

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY

BY H.E. SMITH

Timid Sims

Sims had one merit. He was an indefatigable prospector, and at last struck gravel diggings on Bixel's Flat. Had he been "smart" he might have monopolized the entire lead. He contented himself with a modest slice at one end. Then down came the able-bodied cutting and shooting men of Texas Bar, Jim Free-mantle had worked a bank claim facing the flat two years previously, without suspecting the diggings which existed an eighth of a mile back. No matter. On the plea of possessing a prior claim on Bixel's, he and his compeers argued that they had the right of "running the first boundary lines." Sims had already run his own, which included, so far as he could judge by external indications, a fair slice of the lead supposed to exist underneath. This Freemantle & Co. Coveted. So they ran their lines, which clashed with those of Sims. Sims found Freemantle's notices posted in the heart of his claim. He expostulated with him. He renewed his own notices which had been torn down. These were again snatched off, and his boundary stakes kicked over. This was accompanied by a threat from the proprietors of the "Conquer we Must." Claim, that "any more of that sort of thing would lead to bullets. So Sims "took water," and was obliged to take up with a fragment of the ground he had discovered.

Wang Chu kept a "China store" a little above Bixel's Flat. Wang Chu dealt principally in gin, salt fish, tea, and opium. In his leisure hours he had constructed a boat for transporting parties of his countrymen, who, from time to time in their migrations about the country in search of diggings, might desire to cross the river. It was built after the Chinese style of marine architeoure. It was cumbrous, heavy, lop-sided, and unmanageable in the quietest waters. One aim in its construction had been to use as much old lumber as possible. When Wang Chu had finished "The Ark," as the miners termed it, he painted two great eyes in the bows. Thereby he deemed he had made it a rational, living, seeing creature. When it was first set afloat there was a dedicatory burning of crackers, joss-sticks, other pow-wowing, and an increased consumption by Wang Chu and his contemporaries of gin and opium. After this the ill-starred and ungainly craft floated in its crippled and lo-sided fashion in a little bright of the river. Its passage over the Stanislaus at the lowest stage of water was accomplished with a vast amount of outcries and gabbling on the part of Wang Chu and his crew, who mingled their frantic paddling, when in the heaviest current mid-stream, with an incessant vociferation of contradictory orders to each other. The result was generally a lodgment of the "Ark" a quarter of a mile below its starting point on the opposite side, and a suspension of all Wang Chu's other business until it was towed by hand against the current back again.

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Register of Deeds
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