

CHARLIE LANE LAUNCHED ANGELS CAMP'S GOLDEN ERA

By
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Probably no individual was more responsible for the successful development of the deep mines of Angels Camp during the latter part of the 19th Century than was western mining entrepreneur Charles D. Lane.

During his lifetime Lane mined successfully from Mexico to the edge of the Arctic Circle. During the 27 years he was affiliated with the Utica and other deep mines of Angels Camp they produced more than \$17 million in gold. In addition to mining, his financial and personal involvements included ownership of an Alaskan steamship line and at one time, he played a strong hand in national politics. 1

No doubt, even without Lane's guidance the deep ledges underlying Angels Camp would eventually have produced their millions. But it was he, who during the latter 1800's and into the early part of the present century, served as Angels Camp's mining man of destiny.

Charles David (Charlie) Lane was born November 15, 1840, in Palmyra, Missouri, to Thomas W. and Janet A. Lane. Janet Lane, who had married "Major" Lane in Missouri on November 9, 1826, was the daughter of William Tulloch, for whom the present Tulloch Reservoir, on the Stanislaus River, is named. She was born in 1811 and died in 1888. Major Lane (it is unclear how that title was obtained) was a native of Virginia, born March 24, 1804. The Lane and Tulloch families were among California's early gold rush arrivals.

Charlie Lane was the sixth of eight children born to Thomas and Janet Lane before they left Missouri for California. His brothers and sisters included Mary Ann, 1827 - 1895; Andrew Jackson Lane, 1830 - 1894; William Franklin, 1833 - 1858; Sarah Benton Lane, 1835, died in infancy; Hardage Crenshaw Lane, 1837 - 1870; James M. Lane, 1844 - 1886 and Thomas Martin Lane, 1848 - 1926.

Young Charlie Lane was 12 years old when he, with his family traveling by wagon train, left Missouri for California in 1852. Just how many of the children made the crossing at that time is not known. Their three oldest children, Mary Ann, Andrew and William ranged in age from 25 to 19 years and may have had



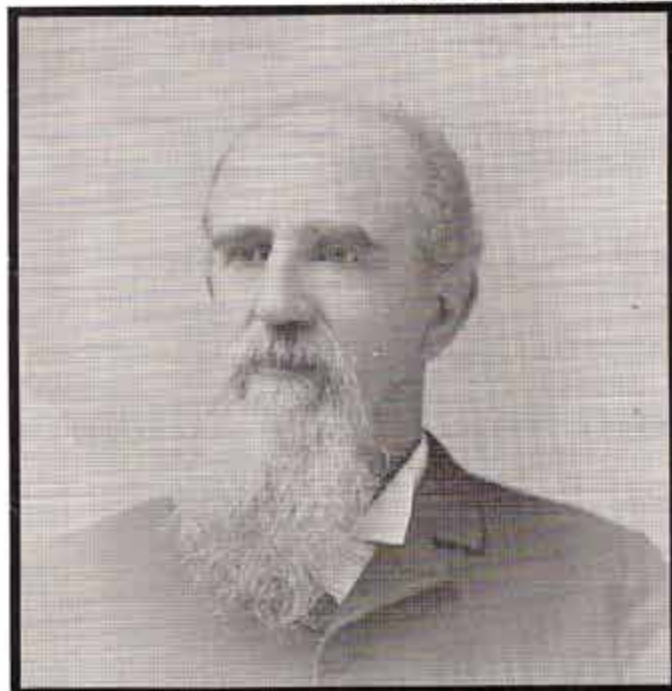
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well established lives of their own, back in Missouri.

Upon his arrival in California's San Joaquin Valley "Major" Lane took up farming not far from the fast growing town of Stockton. But, to a growing boy in a land as new and exciting as California, farming was a dull business. The gold rush with all its excitement and promise of fast riches, was in full swing. The lure of yellow metal in the streams and quartz veins of the Mother Lode was too strong for young Charlie to resist.

Where Charlie Lane may have begun his mining career is uncertain. Quite likely, it was on the Stanislaus River in the vicinity of Knight's Ferry, for the Knight's Ferry Directory of 1856 lists his father, T.W. Lane, as owner of a hotel there. The hotel,

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Charles David (Charlie) Lane



Anna Garrard Lane

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according to Bancroft, burned in 1864, but apparently was immediately rebuilt.

The elder Lane apparently had not stuck long with farming. In addition to the hotel he had acquired 160 acres on the edge of Calaveras County's Salt Spring Valley on which was located a mineral spring which he developed. Lane's Hot Springs began drawing patrons from as far away as San Francisco, who, for medicinal purposes came to drink and bathe in its waters. Major Lane operated the hot springs until 1871, when at age 67, he sold the property to Moses J. Church, a Fresno area rancher, who pioneered agricultural irrigation in the San Joaquin Valley. 2

Apparently young Charlie Lane, involved in mining, did not participate in the operation of his father's businesses. Instead, he mined with varied degrees of success at several locations, including the Alta Mine in Scorpion Gulch, on the 48,000 acre Rancharia del Rio Estanislau Spanish land grant that sprawled across portions of Stanislaus and Calaveras Counties. The Alta Mine originally was the property of Capt. Wright, owner of Salt Spring Valley's Red House Ranch. Charlie Lane's brother, Thomas Martin Lane, later was to become part owner and superintendent of the Alta Mine.

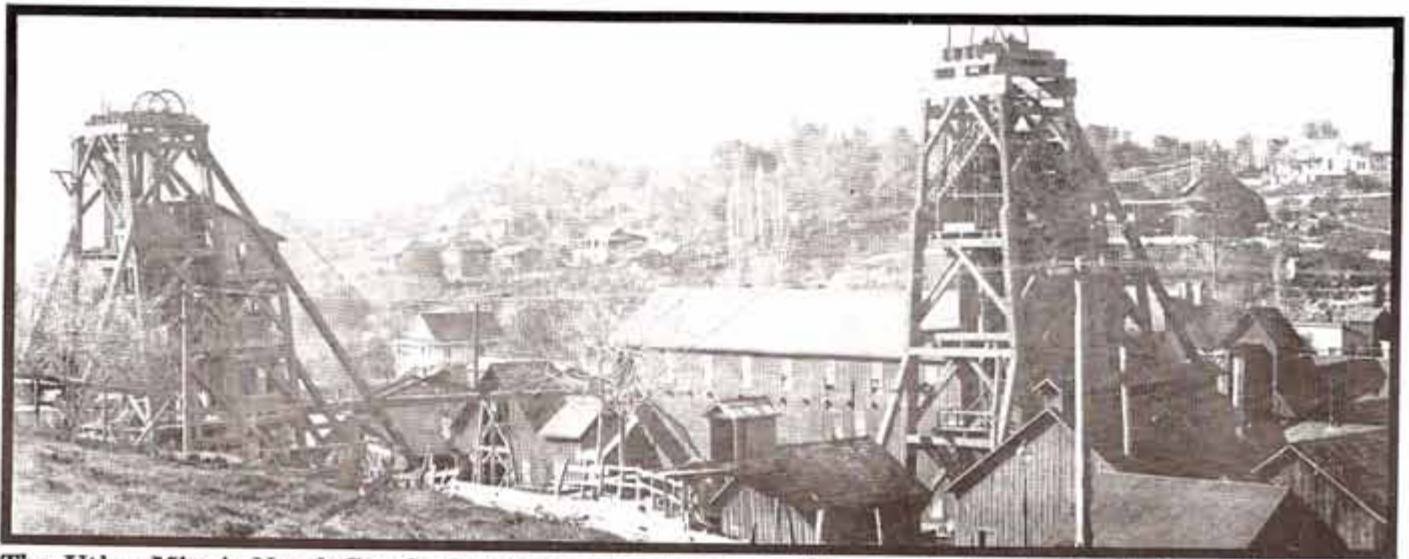
The locations of Charlie Lane's various mining ventures during the 1850's and early 1860's are not well documented. In addition to his early mining experiences along the Stanislaus River and at the Alta Mine he apparently worked at various other locations of the Central and Southern Mother Lode.

The period of 1861 -62 (or possibly earlier, found Lane in the Middle Bar area on the Amador County side of the Mokelumne River. Development of the Hardenberg Mine, sometimes also referred to as the Casco, was underway at that time, but whether Lane was involved in its operation or mining on his own, is not known. While at Middle Bar Lane stayed for considerable periods at a hostelry operated by Abe McKinney, who also owned a store there. It was during that period that Frances Bret Harte also was a guest at the McKinney House. Bret Harte, it was noted, "did not take much part in the general conversation, but asked many questions before finally continuing his trip on towards Mokelumne Hill." 3

How long Charlie Lane stayed in Amador County is not known, but prior to 1864 he was back in Calaveras County, involved in mining the Angels Camp-Altaville area. Where Lane mined or prospected at that time is not documented, but he must have met with at least some success, for on June 24, 1864, he married Anna Garrard. Little is known of Anna Garrard Lane's background, but to that marriage, over the years, were born five children. They included Frank (Frankie) Garrard Lane, born August 28, 1865; Tom Travis Lane, May 3, 1869; Ila Eleanor Lane, November 16, 1870; Paul Garrard Lane, October 13, 1872, and Louis Leira Lane, May 19, 1874.

Charlie Lane was an ambitious man, and although his Mother Lode Mining efforts were providing at least some financial return, he sought greener pastures. At Virginia City the mines along the Comstock Lode were booming, and Nevada beckoned.

Fully aware that all promising prospects in the Virginia City area already had been claimed and without sufficient finances to buy into an operating mine, Lane looked to other areas of the Silver State that he hoped might contain mineral wealth. He chose the desolate Cambridge Hills, overlooking the East Walker River. In that isolated area of Nevada's high desert, amid stunted stagebrush and pinyon pine, for two years he prospected tirelessly.



The Utica Mine's North-South shaft complex stood approximately where Angels Camp Utica Park is located today.

But the famous Charlie Lane luck of later years was not with him. His prospecting efforts failed to turn up enough pay dirt to meet his family's daily living needs. As their finances dwindled, Lane was forced to borrow in order to provide food. The final blow fell in January, 1870. The Lane's oldest son, five-year-old Frankie Garrard Lane, suddenly sickened and died. Destitute, and sick at heart, Charlie and Anna Lane loaded their meager belongings into their wagon and moved on.

At Battle Mountain, Nevada, Lane found employment driving ox team, then as foreman of a quartz mine there. They moved again. He tried farming in Southern Idaho, then returned to placer mining -- this time, on Idaho's Snake River. The gold in the Snake River was extremely fine and difficult to save, but using recovery methods he had learned along California's Mother Lode streams, Lane turned the venture into a profitable operation. 4

Ending the Idaho mining effort, Lane moved his family to Del Norte County, California, where he successfully operated the Big Flat hydraulic gold mine. But, by start of the 1880's hydraulic mining, which washed away whole mountains and turned rivers into ribbons of red mud, was becoming increasingly unpopular. Fully aware that the days of that type of mining were numbered, Charlie Lane divested himself of the Del Norte County interests and with his family, headed back to the Mother Lode from which he had been absent for more than a dozen years.

The steep, quartz veined ridge that formed the west side of the quiet little community of Angels Camp had always intrigued Charlie Lane. Unlikely legend has it that the first piece of quartz gold there was unearthed when early-day arrival Bennager Raspberry, attempting to free a ramrod stuck in his muzzle loading rifle, fired it into the ground. More likely than the unsubstantiated Raspberry story, says C.A. Logan, in his "Mother Lode Gold Belt of California," is that the discovery of gold bearing ore there was made by the Winter brothers, who were among the first to arrive at what was to become known as Angels Camp. Logan said that in 1852, A. and E. Winter were using an arrastra to grind hand-sorted quartz somewhat northwest of the present day intersection of Angels Camp's South Main Street and Mark Twain Road. 5

During the next 30 years that highly mineralized area raised many hopes of wealth, but more often, ended bringing disappointment to owners of claims there. James Graham Fair (Slippery Jim Fair) later of Comstock Lode fame, and Irwin Davis during the 1860's, opened a mine there, which they named the Invincible. Within a few years they sold to Attorney James Boyd and Judge Delos Lake, who after renaming it the Utica, worked it for two months before shutting it down amid accusations that the mine's former owners had "salted" it.

For nearly two decades the Utica bounced from one unprofitable lease or ownership to another. The

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early 1880's found the property, once again known as The Invincible, operating unprofitably under the ownership of Robert Leeper and William B. Keyes.

With money in his pocket and the urge to once again try his luck at mining in Angels Camp, Charlie Lane arrived at the opportune time. With a group of investors identified as Lynde, Hough, Bradley and Mason, Lane in September, 1884, purchased the mine for \$10,000 and changed its name back to "Utica". 6

Under Lane's Direction, development of the mine accelerated, but his partners, like so many former owners, became discouraged with its small profits.

Within months they had disposed of their interests to Andrew Lane, older brother of Charlie Lane and to Judge J. A. Hewell. However, within a year Andrew Lane and Judge Hewell, faced with the mine's rising development costs, also sold out. But, despite his own dwindling finances, Charlie Lane refused to call it quits at the Utica. Always an optimist and something of a spiritualist, Lane was quoted as stating: "Everyone says 'no', 'but my ghost says 'yes', so I'll have to work a while longer."

Lane's ability to continue exploring the underground possibilities of the Utica was bolstered by the fact that his new partners who had replaced his brother and Judge Hewell were Alvina Hayward and Walter S. Hobert. Hayward had realized a fortune from Amador County's deep mines, and Hobert, a San Francisco financier, owned the Union Water Company which took water from the upper Stanislaus River to supply the Murphys-Angels Camp area. Both men had an abiding faith in the potential of the Mother Lode. Within months after they formed the partnership

with Lane their belief of the future of the Utica was rewarded.

As 1885 drew to a close, Lane's miners blasted into the rich ore body that during the next 30 years produced more than \$17 million in gold. Lane, Hayward and Hobart quickly formed the Utica Mining Company and set out to acquire neighboring properties that included the Stickles, Raspberry, Brown, Washington, Confidence, Egan, Little Nugget and Gold Cliff Mines.

With development of the deep mines prosperity came to Angels Camp. Its economy stabilized to the extent that neither fire, flood or the recessions that swept other parts of the country had any lasting local effect. The Utica-Stickles Mines, themselves, produced \$13,635,000 and at the height of their operation, employed approximately 500 men.

The town's population boomed. School enrollment which for 20 years had remained stable at about 140 pupils, suddenly doubled. Close of the century saw youngsters attending classes in a new two-story school on Finnegan Lane.

When in 1885, fire broke out in Cosgrove Hotel, destroyed 15 businesses and all of Chinatown at a loss of more than \$50,000, merchants quickly rebuilt. To ensure that such a disaster would not happen again, the Utica Mining Company which had incorporated the Union Water Company into its holdings to supply its mines with ample water, installed pipelines to bring a pressurized water flow to town. The company also installed several fire hydrants and helped form two volunteer fire fighting units, the Morning Star and Utica Fire Companies. The Utica Company also built a power house east of Murphys which provided the



Turn-of-Century Angels Camp was dominated by gold mining operations. At left is headframe of the Utica Gold Mine's cross-shaft with mine dump at center.



Angels Camp's Main Street was a busy thoroughfare.

Murphys and Angels Camp areas with electricity.

Even as late as 1909, when a cloudburst caused Angels Creek to overflow and flood a portion of South Main Street and Finnegan Lane to a depth of five feet, it was the mining company which helped rally the townspeople and rebuild the flood damaged area.

A common saying around Angels Camp during the heyday of the Utica Mine was "the Utica Mining Company is Angels Camp."

But the Utica Mine was considered by townspeople and the men who worked in it to be an "unlucky mine", and in all truth it had more than its share of accidents. Fires, cave-ins, broken hoist cables, were among the causes of major disasters at the Utica, despite efforts by Charlie Lane to correct or eliminate its underground dangers. The mine's worst accident occurred a week before Christmas, 1889. A crew of 19 men, upon orders of Charlie Lane, were attempting a retimbering project to improve its safety, when they were trapped by a massive cave-in. All but three of the men died, trapped beneath tons of rock and broken timbers, despite every effort by Lane and rescue teams to reach them.

In 1891 a hoist cable snapped and nine men were dropped some 80 feet down the mine shaft to their deaths. There were other cave-ins, and in 1895 and again in 1897, fires swept through the Stickles Mine. The 1895 fire burned for 14 days before it finally was brought under control, luckily, without loss of life. In fact, accidents in Angels Camp mines became so prevalent that its underground miners formed a miners

protective league and went on strike for safer working conditions. The Utica Mining Company, under pressure from the miners and Charlie Lane, built a 16 bed miners hospital in Angels Camp which by standards of that day, was one of the best and most modern along the entire Mother Lode. 7

But, despite accidents, fires and strikes the Utica Mining Company was prospering. During the 1890's the company was recording net profits of as much as \$200,00 per month. In May 1895, the company's gross receipts exceeded the previous record of \$600,000, set earlier by the Standard Mine at Bodie.

Charlie Lane, living with his family in the Utica Mansion he had acquired from former Utica Mine owner Charles Leeper, was becoming a wealthy man. He expanded the mansion, nearly doubling its size, but being Charlie Lane, he could not lean back, relax and enjoy life. He became involved in national politics and in 1896, supported William Jennings Bryan for President. He contributed \$120,000 to Bryan's campaign, served as a delegate at the Democratic convention and became chairman of Bryan's campaign committee on the Pacific Coast. There was speculation that if Bryan won, Lane would receive a high appointment. 8

Lane was nearly 50 years old by the time the Utica Mine began paying its rich dividends in gold, and he was nearly 60 when prospectors struck it rich in Canada's Klondike Territory and at Nome, Alaska.

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Just as the gold strikes along the Stanislaus River had been too much for him to resist when he was 12 years old, so, the discovery of Alaskan gold drew him during what should have been his retirement years.

At that time -- 1898 -- in addition to his interest in the Utica Mining Company, Lane was involved in mining operations in Mexico and with the Fortuna Gold Mine in Arizona, which had produced about \$3 million in gold. He sold his Mexican holdings and headed for Cape Nome, on the Seward Peninsula. There, on Anvil Creek, he staked a series of claims which he named the Wild Goose, then formed the Wild Goose Mining and Trading Company, with its main office in San Francisco. His new company, Charlie Lane knew, could be no small operation if it was to be successful. Within weeks after returning to San Francisco Lane was the owner of four ships for which he paid \$120,000, to carry equipment, people and supplies to his Alaskan mines, and was in the process of buying more. When on May 25, 1900, he and Anna Lane boarded the former steamer Irrawaddy, now refurbished and rechristened the Charles D. Lane, he owned eight vessels. They included the Schooner, Vega; steam schooner, Barbara Hernster; steamers Pauline, Oregon, Lillie and Townsend, the river steamer Gosling and the Charles D. Lane, the flagship of his line.

As they sailed out of San Francisco Bay, aboard the Steamship Lane was a cow, to ensure fresh milk, and two attorneys, Samuel Knight and W. H. Metson, who were to represent Lane against a man who reportedly had "jumped" some of the Wild Goose Company's claims.

Upon arrival at Nome Charlie Lane learned the rumors of claim jumping were all too true. A gang, whose ringleaders included a man named Alexander McKenzie and District Judge Arthur Noyes, had taken possession of the Wild Goose and numerous other claims.

When angered, Charlie Lane could be as tough and belligerent as any man, willing to fight, in or out of court. Litigation concerning his mining claims took place in San Francisco's U.S. Court of Appeals. The result was conviction of both Judge Noyes and McKenzie and a victory for Lane, which won him the title of "The Fighting Father of Nome". The leadership and effort demonstrated in Alaska by Lane was graphically set forth in noted author Rex Beach's

turn-of-the-century novel, *The Spoilers*. For in that book the figure of Charlie Lane became one of his story's leading characters. 9

With his court action behind him, Lane placed the management of his California mining interests in the competent hands of his son, Thomas Travis Lane, and threw all of his energy and resources into development of his Wild Goose holdings. The work included construction of 75 miles of railroad from Nome to Shelton, Alaska. But, despite his best efforts, the Wild Goose claims were not living up to Lane's expectations



The Utica Mansion as it appears today.

and although he authorized vast expenditures to further its development, the venture began to fail.

Then further tragedy struck. While personally overseeing construction of his Nome-Shelton rail line, Charlie Lane was stricken with snow blindness. Despite treatment, his condition did not improve. With much of his fortune dissipated he returned to California's bay area where, during the final years of his life, he was totally blind.

Lane died at age 71, at the home of his daughter, Ila, in Palo Alto, on May 26, 1911, and the mining fraternity lost one of its most prominent and picturesque men.

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1. Stuart Library, University of the Pacific, Stockton California.
2. Calaveras County Archives, Biography of Charles D. Lane, pg. 2.
3. Amador County History, reprint of 1927 by Amador Federated Womens' Club, pg. 32.

CHARLIE LANE NEVER FORGOT A FAVOR

Throughout his life, the character and integrity of Charles David Lane, owner-developer of Angels Camp's famed Utica Mine, was best illustrated by his actions.

The late 1860's found 30-year-old Lane and his wife, the former Anna Garrard, and their two children camped near the East Walker River at the edge of Nevada's Cambridge Hills, where he was prospecting for gold and silver. Those were the years before Lane had met with mining success in Del Norte County or the Mother Lode. For the young family living in that barren desert wasteland of Western Nevada it was a time of hardship and privation.

They had pitched their tent near an isolated custom mill that processed ore from various small mines in the area, but Lane's prospecting efforts were producing no ore for the mill to crush. It was a lonely life for Charles and Anna Lane and their youngsters, four-year-old Frank and his infant brother, Tom Travis Lane. Other than the mill operator, their closest neighbor was Elijah Beaman, owner of a small quartz diggings some two miles from them, which he had named the Cambridge Mine. The Cambridge was not a large producer but Beaman found it well worth working for a number of years. Profits from the mine eventually allowed him to purchase land and become a successful rancher in Nevada's Smith Valley.

Because of the area's isolation - it was some 40 miles from the farming hamlet of Yerington and more than 45 miles from Wabuska, the Lanes depended upon local rancher George Webster to supply them with

meat, vegetables and other necessities. Lane, unable to find a paying mining claim, was forced to charge his purchases from the Webster Ranch. Gradually, his debt grew, then, in early 1870, in the midst of the bitter Nevada winter, real tragedy struck the Lane family.

Frankie Lane, now five-years-old and the center of his father's affection, suddenly became ill. Before medical attention could be obtained, the child succumbed. The death was a heavy blow to both the boy's parents. Devastated by the loss, they wept silently beside the lone burial site a short distance from their camp and the ore mill.



Frankie Lane

Flat broke and with his wife pregnant with their third child, Lane loaded his family into their wagon to seek a more profitable source of livelihood. There was no money to pay off their debt to George Webster for the food and supplies he had provided them. After brief goodbyes with Webster and Elijah Beaman, the Lanes headed for Battle Mountain, Nevada, where Lane found a job as mine foreman.

When the mine closed he drove ox team for a time, Please see FAVOR, pg. 34



In Nevada desert, stone walls of century old mill still mark spot where Lane family once camped.

4. "Charles D. Lane, by E. S. Harrison, in souvenir edition of Nome and Seward Peninsula History, 1905.
5. State Division of Mines Bulletin No. 108, The Mother Lode Gold Belt of California.
6. Calaveras Archives, Biography of Charles D. Lane, pg. 1.
7. Edward C. Leonard, A Brief History of Angels Camp. Published by Old Times Museum, Murphys, Ca.
8. Charles D. Lane obituary, San Francisco Chronicle, May 28, 1911.
9. Charles D. Lane obituary, San Francisco Chronicle.

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tried farming in southern Idaho, then found moderate success in placer mining on Idaho's Snake River. Ending his Idaho mining venture, Lane turned once again toward California. There, he quite successfully for a number of years, operated the Big Flat Hydraulic Mine in Del Norte County.

With money in his pockets, Lane and his family returned to the Angels Camp area where he engaged in various mining operations. Fourteen years had gone by and Charles Lane was 44 years old when, in 1884, he, with Alvina Hayward and Walter S. Hobart, became involved in ownership of the Utica Mine.

Success was not immediate, but gradually the Utica, which had changed hands many times in previous years, began to pay. During the next decade the Utica owners acquired surrounding properties -- the Stickers, Raspberry, Brown, Washington, Dead Horse and other mines. By the 1900's, earnings of the Utica Company were approaching \$2 million per year and Lane and his partners found themselves wealthy men.

But Lane had not forgotten the hungry days in Nevada. He contacted ranch owner George Webster, and with far more than full interest, paid the debt



Elijah and Augusta Beaman at Smith Valley.

owed him for 20 years. And, still in his heart was the memory of his five-year-old son, sleeping in a lonely desert grave.

Once again Lane wrote to Nevada, contacted his friend, Elijah Beaman, now a successful rancher, and made the necessary arrangements. A polished



Rancher George Webster, who befriended Charlie and Anna Lane.

headstone for his son's grave was prepared and shipped by rail to Wabuska. There, Beaman, engaged by Lane to carry out the task, picked up the grave marker and an ornate iron fence to be erected around it.

For Beaman, no longer a young man, it was no



Lane child sleeps here in lonely Cambridge Hills.

small undertaking -- that 45 mile trip by wagon from his Smith Valley ranch to Wabuska, then another 45 miles or more over even rougher roads, to the site of the child's grave beside that now abandoned ore mill. Nevertheless, Beaman carried out the project as requested by Charles Lane.

Today the headstone and its protective fence still marks the burial place of Charles Lane's son. At one time, during the 1930's, the headstone disappeared but was returned after being found near an abandoned dwelling some miles from the grave. The site, today known to few, lies on what is now the Slater Ranch, on the north side of the East Walker River.

Recently, the grave was found and photographed by George Beaman, grandson of Elijah Beaman, friend of Charles Lane, who owned and operated the Cambridge Mine and who placed the headstone and fence at the grave of little Frankie Lane.

George Webster, who once befriended Charles Lane in his time of need, is gone, and the debt Lane repaid, long forgotten. But, there in the lonely desert hills stands the grave marker, bearing witness to the fact that Charles David Lane never forgot his obligations.