Oh, why left I my name' and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good, can repay me for the absence from my country."

So this exile in the new, bright land wrote at the beginning of that exile, which was to last so long and end finally in those far Pacific islands. He was never to forget.

From the dim shelling on the misty island, Mountains divide us, and a world of seas; / But still our hearts are true, our hearts are Highland.

And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

Silverado itself, the deserted mining camp that Stevenson shortly afterward discovered, where he "squatted" and wrote his book during those two summer months of 1850, has changed in no respect since that summer, except that the old miner's house has fallen to dust. Stevenson tells us that "it consisted of three rooms, and was so plastered against the hill that one room was atop of the other, the upper floor was more than twice as large as the lower floor, and all three apartments must be entered from a different side and level." But for the absent cabin, supplanted by the memorial monument, all is the same as in those days. The rank growths of laurel, manzanita, madroña and fir, just as Stevenson describes them, still make the mountain sides a mass of varying greens, with a thick carpet of purple and gold wild flowers underfoot. The poison oak that "Fanny" in the old days so objected to has disappeared, though brakefern still

drapes the precipitous sides with vivid green. The gray escarpment of rock against which the cabin leaned still stands sentinel over the scene—over the new monument and all the rusty ruin of the dump and tunnel, where that lovable latest "squatter" once kept his wine. "The one tall pine beside the ledge" still stands and whispers as in those days, still catches the first gleam of morning light and holds the trailing fog wreaths. Stevenson, we remember, as we look up at the gray ledge, used to like to step out of the second story window to this ledge to welcome the early sun and to watch those early fogs fog wreaths. Stevenson, we remember, one else in all that green world was the household of his he was always the first up, ill though he was, the bringer of water, the maker of tea, beginning his labor of writing long before any one else in all that green world was astir. From our seat under the lonely pine we also watched a fog that might have been a replica of the one he immortalized, packing the valley below

in a white woolly blanket, while all about us lay the golden sunlight and stirring green silence.

Sitting there with the new trail in sight and the new monument near, but with the overgrown relics of that past self in the place of that long dead singer, to see the real tragedy in the events he describes so whimsically in his book; the struggle with the lazy "haly"—Irvine, the oaf who disliked work unless he was constantly praised for his strength, and all those other garrulous ne'er-do-wells. We can picture Fanny and Louis, the one unused to work, the other too ill for it, sweeping the red dust out of the two floors of the cabin, terribly afraid it was giant powder as they worked. We can see Louis going over all the refuse of papers, bootjacks and trash left by the miners, looking for some clew to the former possessors, his adventurous mind forever on the track of real romance, forever eager to get in touch

with matter that would lead to new like steel; green, like the tracks of sunset, and so sharply did each stand forth in its own luster that there was no appearance of that flat, star span-gled arch we know so well in pictures—but all the hollow heaven's chaos of contesting luminaries—a hurly burly of stars. Against this the hills and rugged tree tops stood out redly dark. And still these nights drop over the great red, pine-clad mountain and look down on that long gone poet's monument.

Before leaving the spot we explored the deserted camp, as Louis and Fanny explored them 30 years ago. On the dump the rusty rails of the ore chute are yet in place and an old ore ear lies on its side near them. We peered into the tunnel, from which the water "trots forth into the sunlight with a song." The neighborhood is still tenanted by black crickets, undoubtedly the descendants of those very crickets that Stevenson loved above the scogless California birds, "who used to make night musical at Silverado." If ghosts, do return one can picture the genial, slender ghost of "St. R. L. S." on the summer moon dominated nights, coming back once more to his California to listen under the shadow of the gray bluff to "the fat black addlers of Silverado."

One amusing instance of American enterprise that indicates that the foot of the tourist will soon be over it all—this still virgin, untrodden country of the dead singer—was the news we heard that an enterprising native of Napa intended to make money out of his knowledge of the "Silverado Squatters." The reader will remember how on Stevenson's return from a trip to Calistoga, he found that his place had been looted of its bacon, its hatchets and knives, and he whimsically records that the neighbors at the Toll House inn had by remarked that "the wildcats must have carried them off." The modern Napa citizen in the shadow of Mount St. Helena proposes to manufacture hatchets and knives, properly aged, and sell them to the believing tourists to the monument as the knives and hatchets that were stolen from the "squatters" cabin!

Before starting on the return trip, we were behind the new monument in its age-old lovely setting, we took a long last look out over the valley he loved and remembered a sentence he wrote when he must have had the hot days at Silverado, with its lovely, shimmering panorama, in his mind: "There are days in a life when thus to climb out of the lowlands seems like scaling heaven."

Our road back led through the long since obliterated town of Silverado, abandoned in Stevenson's time. The lonely musical tinkle of a cowbell was the only sound that broke the stillness. Diamond, Ruby, Silver and Cinnabar streets, named by the busy herd of men who expected to become rich here in those old, busy days, with their Arabian Nights suggestion of splendor, strike strangely on the ear. They have long since become merely choked pathways that only the frisky gray squirrels can penetrate.

Only the old Toll House, rebuilt in part since the time of Stevenson, still stands. As in the days when the tired exile climbed down from his mountain aerie to wait for the stage that brought his mail and join the other watchers on the Toll house stoop, the great stage still discharges as burden of tourists and mail before the door; and, as in those days, the peaceful little place becomes alive and busy for a brief while. This historic building is now owned by Daniel Fatten, who himself superintended the making of a new trail to the monument and secured for the clubwomen of Napa county the right to erect the monument on the spot. This right has been granted in perpetuity to a board of trustees of the Napa county clubwomen by the Silverado mining company.