Notes

Prologue: The New Camp

3 “like gentlemen”: “Friends Tell of Kind Work for the Poor,” San Francisco Call, July 21, 1902.

3 “That’s what Jack”: “The Ophir Bonanza in 1859,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 16, p. 48, citing a personal interview with H. L. Slosson, one of Mackay’s friends.

Chapter 1: A Rough Irish Lad

6 with the family pig: Grant Smith, “The Mackay Family in San Francisco and in Paris,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, citing interviews with Alexander O’Grady.


7 “superstitious papists” and “illiterate ditch diggers”: Ibid., p. 42.


13 *shipbuilders generally refused to employ*: Anbinder, *Five Points*, 114; Tyler Anbinder personal email to the author, October 5, 2015.


16 *“the gold fever”*: “*The History of California Newspapers,***” *Sacramento Daily Union*, December 25, 1858.

17 *“the yellow fever”*: *The Polynesian*, July 15, 1848.
18 *“The accounts of”*: *New York Daily Tribune*, December 6, 1848.

19 *“The whole country”*: Ibid., p. 60.

20 *“the gold of”*: New York Daily Tribune, December 6, 1848.

21 *“sneers of the unbelievers”*: *New York Daily Tribune*, December 14, 1848.
Chapter 2: Gilded Dreams—and the Hard Fist of California Reality

22 “worse than the cholera”: Bayard Taylor, Eldorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1949, xi.
23 don’t record whether Mackay went: “Mackay’s Life and Career,” Salt Lake City Tribune, July 21, 1902, says he came via Panama (the paper was owned by two of Mackay’s old friends whom Mackay had helped set up in business); “Death of Millionaire John W. Mackay,” San Francisco Chronicle, July 21, 1902, and others say Mackay came to California around Cape Horn. That he came via Panama seems most likely to the author.
24 “accomplished in a day”: Taylor, Eldorado, xvii; John Mackay was one of the 27,000-odd hopefuls who landed in San Francisco in 1851: Hittell, A History of San Francisco, p. 166.
29 five to eight grains: Woods, Sixteen Months at the Gold Diggings, p. 52.
31 “There are but”: A letter from Virginia City written on November 26, 1859, published in Marysville Express, December 28, 1859.
32 “When caught in”: Charles Ross Parke, September 18, 1848, quoted in Holliday, Rush for Riches, 122.
33 “Mining camps always”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 10, “Mark Twain in Nevada—Final Ms,” p. 37.


*every man has*: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2: Folder 6; “Comstock Characteristics,” 156.


*the palmy days*: Joseph T. Goodman, “What We Owe Nevada,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 31, 1892.


*Fraser fever*: “City Items,” *Daily Alta California*, June 10, 1858.


“wild, ungovernable excitement”: “City Items,” *Daily Alta California*, June 21, 1858.


“while there was”: Joseph T. Goodman, “What We Owe Nevada,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 31, 1892.

twenty-five thousand men: “Let Us Reason Together,” *Daily Alta California*, July 8, 1858; official port records showed 12,700 Fraser-bound passengers departed San Francisco between April 20 and August 8, 1858, while acknowledging “the number of passengers reported is considerably below the truth”; “The Rise and Fall of the Fraser River,” *Daily Alta California*, August 12, 1858; The editor of *Prices Current* estimated that “upwards of 20,000” had gone to Fraser River, ibid.


15 percent: San Francisco City Directory of 1861.

*The Fraser swindle*: “What Has the Fraser River Gold Bubble Cost California?” *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, October 8, 1858.


39 “the most magnificent”: Ibid.
39 “throw a slap jack”: Mackay summary, “Probably Mr. Pratt,” Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/II/3.
39 “lighter hearted in”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, “Introduction to Unpublished Mackay MSS, 7, citing an interview Smith did with Gracey, who died in Virginia City in 1933, the last town resident who had rushed to the Comstock Lode in 1860.
39 admitted John Mackay to its membership: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, “Introduction to Unpublished Mackay MSS, p. 7, citing the records of the secretary of the Grand Lodge at San Francisco.
40 “All I want”: “Death of John W. Mackay Removes a Typical American,” New York Herald, July 21, 1902; Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 2, citing interviews with Robert Gracey and William E. Sharon.
41 “Mackay worked like”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, “Introduction to Unpublished Mackay MSS, p. 7, citing Smith’s personal interview with Pride.
52 five dollars a day: “Carson Valley,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 6, 1859, citing the Territorial Enterprise, April 2, 1859.
42 “remarkably well”: Territorial Enterprise, April 28, 1859, reprinted in “Late from Carson Valley,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 9, 1859.

Chapter 3: The Lure of the Washoe Diggings

“no other white man”: John Reese, “Mormon Station,” Nevada Historical Society Papers, Volume 1, 1913–1916, pp. 186–89. Confounding Reese’s early vision of Fenimore alone in Gold Cañon through the winter of 1850–51 are the recollections of Stephen A. Kinsey, one of the men who accompanied John Reese west from Salt Lake. Although he, too, wrote at thirty years’ remove, he remembered James Fenimore as one of the twelve teamsters in their wagon train who saw the train through the desert to Mormon Station in the spring of 1851, then backtrack to join the “not over six miners” already working Gold Cañon: Myron Angel, ed., History of Nevada (Oakland, CA: Thompson & West, 1881), p. 31; the early history of Old Virginia is uncertain—Daily Alta California, quoting Territorial Enterprise, remembered that “he [Fenimore] came from California to this Territory in October 1857” in an obituary: Daily Alta California, July 22, 1861; Dan de Quille, in The Big Bonanza, p. 10, remembered Fenimore as a “resident of Johntown in the early days,” by which he seems to mean 1852–53; Eliot Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners (Berkeley, CA: Howell-North Books, 1959 [reprint of the 1883 edition]), p. 34, says Fenimore had been working in Gold Cañon since 1851, citing Mrs. L. M. Dettenrieder. Fenimore had been born: http://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/fenimore/20/, accessed April 7, 2016; author’s emails with Martin Fenimore, March 26 and 27, 2016. “a good many”: John Reese, “Mormon Station,” Nevada Historical Society Papers, Vol. 1, 1913–1916, p. 188. In 1880, Comstock historian Eliot Lord estimated 120 miners worked Gold Cañon in the 1851–52 mining season and that 150 worked the cañon in 1852–53: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, 24; Dan de Quille’s The Big Bonanza, p. 10, reports “a considerable number of men” working Gold Cañon in the spring of 1852. at thirty cents per pound: H. van Sickles, “Utah Desperados,” Nevada Historical Society Papers, Volume 1, 1913–1916, p. 191 “with good prospects”: Sacramento Daily Union, November 8, 1854. five dollars per day: “Why the Comstock Went So Long Undiscovered,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 8, 7. “Arcadian” simplicity: R. M. Bucke, “Twenty Five Years Ago,” Overland Monthly, Vol. 1, No. 6, June 1883. “a reasonable stock”: Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers, No. 2,” Mining & Scientific Press, July 29, 1876. sold for four dollars: Tennessee letter to San Francisco Herald, April 16, 1859, The Tennessee Letters from Carson Valley, 1857–1860, compiled by David Thompson. as savage “diggers”: For a dissertation on the pejorative “Digger Indian,” see: Allan Lönnberg, “The Digger Indian Stereotype in California,” Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 1981), pp. 215–23. striking one of the ore bodies: Grant Smith Collection, “Why the Comstock Went So Long Undiscovered,” Box 1, Folder 8; also, “Gold Cañon was richest in gold from the mouth up three or five miles”: William Hickman Dolman, Before the Comstock, 1857–1858, p. 32. Many historians incorrectly suppose that the ignorance and sloth of the early miners delayed discovery of the Comstock for most of a decade—these persons are incorrectly appreciating the mining conditions of Gold Cañon and taking facile swipes at the early miners, all of whom had much experience. three or four dozen: Dr. Richard M. Bucke, “Twenty Five Years Ago,” Overland Monthly, June 1883, p. 553; Allen Grosh to Dear Father, September 7, 1857, James


51 “fond of the bottle”: De Quille, *History of the Big Bonanza*, p. 52.


had managed to amass: Additional Grosh brothers source: Sam Davis, History of Nevada, pp. 382–86, citing an interview with Johnson Simmons.

California’s various quartz: A video of a vintage five-stamp California mill in operation is available on the Mariposa Museum & History Center’s website: http://mariposamuseum.com/on-the-museum-grounds/our-stamp-mill/. A number of other videos are available on YouTube.

“Pioneer Quartz Company”: The Pioneer Quartz Company was the first quartz claim in what would become the state of Nevada: “The Pioneer,” Mining & Scientific Press, November 2, 1863, citing Territorial Enterprise.


January 28, 1859: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 21, says that Gold Hill was located on “Saturday, January 28, 1859”—however, only one of those data points can possibly be true because in 1859, January 28 was a Friday; Alfred James, “Early Days in Washoe,” Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register, Vol. 5, 1901, p. 189, says that “an item in the Enterprise of January 29, 1859,” mentions the new diggings, which makes it plausible that the Gold Hill locations were made a few days before, since it’s hard to imagine news reaching Genoa in a single day.

decidedly not Gold”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 23, quoting Bishop.

they settled on: The Gold Hill discovery: The most convincing are the account of John Bishop in De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, pp. 21–23; excerpts of an October 14, 1863, article in the Virginia City Union (presumably the Virginia Daily Union) published in footnote 34 on pp. 109–10 of Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. XXV, and “Pioneer Reminiscences in Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 10, 1863, citing Territorial Enterprise, October 7, 1863; also “Letter from Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 8, 1860 (which includes the usual characters and tells a variant of the John Bishop tale, but places the discovery in November 1858); “Sketch of Early Times,” Territorial Enterprise, June 20, 1875, reprinted in “The Story of the Water Supply for the Comstock,” Geological Survey Professional Paper, Volume 779, pp. 1–2, which claims Gold Hill was named on February 8, 1859, and that mining began in mid-April; Myron Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 55, which repeats The Big Bonanza testimony of John Bishop; Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, pp. 35–36, citing a Territorial Enterprise story of October 7, 1863, and other newspaper and interview sources; Charles Howard Shinn, The Story of the Mine (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1896), pp. 35–38; Grant Smith collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1; and Grant Smith Collection, “The Original Gold Hill Bonanza: The Discovery,” UCB, Box 1, Folder 8.

“pass upon”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 23.

“Johntown unbelievers”: Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 56.

“every man naturally”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 49.


to say them nay: Hutchinson, ed., Before the Comstock, p. 38; the story of McLaughlin and O’Reilly jumping the claim while the others were at the Sides trial is also in Annual Mining Review and Stock Ledger (San Francisco: Verdenal, Harrison, Murphy & Co., 1876), p. 12.


they’d gleaned nearly: Commonly reported figure for the first day’s clean up; the closest to contemporary source for this I have found is “Rich Discovery Near Washoe Valley,” Sacramento Daily Union, July 2, 1859, reprinting from Nevada Journal, July 1, 1859, which says, “He took out in half a day three hundred dollars, with two hands.”

June 8 and June 12: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, pp. 37–38, says the strike was made on June 8, 1859, citing the testimony of James Corey, March 29, 1877, in S. C. Barnes et al. vs. California Mining Company; testimony in Kinney v. Consolidated Va. Min. Co. et al., November 1, 1877, Circuit Court D, California, Case No. 7,827, p. 9, says the strike was made on June 10; ibid., p. 20, Circuit Judge Sawyer says the strike was made on June 10 or 11.

Comstock rode up: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 25.

“You have struck”: Angel, History of Nevada, p. 56.


“a fact which”: Ibid.

No matter the exact: Some of the details in the two accounts attributed to Penrod don’t agree: on p. 133 of “A Life of Fifty Years in Nevada: The Memoirs of Penrod of the Comstock Lode,” Nevada State Historical Society, Vol. I, No. 3, Winter 1958, Penrod says that Comstock got the signatures of three of the four others on the bill of sale for $35, but in the October 1880 letter he wrote for Myron Angel’s History of Nevada (pp. 56–57), Penrod says that he personally acquired the signatures and
paid $50, with Comstock contributing “an old blind horse” to the deal; hoary mining legend often include bottles of ardent fluids in the transaction, such as in Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers, No. 2,” Mining & Scientific Press, July 29, 1876, which says that “Finney received some bottles in consideration for his part of the claim”; “Letter from the Washoe Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 28, 1859, says that Finny “sold out his interest for $45, taking his pay in superannuated horseflesh and lightning whisky”; S. H. Marlette, Annual Report of the Surveyor-General of the State of Nevada for the Year 1865, p. 20, also mentions Comstock purchasing the claim of “Kirby and others.”

60 “a continuation of”: Letter from Emanuel Penrod, October 1880, in Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 56.

60 “The troublesome black stuff”: “Not So Very Strange,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 9, 1863. This is the closest-to-contemporary source I have found that describes the original discoverers using this term. The last paragraph of the story says that the person who wrote it was “the same gentleman who first assayed the Comstock silver ore,” presumably Melville Atwood.

61 forty-five degrees: “The New Silver Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 9, 1859, reported the vein dipping downward to the west at forty-eight degrees; also, “Mining Education,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 23, 1863, quoting from a November 2, 1859, letter written to Sacramento Daily Union by Melville Atwood (likely the letter sourced in the November 9 article cited above).

61 “only a crevice”: Ibid., p. 57.

62 “a horse and $20 in coin”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 29.


62 awarded Comstock and Penrod: Penrod’s two accounts say that he and Comstock were given the 100 feet because they’d taken the time to stake out the claim as a quartz mine; however, F. J. Hughes, who bought a 50-foot interest later in 1859 (25 feet from J. Cora and 25 feet from Comstock), asserts that Comstock and Penrod traded their spring water to the whole company in exchange for the segregated 100 feet: “Statement as to the Mexican, Ophir, and Atchison Mines,” Virginia Evening Bulletin, January 29, 1864, photostat in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB; also, “The Mexican Mine,” Daily Alta California, September 27, 1863, which claims the members of the original Ophir Company traded 100 feet of their ground “to a company of Spaniards” for the water rights to a small spring higher up Spanish Ravine. If true, “the Ophir gave over one million dollars for the piece of moist ground.” See also Austin E. Hutcheson, ed., “A Life of Fifty Years in Nevada: The Memoirs of Penrod of the Comstock Lode,” Nevada State Historical Society, Vol. I, No. 3, Winter 1958, pp. 132–38; Hutcheson, ed., Before the Comstock, pp. 38–39; Emanuel Penrod letter, October 1880, in Angel, ed., History of Nevada, pp. 56–57; Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, pp. 37–55; De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, pp. 24–29; Grant Smith Collection, “The Ophir Discovery,” UCB, Box 1, Folder 19, pp. 42–49.


62 Amid the claiming: A copy of the notice is published in Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 57, but as is noted, the original contains several irregularities and erasures and is likely backdated—typical of the “location notices” from this period in Comstock Lode mining history.

“united the usual vice”: “The New Silver Mines,” _Sacramento Daily Union_, November 9, 1859.


“kiting” the mine: Hints of Comstock’s state of mind can be found in a letter he wrote to _San Francisco Bulletin_ published on October 29, 1859, and reprinted in _Sacramento Daily Union_, October 31, 1859. “By far the richest mines are quartz leads,” he wrote, “and of course they require machinery to work them, which requires capital.” And capital, he did not have.

“the Ophir mine”: The “village of Ophir” is referred to in Walsh’s agreement with Comstock: De Quille, _History of the Big Bonanza_, p. 42.


sales on August 12: Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers No. 8,” _Mining & Scientific Press_, November 4, 1876, says the sale was agreed upon on August 10; De Quille, _History of the Big Bonanza_, p. 42, says the sale took place on August 12.


“I’ve fooled the”: Lord, _Comstock Mining and Miners_, p. 60, citing an interview with Henry de Groot; although, de Groot said that Curry received "not over six or seven thousand dollars and Gould still less" in Comstock Papers No. 13, _Mining & Scientific Press_, December 23, 1876.
Walsh's mule train started: “The New Silver Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 9, 1859; Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 59, says that Walsh sent a sample sack ahead at an earlier date.


He'd profited $4,871: The profits on Walsh's first trip to San Francisco; Walsh and Woodworth’s purchase: Henry DeGroot, “Comstock Papers No. 3,” Mining & Scientific Press, August 12, 1876, which de Groot wrote in consultation with Judge Walsh; “Washoe Diggings,” Sacramento Daily Union, August 29, 1859, says that Walsh and Woodworth had purchased by this date, but may refer to their option to purchase; “The New Silver Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 9, 1859.

September 23, 1859: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 42.


“wild enthusiast”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners p. 60.


Comstock and Penrod also sold: Sale of the segregated hundred feet, which became the Mexican or Spanish Mine: “Statement as to the Mexican, Ophir, and Atchison Mines,” Virginia Evening Bulletin, January 29, 1864, photostat copy in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB; “The New Silver Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 9, 1859, gives the sales figures as $7,000 and $8,000.


“indicative of his”: “Letter from the Washoe Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, Oc-


72 “Washoe zephyrs”: Mark Twain, Roughing It, p. 156.

72 “often blew the”: Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers No. 5,” Mining & Scientific Press, September 2, 1876.


72 “at which six”: Ibid.

72 “Rum mills are”: “Virginia Silver Mines,” Daily Alta California, October 25, 1859.


72 $5 to $600: “Big Stories from Carson Valley and Vicinity,” Daily Alta California, October 23, 1859.


73 “far richer than”: “Carson Valley Silver Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 18, 1859.

73 “It is the universal”: “Letter from Virginia City, November 26, 1859,” Daily Alta California, December 28, 1859, reprinted from Marysville Express.

74 tried a different approach: Tennessee letter to San Francisco Herald, October 22,


75 bars of resultant bullion: Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers No. 3,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, August 12, 1876; Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners* p. 65. Both sources written years after the fact. I have not been able to locate a contemporary source describing the Alsop display.

75 Fraser River–related recession: *San Francisco Call*, April 17, 1863, quoted in Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 16; “The Discovery of Silver Revives California,” p. 12; Joseph T. Goodman, “What We Owe Nevada,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 31, 1892.

75 “Washoe [was] all”: *San Francisco Bulletin*, December 1, 1859, transcribed in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder: “Comstock Notes 1858–1863”; “Letter From Nevada,” *Daily Alta California*, December 2, 1859.


75 Mackay excavated a dugout: “Early Days on the Comstock: How John W. Mackay and His Mates Roughed It in 1860,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1884, reprinting from *Territorial Enterprise*, June 25, 1884 (the article has Patrick S. Corbett in place of Kinney Said); Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1, p. 37 (which includes Kinney Said as one of the original four companions).

75 renamed “Mount Davidson”: “From Carson to the Silver Mines,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, November 18, 1859. Donald Davidson bought most of the Ophir Company’s ore in San Francisco and also owned an interest in the mine.

10, 1859 (the second part of a two-part letter); also, “Letter from Carson City,” *Daily Alta California*, December 29, 1859.


77 After that, they ran out: “Early Days on the Comstock,” *New York Times*, and Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1, p. 37.

77 “You boys come”: Grant Smith, citing an interview with William E. “Billy” Sharon (a Comstock mine superintendent and nephew of the William Sharon who will play a large part later in this story), Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1, p. 40.

77 isolation seemed to diminish: “Our Washoe Correspondence, April 4, 1860,” *Daily Alta California*, April 15, 1860.


77 “a very heavy”: “Our Washoe Correspondence,” *Daily Alta California*, March 14, 1860.


Chapter 4: The Rush to Washoe—and an Indian War


82 “stopping now and”: Browne, “A Peep at Washoe.”

82 “like a great”: Ibid., p. 12.

83 to reach the new mines: On the rush to Washoe, see “A Returned Washoeite’s Narrative,” Daily Alta California; San Francisco Herald, March 23, 1860, quoted in Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder “Comstock Notes 1858–1863”; Adolph Sutro, “A Trip to Washoe,” Daily Alta California, April 11, 1860; “Notes of Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 27, 1860 (a letter written on April 18, 1860); “Letter from Washoe, April 28, 1860,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 8, 1860; Browne, “A Peep at Washoe.”


83 averaged eight miles per hour: “Starting of the Pony Express,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 5, 1860.

84 “a primitive wilderness”: “A Returned Washoeite’s Narrative,” Daily Alta California.

84 “the concentrated energy”: “Our Washoe Correspondence, April 4, 1860,” Daily Alta California, April 15, 1860.

85 “corralled” all of the: Ibid.


85 Mr. Winn, who owned: “Washoe Items,” Daily Alta California, April 26, 1860.

85 one man in fifty: “Our Washoe Correspondence, April 4, 1860,” Daily Alta California, April 15, 1860

85 “Endless chaffering”: Ibid.


“a view toward maintaining”: “Our Washoe Correspondence, April 4, 1860,” *Daily Alta California*, April 15, 1860.

“entirely out of”: Ibid.


ten kegs of”: “Our Washoe Correspondence, April 4, 1860,” *Daily Alta California*, April 15, 1860.


county mining records do show: 5 feet to C. B. Land of California on February 24; 20 feet to A. E. Kennedy on May 9; 15 feet from John L. Newman on June 14; 15 feet to E. Said on July 8: Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of Storey County Recorder and Auditor to Grant Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

“ore of rich”: “Washoe Items,” Daily Alta California, April 26, 1860.


“five days in every week”: Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of Storey County Recorder and Auditor to Grant Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

Indian massacre at Williams Station: “From California, May 21, 1860,” New York Times, May 21, 1860; Frank Soule, “Our Special Washoe Correspondence, June 1, 1869,” Daily Alta California, June 9, 1860, says four whites were killed; Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1883), p. 71, says that when her people saw [the girls’] condition, “they at once killed both brothers and set fire to the house.”

“not fond of”: Hopkins, Life Among the Piutes, p. 51.

“There is no”: Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 151.


“a vast deal”: Frank Soule, “Our Special Washoe Correspondence, May 8, 9, and 10, 1860,” Daily Alta California, May 15, 1860.


“hollow and threatening”: Frank Soule, “Our Special Washoe Correspondence, May 11, 12, and 13, 1860,” Daily Alta California, May 18, 1860.


“No, sir, it”: Ibid.


“It is deplorable”: “Our Washoe Correspondence,” Daily Alta California, May 22, 1860, almost certainly written by Frank Soule.

“frightened hombre”: “Map Traps of Virginia,” Daily Alta California, July 17, 1862.


“the protestations of”: “Matters in Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 26, 1860.

heads of the astonished soldiers: Frank Soule, “Our Special Washoe Correspondence,” Daily Alta California, June 9, 1860.


Mackay deeded twenty feet: Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of Storey County Recorder and Auditor to Grant Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

Chapter 5: Surrounded by Riches—and Unable to Get Them Out

“silver veins are”: “Letter from Washoe, January 8, 1861,” Sacramento Daily Union, January 14, 1861 (a retrospective story that looks back on the previous year).


“Washoe stock, as”: Almarin Paul letter to San Francisco Bulletin, cited in the Grant Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder: “Comstock Notes 1858–1863.”
“put their foot”: “The Late Failure in San Francisco,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 22, 1860; other sources for the spring setback: “The Results of Washoe,” California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences, June 22, 1860;
a tank winched up: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 88.
Mules hitched to: Shinn, The Story of the Mine, p. 94; alluded to but not specifically attributed to the Ophir in other sources.
thousands of tons of lower-grade: “Notes of a Hasty Trip to the Washoe Mines,” Daily Alta California, September 27, 1860.
less than sixty days: “City Items,” Daily Alta California, March 23, 1861, says construction took fifty-seven days.
Four days later: Every other Comstock history, including ones written by Almarin Paul and others written with his help, claim that the mill started work on August 11, 1860. However, those accounts were written fifteen to twenty years after the fact. A “Letter from Washoe, Silver City, August 15, 1860,” to Sacramento Daily Union (published August 29, 1860) says that “actual operations commenced on August 13 under the supervision of Almarind K. Paul [sic]”; “Silver City Mines,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 25, 1860, confirms the date.
ers, pp. 80–89 (based largely on an 1880 interview with Paul); Shinn, *The Story of the Mine*, pp. 80–89.

110 “cloth cabins”: “Mining Region in Utah,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, October 8, 1860.


110 *in Virginia City*: Henry de Groot took the census in August, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder “Comstock Notes 1858–1863.”


114 recalled working alongside: Grant Smith interview with John B. Shaw, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 6, “Mackay’s First Years on the Comstock,” p. 62; “Mr. Mackay’s Career,” *New York Times*, February 25, 1892, also claims that Mackay worked for the Mexican, as does “Outline of Life of John W. Mackay” and “John W. Mackay, Chronology,” both in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/II/8 (both likely written by Grant Smith); also “Mackay’s First Years on the Comstock,” Grant Smith Collection, Box 2, Folder 6. (This author is not fully convinced by these sources, as the Mexican mine employed mostly men experienced in Mexican silver mines and notoriously eschewed extensive timbering—a decision that would cost it dearly in 1863, as shall be seen.)


115 formerly a ship captain: “Notes of Travel in Nevada Territory, June 25, 1862,” Marysville Daily Appeal, June 29, 1862, says Dall commanded the steamship J. L. Stephens before the Comstock era; maritimeheritage.org places him at the helm of SS Columbia; http://www.shippassengers.com/ships/steamships#SSColumbia, accessed October 17, 2016. Both vessels served in the Pacific Mail Steamship Company fleet during the 1850s.

119 “strong, heavy timbers”: “A Visit to Virginia City,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 4, 1861.

119 “striking contrast”: “Ophir and Potosi,” Daily Alta California, March 29, 1861, citing an article in Marysville Democrat.


120 five to ten tons of ore per shift: “From Nevada Territory,” Red Bluff Independent, December 6, 1861.


121 Sources don’t reveal: Storey County Mining Records don’t record Mackay making a single transaction in 1861. A few sources published after his death claimed that Mackay went to Aurora and made an unsuccessful investment in the Esmeralda District (Sam Davis, ed., History of Nevada, Volume II, p. 1063; also, Mackay Summary, “Probably Mr. Pratt,” Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/II/3). That claim is difficult to reconcile with an entry in the Storey County Records that shows Mackay receiving 225 feet of Milton Company ground in late November 1862 for completion of the tunnel he’d agreed to build for the Buck Ledge back in March of 1860. The original contract required Mackay to “run said tunnel five days in every week till his contract is completed”; the November 1862 transaction records the “full satisfaction thereof,” and passed to Mackay the feet of mine he’d earned with diligent labor.
“in a fret because”: “Our Washoe Correspondence, February 5, 1861,” Daily Alta California, February 8, 1861.

roughly $1 million worth of gold (estimated, predominantly from the Central-Ophir-Mexican bonanza and the Gold Hill mines): Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 416. However, J. Ross Browne and James W. Taylor, Reports Upon the Mineral Resources of the United States (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867), p. 104, credits the Comstock with only $100,000 of 1860 production, which is less than the Washoe bullion deposited at the San Francisco Mint in 1860.


“There never were”: “From California, April 20, 1860,” New York Times, May 13, 1861.


“rag of treason”: “Traitors in Virginia City,” Daily Alta California, June 8, 1861.


“a man is”: “Matters in Virginia City, June 5, 1861,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 10, 1861.


“locked up in”: “Mining News from Washoe,” Daily Alta California, December 19, 1860.


125 hundredweights of bullion: “Nevada Territory Items,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 1, 1861, citing Territorial Enterprise, May 25, 1861.

125 Caledonia gold- and silver-mining: The Caledonia was incorporated April 7, 1861: “Mining Corporation,” Daily Alta California, April 7, 1861.

125 Observant citizens built: Living improvements noted in: “Notes on Washoe, June 1, 1861,” Daily Alta California, June 16, 1861.

126 the vigor, energy: “Letter from Washoe, February 7, 1861,” Daily Alta California, February 11, 1861.

126 June 20, around noon: Fenimore’s accident and death: “Letter from Silver City, June 20, 1861,” Daily Alta California, June 23, 1861; De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, pp. 52–53.


126 Uncle Sam’s authority: “Matters in Virginia City, June 5, 1861,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 10, 1861.

126 foreign capitalists; noisy amusements; and “It is more”: “Nevada Territorial Legislature, October 17, 1861,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 21, 1861.


127 a visit of business: “Gone to Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 17, 1861.


128 exacting as a supervisor: “Famous Life of a Maker of Millions,” San Francisco Call, July 21, 1902.


128 never “put on the dog”: Sam Davis, “He Was Manly, He Was Kind and He Was Honorable,” San Francisco Examiner, July 21, 1902.


129 the toil, privation: New York World, July 27, 1902, quoted in Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, “Mackay Obituary Comments.”

129 stimulated every fiber: Grant Smith interview with James E. Walsh, February 10, 1931, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, “Mackay.”

129 to win a name: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 302, citing an interview with John Mackay, probably around 1880; also, “Mackay’s Ambition,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17.
Chapter 6: Revving Up the Boom


132 a service that would: Ibid.


133 “fixed fact”: Ibid.

133 “a vast lake”: “Letter from Nevada Territory, January 12, 1862,” Daily Alta California, January 20, 1862.

133 “voyages of discovery”: Ibid.


134 “commerce rests”: [Article title illegible], New York Herald, July 14, 1862.


135 his first recorded transaction: The transaction was recorded on April 26, 1862: Jerome Quinlan, Recorder and Auditor, Storey County, to Grant H. Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

135 receiving or deeding away: Jerome J. Quinlan, Recorder and Auditor, Storey County, to Grant H. Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

135 relocating a thousand feet: On the relocation of the mine that became the Milton, I have not been able to determine why the company felt the need to relocate the mine. The transaction is noted among those in Jerome J. Quinlan, Recorder and Auditor, Storey County, to Grant H. Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

135 sixty feet of “the Winters Co.”: Ibid., transaction marked in pencil “#5.”

135 Caledonia Gold and Silver Mining Company: “News of the Morning,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 9, 1861.


135 “running full time”: “Nevada Territory,” Daily Alta California, February 2, 1862, citing The Silver Age, January 26, 1862.
“not less than”; “The Ophir Works,” Marysville Daily Appeal, January 10, 1862, citing The Silver Age.


“sheeted over with”: “Great Strike in the Comstock Lead,” Sacramento Daily Union, July 8, 1862, citing Territorial Enterprise, July 4, 1862.


“a well established fact”: “Sacramento Ore,” Daily Alta California, August 12, 1862.


‘got down where”: Twain, Roughing It, p. 277.

“It is now proven”: “Letter from Virginia City, March 28, 1862,” Daily Alta California, April 3, 1862.

“There is room”: “Letter from the Nevada Territory, April 5, 1862,” Daily Alta California, April 11, 1862


“people do not”: “Prosperity of Nevada Territory,” Marysville Daily Appeal, citing Territorial Enterprise, July 30, 1862.

“with the celerity”: “Nevada Territory,” Marysville Daily Appeal, August 12, 1862, citing Territorial Enterprise, August 9, 1862.


in less than thirty-six hours: “Late from Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, July 22, 1862.

“mint juleps, sherry”: “Letter from Nevada Territory,” Daily Alta California, April 9, 1862.

“smart and fashionable”: “Notes of Nevada Travel, June 25,” Marysville Daily Appeal, June 29, 1862 (part II of the letter; part I published the day before).


“choice works”: “Virginia City,” Mariposa Gazette, March 18, 1862.

“draped with great”: “Letter from Nevada Territory,” Daily Alta California, April 9, 1862


hares, sage hens, and ducks: “Game in Washoe,” Marysville Daily Appeal, November 18, 1862, citing Territorial Enterprise, November 15, 1862; “Game in Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, December 19, 1862.

Knowing Washoeites as: “Omnibus for Washoe,” Sacramento Daily Union, August 5, 1862.


“venture in the”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 45.

$12,000 and $15,000: Henry de Groot, “Comstock Papers No. 6,” Mining & Scientific Press, September 30, 1876. The range makes sense in the context of the sums mentioned in other sources.

sold his wife to Comstock: de Quille in The Big Bonanza (p. 45) claims Comstock bought the woman for “a horse, a revolver, and sixty dollars,” but a more contemporary source, “The Shooting at Gold Hill,” Sacramento Daily Union, July 25, 1862, citing Territorial Enterprise, July 22, 1862, says that “a man named Comstocks [sic]” bought the wife for $350. I have cleaved to the more contemporary source. The Union’s July 25 article incorrectly asserts that “Comstocks” was “the same man who committed suicide last winter by blowing out his brains in Dayton,” but a correspondent’s letter published in the Union a few days later, on July 29, corrects the mistake, saying that “the Comstock The Enterprise speaks of is not the Comstock that committed suicide. . . . The Comstock The Enterprise has reference to is H. P. T. Comstock [sic], the one that discovered and located the Comstock Ledge,” and “the last was heard from him had gone to the new mines.” (The author of the correcting letter was related to the man who had committed suicide.)

“a long-legged”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 47; the story of Comstock’s marriage is told Twainian fashion in De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, pp. 45–48; it is also mentioned in Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Volume XXV, p. 107, note 29.


doing well on a placer claim: “From Powder River,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 20, 1862, citing Oregonian, June 11, 1862.


$500,000: The Ophir traded at about $1,600 per foot that week ($1,625 per foot on July 3, 1862: “Weekly Trade Summary,” Daily Alta California, July 3, 1862), making Comstock’s original share worth about $375,000; half of the Mexican was probably worth more than $100,000, and his original slice of Gold Hill would have sold for between $10,000 and $20,000.

considerable jealousy and resentment: “Notes from Washoe,” Daily Alta California, May 16, 1861.

of Washington Idaho, and Montana, 1845–1889, p. 257, note 47. Comstock wasn't alone in his humbling. Alva Gould, one of the original locators of the Gould & Curry, was cutting wood shingles in Washoe Valley.

139 “Dixie-ite”: “Commerce-Intercourse-Taxation,” Sacramento Daily Union, September 26, 1862

139 “treasonous sentiments”: “News of the Morning,” Sacramento Daily Union, September 17, 1862.

140 “invoke the considerate”: The phrase is in Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, but not in his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, issued on September 22, 1862; text of both online at Historynet.com, http://www.historynet.com/emancipation-proclamation-text, accessed December 7, 2016.


140 “The thunder in”: Ibid., quoting the Territorial Enterprise.

140 “to forget the fearful”: “Commerce-Intercourse-Taxation,” Sacramento Daily Union, September 26, 1862.


140 “three hundred millions”: “Mountains of Silver,” Cleveland Tri-Weekly Leader, October 23, 1862, citing The Silver Age.

141 $18 million: “Yield of the Washoe Mines,” Sonoma Democrat, October 23, 1862.


141 “There is not”: Mining & Scientific Press, September 11, 1862, citing Territorial Enterprise, August 30, 1862.


141 “fever, not to say mania”: “Legitimate Profit vs. Wild Speculation,” Daily Alta California, October 23, 1862.


141 The most successful speculators: “Making Money,” Marysville Daily Appeal, September 13, 1862.

141 “perplexing question”: “The Ophir Company,” Mining & Scientific Press, December 6, 1862.

142 had advised the Ophir’s: Adolph Sutro, “A Trip to Washoe, Part II,” Daily Alta California, April 13, 1860.


142 “a narrow escape”: And description of the Virginia Ledge’s threat to the Ophir: “Gos-

“Stock job” complete: Daily Alta California, October 24, 1862, brags about the San Francisco stock market’s “bulls,” “bears,” “operators,” and “sellers short.”


penetrated fifteen hundred feet: The Caledonia Tunnel was 1,700 feet long in mid-January 1863: “Mining Notabilia,” Mining & Scientific Press, January 19, 1863.


The water gushing from: “Burst of Water,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 2, 1862

$450 per month: “Caledonia Mining Company,” Mining & Scientific Press, December 24, 1864.

“full satisfaction”: James Keefe to J. W. Mackay, November 25, 1862, Storey County Records, Book I of Deeds, p. 188, quoted in Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder and Auditor, to Grant H. Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

deeded away thirty feet: Mackay deeded twenty-five feet of the Milton to A. C. Wightman and five feet to S. W. Wulff on January 30, 1863: John Mackay to A. C. Wightman, January 30, 1863, Records of Gold Hill Mining District, Book H of Deeds, p. 397, and John Mackay to S. W. Wulff, Records of Gold Hill Mining District, Book K of Deeds, p. 132, quoted in Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder and Auditor, to Grant H. Smith, August 19, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.


“formidable ledge”: “Washoe Stock Report,” Mining & Scientific Press, December 20, 1862


$1 million per month: “Mines at Virginia City,” Sacramento Daily Union, December 22, 1862.

bars of Washoe bullion: Mining & Scientific Press, December 29, 1862.

$470,000: Mining & Scientific Press, December 29, 1862.


dividend to $100 per foot: “A Big Dividend” and “Mining Operations about Virginia City,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 2, 1863.

“impossible to portray”: “Letter from Washoe, September 3, 1862,” Sacramento Daily Union, September 6, 1862.


Chapter 7: The First Boom, Frenzied and Exuberant


“hard and long”: Twain, Roughing It, p. 233.


preserved petrified man: San Francisco Bulletin reprinted “The Petrified Man” story from Territorial Enterprise on October 15, 1862, along with the in good faith comment about the interior journals.


“a large experience”: Ibid., p. 38, citing an essay Clemens contributed to a symposium, SLC to A. Arthur Reed, Study and Stimulants, March 14, 1882, p. 120.

mine’s stock held firm: “Letter from Nevada Territory, February 1, 1863,” Daily Alta California, February 8, 1863.


A superintendent needed: Three weeks after the first appearances of “Mark Twain,” Mining & Scientific Press summarized the knowledge required to successfully superintend a mine in “Mining Education,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 23, 1863.


“inexhaustible”: Ibid.


the bullion raised: “Mineral Wealth of Nevada,” Daily Alta California, August 26, 1863.


feet on the brain: “First Impressions of Esmeralda, March 5, 1863,” Daily Alta California, March 14, 1863; “Notes of a Trip to Washoe En Route to Reese River.—No. 1,” Daily Alta California, March 15, 1863.


“There was nothing”: Twain, Roughing It, p. 279.

“considerable ore from”: Grant Smith, “John Mackay Manuscript,” p. 266, Grant Smith Collection, UCB.

“a stride upwards”: Mining & Scientific Press, April 6, 1863.


“As the Gould & Curry”: Twain, Roughing It, pp. 274–75.


“We are marching”: “The Comstock Mines,” Marysville Daily Appeal, July 12, 1863, citing “the lively local” of Territorial Enterprise; Clemens had spent May and June in San Francisco—he returned to Virginia City on July 2, 1863, and supposedly went straight to work.

“aglow with energy”: “Our Letter from Nevada Territory, June 9, 1863,” Daily Alta California, June 12, 1863.

“a perfect stampede”: “Matters at Napa, April 20, 1863,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 22, 1863.

“unabated fury”: “Mr. Editor,” Pacific Appeal, June 6, 1863.


from four-horse teams: “Nevada County,” Marysville Daily Appeal, April 12, 1863.


“immense and astonishing”: “Virginia City,” Mining & Scientific Press, August 17, 1863.


Fish taken from Lake Tahoe: Marysville Daily Appeal, May 22, 1863, citing Territorial Enterprise.


“California-like”: “Mackay’s Ambition,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, citing John Mackay’s friend Dick Dey.

scorning cigarettes as fit only: Grant Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 29.


Women in the fast life sought: Marion S. Goldman’s *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners* is an interesting discussion of the sex and drug trades on the Comstock.


“To be a saloon-keeper”: Twain, *Roughing It*, p. 307.


“threw up his”: “For the Liberal Army,” *Daily Alta California*, August 22, 1866.

returned to the Pacific Coast: “California Regiments for the War,” *Marysville Daily Appeal*, September 7, 1862

her husband, Dr. Edmund: “Copy of Records,” Sierra County, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

Louise and her best friend, Louise Meyer: “The Hungerford Family,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, citing Smith’s late-in-life interview with Louise Meyer Howland, Louise Hungerford Mackay’s childhood friend; “Conversation with Mrs. Robert Howland,” September 5, 1929, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.


A “winsome,” pleasant young: *Downie, Hunting for Gold*, p. 182.

II/8; “Particulars of the Fire in Virginia City,” *Daily Alta California*, August 30, 1863; Ellin Berlin, *Silver Platter*, p. 103, places them at No. 10 A Street, but doesn’t mention the fire. The *Daily Alta California’s* August 30 article specifically mentions the destruction of Dr. Bryant’s office.

“the septic sore”: Berlin, *Silver Platter*, pp. 109–10. I’m unclear on the exact sequence of events of Marie Louise’s Virginia City existence. I haven’t been able to ascertain whether the fire happened before or after baby Marie’s death. If I had to guess, I would venture just before.

“acted like an”: “Conversation with Mrs. Robt. A. Howland, September 5, 1929,” “From Mrs. Howland,” and “Dr. Bryant?” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

“Shameless!”: *Gold Hill News*, March 11, 1864, article transcribed in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

whose names appeared on the mine’s deed: Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder, to Grant H. Smith, November 23, 1929, and Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder, to Grant H. Smith, December 19, 1929, both letters in the Grant Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 17; the deed is recorded in Book “I” of Deeds, p. 277, Storey County Records; Smith documented Cole’s and Hirschman’s friendship with Mackay in a number of documents, through interviews with Hirschman’s son, Marion.


“rich Irish burr”: Grant Smith interview with James E. Walsh, February 10, 1931, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, “Mackay.”

scathing Irish wit: Grant Smith interview with Alexander O’Grady, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 11, “John W. Mackay and the Comstock Story, Vol. 2,” p. 312.

tolerant of anything”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 4, “Mackay Descriptions.” (The friend quoted is not identified.)

“to the living”: “Famous Life of a Maker of Millions,” *San Francisco Call*, July 21, 1902.

“an agreeable man”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 16, “The Kentuck Brings Mackay’s First Fortune.”


good-looking quartz”: “Gold Hill,” *Daily Alta California*, March 6, 1863.

Of the fifty-five local miners: *Mercantile Directory of Virginia City, Gold Hill, Silver City, and American Flat, 1864–1865*, p. 251; the Bullion deed: Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder, to Grant H. Smith, November 23, 1929, Grant Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 17; the deed is recorded in Book “M” of Deeds, p. 547, Storey County Records; “Election,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, February 23, 1863.

Freemasons: Roll of the Members of Escurial Lodge, No. 7, F. & A. M., Virginia, Storey County, Nevada, Also, a Short History of the Lodge to December 1st, 1867.

likely to great advantage: Mackay owned at least fifty shares of the Caledonia Tunnel Company through the spring of 1864. Various delinquent notices from the Caledonia Tunnel and Mining Company in *Daily Alta California*: March 19, 23, and 28, 1864; April 28, 1864. He owned at least fifteen shares in July 1865: “Caledonia Tun-
nel and Mining Company,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, July 25, 1865. He had quite possibly kept interests in the Milton. He deeded away all of his Union feet.


“I thought they”: Twain, *Roughing It*, p. 280.

**Chapter 8: A Tiny Sliver of Mine**


**By the end of 1863**: “San Francisco Stock Boards,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, January 2, 1864.

“700 pounds of bullion”: “Mining Items,” *Daily Alta California*, December 29, 1863, citing the Virginia City newspapers.


**firm in his belief**: “California Gossip, December 23, 1863,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1864; George Thomas Marye, Jr., *From ’49 to ’83 in California and Nevada*, pp. 93–95. Marye claims Palmer’s salary was $25,000 per year. I have used the *Times’* more contemporary figure.

“a good deal”: Marye, Jr., *From ’49 to ’83 in California and Nevada*, p. 95.


**the Ophir’s ore body narrowed**: Ferdinand Richthofen, *The Comstock Lode: Its Character and the Probably Mode of Its Continuance in Depth* (San Francisco, 1866), pp. 34–35; “Ophir Ore-Bodies,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 7; Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode*, p. 81.


“largely interested”: “Idaho Territory Correspondence,” Sonoma Democrat, August 20, 1864; Comstock in the South Boise mines: “Suit of the Grosch Co.,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 19, 1864


“an important part”: “The Red Bluff and Owyhee Wagon Road,” Daily Alta California, January 9, 1865; Comstock, his quartz, and his arastras in Idaho are mentioned in Merle W. Wells, Gold Camps and Silver Cities: Nineteenth Century Mining in Central and Southern Idaho (Moscow: Idaho State Historical Society, 1983), pp. 16–19.


dismissed the lawsuit: “By Telegraph to the Union,” Sacramento Daily Union, March 10, 1865.

Did the Comstock Lode consist: The lawsuits are discussed in lengthy and occasionally entertaining detail in Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, pp. 131–80; Stewart, Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart, of Nevada; Smith, The History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 66–74.


“floated”: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 69, 91.


“pretensions to architectural”: “Notes of Nevada Travel, June 25, 1862,” Marysville Daily Appeal, June 28, 1862.

“useless ornament”: “Blunders in Washoe Mining,” Daily Alta California, October 24, 1865.


“why so much money”: “Notes of Nevada Travel, June 25, 1862,” Marysville Daily Appeal, June 28, 1862.


“pacing the roof”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 125.


“a thousand merry”: “Virginia City, Underground,” Mining & Scientific Press, December 3, 1863, quoting the “local” of Territorial Enterprise, Dan de Quille or Mark Twain.

“Satan’s sooty kingdom”: Ibid.


George Hearst, the consummate: Hearst, The Way It Was.


Ralston began the change: “Donohoe, Ralston & Co.,” Marysville Daily Appeal, October 27, 1863.


“went up the flume”: A mining expression meaning the same as “went up the spout.”


“contact with the world”: “A Checkered Career,” Daily Alta California, November 14, 1885.


distasteful”. Ibid.

two years at Athens College: “A Checkered Career,” Daily Alta California, November 14, 1885, and “Death of Sharon,” San Francisco Chronicle, November 14, 1885, both
say two years; Bancroft, “William Sharon,” *Chronicles of the Builders of the Common-wealth, Historical Character Study*, Volume IV, p. 29, says three years, as do most sources published after. I have cleaved to the most contemporary sources.

“Circumstances”: Ibid.


“every cent of”: “Death of Sharon,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 14, 1885.

“the world before”: “A Checkered Career,” *Daily Alta California*, November 14, 1885.

luminaries among its directors: The Pacific Insurance Company ran daily newspaper ads featuring Ralston’s and Sharon’s names; Lavender, *Nothing Seemed Impossible*, p. 118, agrees that it seems likely they knew each other before 1858.

“manly action”: *San Francisco Call*, November 14, 1885, quoted in Makley, *The Infamous King of the Comstock*, p. 24.


“keen-eyed”: “Keen-Eyed Ki,” *Daily Alta California*, November 18, 1885 (an interview with Ah Ki).

“No offence was more”: “A Checkered Career,” *Daily Alta California*, November 14, 1885.


“a true fissure vein”: Prussian geologist Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (uncle of famed World War I flying ace Manfred von Richthofen, “The Red Baron”) inspected the Comstock mines in 1864–65. Although Richthofen's report The Comstock Lode: Its Character and the Probable Mode of Its Continuance in Depth, wasn’t available to the general public until 1866, he’d published his “true fissure vein” opinion in Adolph Sutro’s pamphlet The Advantages and Necessity of a Deep Drain Tunnel for the Comstock Lode (San Francisco, February 1865), p. 21, in February 1865. William Sharon had likely been acting on Richthofen’s advice before that. (The Mining & Scientific Press announced the beginning of a mining survey that was probably Richthofen’s in its issue of November 26, 1864, just two months after Sharon opened the Bank of California’s Virginia City branch.)

“The Bank Ring”: For the Bank Ring’s rising influence in the Yellow Jacket and at the Chollar-Potosi, see Makley, The Infamous King of the Comstock, pp. 31–32, citing “Yellow Jacket Silver Mining Company Records 1861–1911,” Vol. 1, 1863, August 4, 1864, February 11, 1865, April 1, 1865, July 10, 1865, and July 9, 1866, UNR, Special Collections; “City Stock Reports—San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board,” Mining & Scientific Press, April 8, 1865 mentions William Sharon becoming a trustee of the Overman mine; also, James, The Roar and the Silence, pp. 78–79.

As the leading mines delved: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 233


Physically massive and imposing: Goodwin, As I Remember Them, p. 240.

Sutro had been involved: Adolph Sutro, “A Trip to Washoe, Part II,” Daily Alta California, April 13, 1860.

unable to enjoy a laugh: Mark Twain, “Letter from Dayton” (likely published in Territorial Enterprise between November 1863 and February 1864), in Branch, Hirst,


spontaneous rejoicing: Although George D. Lyman’s *The Saga of the Comstock Lode: Boom Days in Virginia City* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934), p. 327, says that the news broke in Virginia City on April 11 (citing *Territorial Enterprise*), “From the Virginia Union” and “The Virginia Union,” *Daily Alta California*, April 15, 1865, say that Virginia learned the news “on Monday morning.” Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, a Sunday.


“low tones . . . expressive”: “How Lincoln’s Death Was Received in Virginia City,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 16, citing *Territorial Enterprise*, April 18, 1865; Angel, ed., *History of Nevada*, pp. 270–71.

“very dissipated”: “Conversation with Mrs. Robert Howland (Louise A. Meyer),” September 5, 1929, Grant Smith Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

Louise Meyer Howland: Ibid.

for the rest of her life: “The Hungerford Family” and “Mackay’s Lonely Life,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, and Box 4, Folder 1; Berlin, *Silver Platter*, pp. 111–20.


Kentuck had received no mention: “Washoe Mining Claims,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, October 13, 1863.

said not a word about: The December article about the Gold Hill mines that makes no mention of the Kentuck: “The Mines of Gold Hill District, Nevada Territory,” *Daily Alta California*, December 24, 1863; the author’s careful scrutiny of every issue of *Mining & Scientific Press* didn’t reveal a single mention of the Kentuck before the
mine’s incorporation notice, which appeared in the October 7, 1865, issue (the Kentuck had incorporated on August 22, 1865), even though it sat between two of the most important mines south of Gold Hill; besides V. A. Houseworth’s location notice in the Gold Hill record book, the earliest published mention of the Kentuck I’ve seen is the mine’s incorporation notice, which appeared in *Daily Alta California* on August 24, 1865. Kentuck stock quotations appeared regularly thereafter. The Kentuck appeared in a comprehensive list of Comstock mines in *Daily Alta California* on March 19, 1866.

*Maps of the Comstock Lode:* “Map of Virginia, Gold Hill, Devils Gate, American Flat Gold and Silver Mining Districts, State of Nevada (1865),” Higgenson & Goldsworthy, UNR Special Collections; “Map of Gold Hill Front Lodes on the Comstock Range (N.T.),” Nelson Wescott, 1864, UNR Special Collections.

*Houseworth’s claim antedated:* Margaret M. Quinlan, Office of the Storey County Recorder, to Grant H. Smith, September 15, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, citing Gold Hill Mining District, Book 26 of Deeds, pp. 593; also, Grant Smith, “The Kentuck Brings Mackay’s First Fortune,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, folder 7.

*Valentine A. Houseworth:* Houseworth is recorded as “J. A. Houseworth,” or “John A. Houseworth” in some sources, but as “V. A. Houseworth” in others. He is “Valentine A. Houseworth” in a quitclaim deed for the Kentuck mine in Book 35 of Deeds, Storey County Records, pp. 122–23, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, “JM Walker.” Precedence is given for documentation over which money changed hands.


*Houseworth conveyed a quitclaim:* Book 26 of Deeds, p. 593, Storey County Records, PDF image of the quitclaim provided to the author by Roberta Martinoni, Deputy Recorder, Storey County, April 14, 2017.

*The Kentuck incorporated with:* “List of Officers of Mining Companies and Incorporations,” Mining & Scientific Press, October 7, 1865, said the Kentuck incorporated on August 22; “Court Proceedings, Wednesday, August 23,” *Daily Alta California*, August 24, 1865, said the mine incorporated on August 23.

*Kentuck’s principal owners:* Details of the Kentuck ownership are difficult to discern. Many people said Mackay made his first big “raise” from the Kentuck, many of whom heard it from Mackay himself. Confoundingly, on January 19, 1866, *Daily Alta California* published a list of Kentuck shareholders who had not paid the December 12, 1865, assessment. The list represents 1,618 of the mine’s 2,000 shares and neither Mackay’s nor Walker’s name is among them. That presents several possibilities—one, Mackay and Walker owned the remaining 382 shares on which they had already paid the assessments and perhaps possessed themselves of many more shares in the January 9, 1866, transactions; two, some of the shares on the published list were actually already owned by Mackay and Walker and the shares were registered in other names to disguise their ownership, a tactic often employed to disguise speculative maneuvers; or three, with the expensive assessment depressing the value
of the stock, Mackay and Walker bought out some of their co-owners, a possibility that doesn't square with the oft-told story that Mackay and Walker pledged their entire fortune to fund Kentuck development.

$20,000 in exchange for: Book 26 of Deeds, pp. 594, Storey County Records, PDF image of the quitclaim provided to the author by Roberta Martinoni, Deputy Recorder, Storey County, April 14, 2017.

borrowed $20,000: Many sources (i.e., Oscar Lewis, Silver Kings: The Life and Times of Mackay, Fair, Flood, and O'Brien, Lords of the Nevada Comstock Lode [Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986], p. 69) say Mackay and Walker borrowed $60,000, including Grant Smith, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, “Conversation with James E. Walsh, September 12, 1929.” However, James D. Hague and Clarence King, Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel, Vol. III, Mining Industry (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1870), p. 182, published in 1870, say they borrowed $20,000. I’ve chosen to use the more modest figure because it is more contemporaneous and it seems possible that Hague and King obtained the number from Mackay himself, and because it “feels” like a more reasonable number.

small workforce: “Virginia City and Vicinity,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 3, 1866, reported the Kentuck workforce as eleven men, which may or may not have included Mackay.


and signed the extension: “Mackay Joins the Bullion Venture; The Kentuck Brings Mackay’s First Fortune,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 16, citing an interview with James E. Walsh, September 12, 1929. Walsh was manager of the Flood estate and connected to James Flood and John Mackay through much of his lifetime. He held a power of attorney for Mackay for the last ten years of Mackay’s life. Walsh described Mackay as taking great delight in telling this story.


richest men in the world: For sources for Mackay and Walker’s Kentuck operation,
Chapter 9: The Rise of the Bank Ring

199 "come out right": "Washoe All Right," Sacramento Daily Union, March 13, 1866.
200 “an extraordinary advance”: “IMPROVEMENT IN MINING STOCKS,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 10, 1866.
200 Working from the New Year’s: "From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 24, 1866; Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 103–6.
200 "a considerable quantity": “Virginia City and Vicinity,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 17, 1866.
200 they rescinded the mine’s recent: “Virginia City and Vicinity,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 17, 1866; “From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, February 24, 1866; “Virginia City and Vicinity,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 3, 1866; For the Kentuck’s $7.50 replacement assessment, see “Kentuck Mining Company,” Daily Alta California, February 28, 1866.
200 rescinded that one, too: “Kentuck Mining Company,” Daily Alta California, March 11, 1866.
200 Yellow Jacket miners worked west: "From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 10, 1866.
200 Mackay worked the Kentuck: “Washoe, Nevada,” Mining & Scientific Press, April 7, 1866.
201 sent about seven thousand tons: “From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, April 21, 1866.
201 receipts for the west stratum: “From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 31, 1866, and April 14, 1866; “From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, June 2, 1866.
201 from fifty to eighty dollars per foot: “Mining Dividend,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 17, 1866; “From the Stock Circular . . . ,” Mining & Scientific Press, May 12, 1866.
exceeded the combined total: “Nevada” and “Bullion Figures from Gold Hill, Nevada,” Mining & Scientific Press, June 23, 1866.


brought him happiness: New York World, July 27, 1902, citing a letter Mackay wrote to the paper in answer to the question, “Does wealth bring happiness?” (the article doesn’t date Mackay’s letter), article transcribed in “Mackay’s Ambition,” Grant Smith Papers, UCB.

“No property deteriorates”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 246, citing an interview with Alpheus Bull.

Sharon foreclosed on the mill: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 246.

the lode’s millable ore: “Comstock Ledge,” Mining & Scientific Press, October 27, 1866.


he had concluded contracts: “The Drainage of the Comstock Lode,” Daily Alta California, April 2, 1866.


The Crown Point repudiated: Ibid., p. 54.


as a Washoe powerbroker: Ibid., pp. 54, 878.


“Owls would roost”: Ibid., p. 110.


“hurricane of applause”: Ibid., p. 131, citing Twain’s friend Steve Gillis.


“most uncomfortably genuine”: Twain, Roughing It, p. 500.

as their own: “Nevada State Items,” Daily Alta California, November 1, 1866; “Mark Twain’s Lecture at Virginia,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 3, 1866, citing Territorial Enterprise, November 1, 1866; “Nevada State Items,” Daily Alta California, November 4, 1866. For the robbery, see “Mark Twain Robbed,” Sacramento Daily Union, November 13, 1866; “Mark Twain and the Road Agents,” Daily Alta California, November 14, 1866; “A Robbery Joke,” Sacramento Daily Union, November
15, 1866, citing Territorial Enterprise, November 13, 1866; Twain, Roughing It, pp. 497–502; see also, Tarnoff, The Bohemians, pp. 131–33.

“as the mine is”: “Mines of Nevada,” Daily Alta California, January 12, 1867.


bought the mill outright: Gold Hill News, May 25, 1867, article transcribed in Grant Smith, “Kentuck,” UCB, Box 1, Folder 17.

Tetanus symptoms: Author’s email correspondence with Dr. Mark Robinson, MD.

June 29, 1866: “Died,” Sacramento Daily Union, July 10, 1866; Pioneer Memorial Park, Laurel Hill Cemetery Association to Grant Smith, September 2, 1930, says Dr. Bryant died on June 30, 1866, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.


“active operations”: “For the Liberal Army,” Daily Alta California, August 22, 1866; see also, “By Telegraph to the Union,” Sacramento Daily Union, August 22, 1866. Colonel Hungerford’s hagiographic biography Life of Colonel Daniel E. Hungerford (almost certainly financed by John Mackay) says he departed for Mexico in 1865. Contemporary newspaper articles make it apparent that he went south the following year, on July 24, 1866.


“having a hard”: Smith, “The Hungerford Family,” p. 48, Grant Smith Collection, UCB.

“beautiful, charming, and”: “From Mrs. Howland,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.

“the road to fortune”: Bancroft, Chronicles of the Builders of the Commonwealth, Volume IV, p. 214.

“filled his sacks”: Ibid., p. 216.

“knew the exact”: Goodwin, As I Remember Them, p. 178.

moved his family to Virginia City: Several sources claim Fair started on the Comstock Lode in 1860. However, The Mercantile Guide and Directory for Virginia City, Gold Hill, Silver City, and American City for 1864–5 lists no resident named Fair. “Nevada. The Fair Divorce Case,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, May 14, 1883, says the Fairs moved to Virginia City in 1866. Precedence is given to testimony delivered under oath.

Fair shifted his shingle: “Nevada State Items,” Daily Alta, California, November 2, 1866, mentions a new man appointed as Ophir superintendent. For James Fair’s background, see “His Business Grasp,” San Francisco Call, December 29, 1894; “Death of Fair,” San Francisco Chronicle, December 29, 1884; “Ex-Senator Fair is Dead,” New York Times, December 30, 1894; De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza,

“conversational powers”: *San Francisco Bulletin*, March 6, 1876.

“Snows hit the lode”: “Nevada State Items,” *Daily Alta California*, December 6, 1866, citing *Gold Hill News*.


*a trip to the East*: “Supt. Walker of the Bullion mine has returned from a trip east,” *Gold Hill News*, September 10, 1866, article transcribed in Grant Smith, “Kentuck,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17.

“When Walker had”: Grant Smith, “Kentuck,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, citing an interview with James E. Walsh.


*the rest of McCullough’s life*: “Mackay’s Lonely Life and Diversions,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8.

“I am a”: Grant Smith, “Marriage,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1, citing an interview with Mrs. Robert Howland (Louise Meyer, Marie Louis Hungerford’s childhood friend).


*an old acquaintance*: *Daily Trespass*, quoted in “Mackay’s Lonely Life,” p. 41, Grant Smith Collection, UCB.

“It is seldom”: *Territorial Enterprise*, November 27, 1867, quoted in Makley, *John Mackay*, pp. 37.
Chapter 10: The Irish Coup


5:00 p.m.: Oscar Shuck, *History of the Bench and Bar of California*, p. 489.


“made all of”: Marye, Jr., From '49 to '83 in California and Nevada, 93.

Hale & Norcross shares opened: “By Telegraph to the Union,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 1, 1868, giving the closing price for December 31, 1867.


“Everything was shrouded”: “Nevada,” *Daily Alta California*, January 14, 1868, reprinting from *Territorial Enterprise*, January 10, 1868.


another $325: *Daily Alta California*, January 21, 1868.


rumors claimed that: “By Telegraph to the Union,” Sacramento Daily Union, February 13, 1868.
“a prominent banker”: Joseph King, History of the San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board, p. 40; see also “Somebody Won,” Daily Alta California, March 3, 1868.
the new trustees restructured: The Hale & Norcross reorganization restructured the mine’s capital stock from $1,200,000 divided into eight hundred shares nominally valued at $1,500 each to $1,600,000 divided into eight thousand shares with a nominal value of $200 each: “Stockholders’ Notice,” Daily Alta California, March 24, 1868; “By Telegraph to the Union,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 1, 1868.
had been footed about for years: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 250; Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 279.
fifty-three and a half minutes: “Virginia City, May 8, 1869,” Daily Alta California, May 9, 1869.
$700,000: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 123, although James, The Roar and the Silence, p. 80, and endnote 17, p. 290, points out that the amount of the mines’ contribution varies in different sources.
Yellow Jacket stockholders paid: Makley, The Infamous King of the Comstock, p. 47.
“Can you run”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 251, citing an interview with I. E. James.
“the indefatigable”: “Letter from Washington, March 14, 1869,” Daily Alta California, April 18, 1869.
"a strong box": President Grant’s Inaugural Address, March 14, 1869, text online at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25820, accessed August 1, 2017.
“a favorable lead”: “Letter from Washington, March 14, 1869,” Daily Alta California, April 18, 1869.
improvements revolutionized capabilities: Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 594; sum-


“scalping knife of”: Ibid.


deepest shaft in Nevada: Gold Hill News, March 8, 1868.


After their discovery: Merle W. Wells, Gold Camps & Silver Cities, pp. 11, 45.


Among the other delinquents: “Rising Star Silver Mining Company,” Daily Alta California, October 24, 1868.

to superintend the mine: James, The Roar and the Silence, p. 103, citing Territorial Enterprise; Makley, John Mackay, p. 32.

emerged as one of the trustees: “New Incorporations,” Mining & Scientific Press, November 14, 1868.


opened an office devoted: San Francisco Directory for the Year Commencing October 1868, p. 218.
courage to make the change: The San Francisco City Directory of September 1867 lists Flood and O’Brien at the Auction Lunch; the San Francisco City Directory of October 1868 lists them at the nearby office.


cost him $300,000: Goodwin, As I Remember Them, p. 161.


“shorts” and “holders”: “Financial and Commercial,” Daily Alta California, August 1, 1868.


“a strange sight”: “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, December 31, 1868, quoting Territorial Enterprise, December 29, 1868.

to finance the final quarter: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 117, citing an interview with James E. Walsh.


Thursday, January 7: “Financial and Commercial,” Daily Alta California, January 8, 1869. (The mine had 8,000 shares; 4,001 were needed to control the election.)


dSeveral bodies of good ore: “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, February 20, 1869, citing Territorial Enterprise.

“J. G. Fair and Wm. Mackay”: “Pacific Coast Dispatches,” Daily Alta California, February 21, 1869. The news also appeared in Daily Morning Chronicle on that date.


reregistered their ownership: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 117–18, citing an interview with James E. Walsh.

rescinded the mine’s most recent: “Mining Notices,” Daily Alta California, March 13, 1869.

the old hoisting works back in operation: “State Line Dispatches,” Marysville Daily Appeal, March 20, 1869.


Chapter 11: The Lode’s Worst Day


along the stations of the: “Small-Pox on the Railroad,” Daily Alta California, January
13, 1869. For the smallpox in Reno, see “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, December 17, 1868, citing Territorial Enterprise, December 15, 1868.

east side of A Street: Weekly Alta California, October 10, 1868, reprinting from Territorial Enterprise, October 1, 1868.

about eighty cases: “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, December 18, 1868, citing Territorial Enterprise, December 16, 1868.


Seven adepts racing: “From Virginia, Nevada,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 22, 1869.


referring to them as bicycles: The first use of the word “bicycle” in Daily Alta California appears to be in late January 1869; The Mining & Scientific Press seems to have first used it on March 6, 1869.


“new and unheard-of”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 145.

“Hundreds upon hundreds”: Ibid., p. 146.

“in every way”: Ibid., p. 145.

one death per week: “Nevada Items,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 23, 1875, which includes the cited statistic in plain language.


collapsing pile of shoring: “Serious Accident,” Sacramento Daily Union, June 17, 1862, citing Silver Age, June 14, 1862.

stagecoach driver: “Fatal Stage Accident,” Marysville Daily Appeal, December 9, 1862.


A sill timber being lowered: “Mining Accident,” Daily Alta California, August 19, 1863.

“at the run”: “A Frightful Fall—Saved by Water,” Red Bluff Beacon, October 14, 1863.


severely scalded the back: “Accidents in Nevada Territory,” Sacramento Daily Union, August 20, 1863.


In the Chollar-Potosi: “Virginia City Items,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 1, 1868, quoting Territorial Enterprise, April 29, 1868.


Chauncy Griswold: Weekly Alta California, October 10, 1868, reprinting from Territorial Enterprise, October 1, 1868.


eight-year-old boy drowned: “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, February 8, 1869, citing Territorial Enterprise, February 5, 1869.


John Percival Jones: “Over the Mountains,” Daily Alta California, November 12, 1868.

“Murphy . . . Send me”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 270, citing the testimony of John Murphy at the coroner’s inquest and Gold Hill News, April 26, 1869.

We are fast”: “The Enterprise Account,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 10, 1869, extracting from Territorial Enterprise.


“It was such”: “The Enterprise Account,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 10, 1869, extracting from Territorial Enterprise.

“peculiar and sickening”: “Nevada,” Daily Alta California, April 14, 1869, citing Territorial Enterprise, April 10, 1869.


most of whom would have died: Fire sources: “Great Disaster at Gold Hill,” Daily Alta California, April 8, 1869, citing Gold Hill News, April 7, 1869; “News of the Morning” and “Terrible Accident and Loss of Life!” Sacramento Daily Union, April 8, 1869; “The Comstock Mine Fire,” Daily Alta California, April 9, 1869; “The Gold Hill Disaster,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 9, 1869; “The Fire in the Comstock Mines,” “The ‘Enterprise’ Account,” “Second Dispatch,” and “SAD,” Daily Alta Cali-

265 “saved their powder”: “Virginia City, May 8, 1869,” Daily Alta California, May 9, 1869.
265 “the greatest industrial”: “By the Vallejo Route,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 12, 1869, quoting San Francisco Bulletin, May 11, 1869.


“that famous tunnel”: “Mr. Sharon’s Speech,” *Gold Hill Daily News*, October 7, 1869. (Sharon made the quip in reference to the start of grading the tunnel approach.)


lowest annual total since 1862: Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, p. 416. (Sources dispute the exact figures; not the overall trend.)


the most important development: “Washoe,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, November 27, 1869.

Chapter 12: Jones’s Sick Child


checked into the Grand Hotel: “J. Mackay, Virginia” checked in, almost certainly our man, as recorded in “Arrivals,” San Francisco Chronicle, June 10, 1870. His wife and stepdaughter weren’t mentioned, a common omission in nineteenth-century newspapers. Considering that Marie Louise gave birth in the Grand Hotel two months later, both of her parents still lived in San Francisco, and her well-known dislike of Virginia City, it seems probable she accompanied her husband and spent the rest of her pregnancy in San Francisco.


$164,000 in dividends: Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains, 1871, p. 103.


“not very encouraging”: “The Comstock Lode and High Wages,” Daily Alta California, July 8, 1870.


274 endangered the bank’s: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 279, citing an 1880 interview with William Sharon.


274 “drifting about in”: “Local Mining Intelligence,” Territorial Enterprise, February 13, 1870, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6.

274 At the morning session: “Stock Market,” Daily Alta California, November 12, 1870. (The lowest recorded price for a Crown Point sale the author could find.)

275 more than $1,000 per foot: “San Francisco Stock and Exchange Board,” Daily Alta California, November 2, 1866. (No Crown Point shares changed hands during the November 2, 1866, sessions.)


275 “well-defined clay seam”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 282, citing an interview with John Percival Jones.

275 “the discovery of”: “Mary Jane Simpson, Virginia Gossip, December 1, 1870,” San Francisco Chronicle, December 3, 1870.

276 price climbed to sixteen: All stock quotations, “Stock Market,” Daily Alta California, November 26 to December 4, 1870.

276 “supposed” to be: “Crown Point,” Territorial Enterprise, December 8, 1870, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6.


277 “dangerously ill”: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 282, citing an interview with John Percival Jones.

277 rumors of $400 rock: The report was published the next day in San Francisco Weekly Stock Circular. Rossiter W. Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States West of the Rocky Mountains, 1872, p. 93.


Chapter 13: The Consolidated Virginia Mine


blessedly free from smallpox: “The Health Of” Territorial Enterprise, February 3, 1871, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6.


“the most popular”: “The Rinks,” Territorial Enterprise, February 10, 1871, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6.


Taking Willie’s nurse, Alice O’Grady: Mackay’s granddaughter Ellin Berlin’s historical novel Silver Platter, about her grandmother life, says that Louise’s mother and sister accompanied John, Louise, Eva, Willie, and their nurse on the European trip. Contemporary confirmation is difficult to locate. Mrs. Hungerford, Ada, and the nurse are not listed among the passengers who sailed with “Miss Mackay” and “Mr. Mackay wife and son” aboard the SS City of Brooklyn on April 8, 1871 (“Passengers
Sailed,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1871). Most compelling evidence that Ada and Mrs. Hungerford accompanied them is in an essay about John Mackay in *Sketches of Leading and Representative Men of San Francisco, Being Original Sketches from the Lives of the Prominent Politicians, Lawyers, Divines, Pioneers, Merchants, Orators, Etc., Etc., of San Francisco, 1875*, pp. 959–64 (based on an interview with Louise), which says that “Mrs. Mackay’s sister has just completed a brilliant education in Europe.” Colonel Hungerford likely stayed in San Francisco and Baja California in 1871–75. His biography says he traveled from Mexico to Belgium to meet them in 1874. (Colonel Hungerford donated a collection of Gulf of California marine life to the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco on April 6, 1874 (“Academy of Sciences,” *Daily Alta California*, April 7, 1874), and he was elected to the Academy a month later (“San Francisco Academy of Sciences,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 6, 1874). Colonel Hungerford, his wife, and his daughter appeared on a list of “Californians in Paris” published in *Daily Alta California* on December 4, 1875. They were not on the list published on November 11. The author judges it likely that Mrs. Hungerford and Ada did not accompany the 1871 trip. Alice O’Grady definitely did accompany the trip, based on Grant Smith’s interviews with her son, Alexander O’Grady.


285 Arthur Perkins: “Murder in Cold Blood,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 7, 1871 (the murderer’s full name was Arthur Perkins Heffnan or Hefferner, but in Virginia City he was usually called Arthur Perkins).


286 “Hung by Vigilance Committee”: “Swift Retribution,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 26, 1871; “Vigilance Committee in Virginia City,” *Daily Alta California*, March 27, 1871; “Letter from Virginia City, March 25, 1871,” *Daily Alta California*, March 27, 1871, reprinted from “The Correspondence of The Union”; “More of the Virginia Vigilance Committee,” *Daily Alta California*, March 29, 1871. Some sources say he was hanged in the old Ophir works. The most immediate say the old works of the Mexican.


287 *Pushing a 1,200-pound carload:* “A Mule 1,000 Feet Underground,” *Daily Alta California*, October 1, 1871, citing *Gold Hill News*, September 29, 1871.


288 *There had been “horses”: “Rumors about the Belcher,”* *Territorial Enterprise*, October 10, 1871, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6.

288 “many long powwows”: “A Pair of Mules Living and Working 1,100 Feet Underground,” *Territorial Enterprise*, October 6, 1871, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/Box 6; also, “Mules 1,000 Feet Underground,” *Pacific Rural Press*, October 14, 1871.

288 *to exceed $400,000:* “Washoe,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, November 18, 1871.


289 *A series of underground floods:* Underground floods in the Hale & Norcross mentioned often in *Mining & Scientific Press* in the summer of 1871; *baser and less: Smith, The History of the Comstock Lode*, pp. 119, 145.

289 *last dividend:* Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, p. 306.

289 *six hours of running water per day:* Mary Jane Simpson, “Virginia Gossip, January 19, 1871,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 22, 1871.


290 *three hours a day:* Mary Jane Simpson, “Virginia Gossip, January 19, 1871,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 22, 1871.

290 “Anything can be”: Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, p. 323, citing an interview with J. B. Overton, superintendent of the Virginia City and Gold Hill Water Company.


“The Consolidated Virginia”: “Consolidated Mining Company,” *Daily Alta California*, June 9, 1867. It isn’t easy to figure out the exact details of the original consolidation. Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode*, p. 146, claims the Con. Virginia incorporated with 1,010 feet and 1,160 shares formed from the Sides, the White & Murphy, and the California mines. Confoundingly, historian Eliot Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, pp. 308–9, says the original Con. Virginia had 860 feet on the lode and included the Sides, White & Murphy, Kinney, and the Central No. 2; “Burke v. Flood,” *Daily Alta California*, December 10, 1880, makes it clear that the Firm acquired the Kinney ground through several purchases from several small holders in April 1872. Confusingly, “Nevada,” *Daily Alta California*, May 21, 1868, citing *Territorial Enterprise*, May 19, 1868, describes the Con. Virginia as including “the California, Central, White & Murphy, and other claims”; “Mining Stocks,” *Mining & Scientific Press*, April 27, 1872, includes a table of all the Washoe mines that lists the Con. Virginia with 1,160 feet and 11,600 shares. Supporting Smith’s statement, “Financial and Commercial,” *Daily Alta California*, January 1, 1874, describes the creation of the “new” California mine from the Kinney, Central No. 2, California, and Central No. 1 (a consolidation managed by the Firm’s guiding hand). Before the consolidation, Central No. 2 and Central No. 1 traded independently (although were likely controlled by the Firm), and the Kinney (50 feet) and California (300 feet) belonged to the Consolidated Virginia. Con. Virginia shareholders received 58½ shares of the “new” California mine for every 100 shares of Con. Virginia stock they owned. (They owned 350 of the 600 feet involved.) They’d have received more if either the Central No. 2 or Central No. 1 had belonged to the Con. Virginia. However, “Burke v. Flood,” *Daily Alta California*, December 15, 1880, reporting on a court case, says, “stock in the Con. Virginia Company was always issued to holders of interests in the 1,160 feet comprised in that mining claim.” Davis, *History of Nevada*, p. 416, says the Bank Ring organized the Con. Virginia, a contention supported by the slate of incorporators.


ten dollars per share: “Sales, May 26, 1868,” *Daily Alta California*, May 27, 1868.


two dollars per share: “Sales of Stocks,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, September 15, 1869.


their drifts and crosscuts: Many contemporary mining updates include mildly optimistic Con. Virginia updates.

mine’s trustees levied assessments: “Consolidated Virginia Mining Company,” *Daily Alta California*, December 10, 1869; January 17, 1870; September 19, 1870; Decem-
Many other articles and advertisements announce the assessments.

292 **Con. Virginia's stock price dipped:** I have been unable to locate a daily quotation or a recorded sale at $1⅝ in *Daily Alta California*, but "Bubble of the Day," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 4, 1872, includes a table that lists the lowest stock price of the leading mines in 1871 and places the Con. Virginia at $1⅝, as does "The Highest and Lowest Prices of Mining Stocks During 1871," *Mining & Scientific Press*, February 3, 1872; also, Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, p. 308, citing the Consolidated Virginia Mining Company’s President's Report for 1877.

292 **being properly developed:** "Consolidated Virginia," *Territorial Enterprise*, February 1, 1872; "Consolidated Virginia," *Territorial Enterprise*, August 31, 1871; both articles transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, 90-87/Box 6.


293 **Con. Virginia stock fluctuated:** Con. Virginia stock quotations are from "Stock Market," *Daily Alta California*, October 1, 1871, to January 11, 1872.

293 **just over $100,000:** Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*, p. 309, estimates that the Firm gained control for around $50,000, which seems low (around $4.30 per share); Henry de Groot, writing in John J. Powell’s *Nevada: The Land of Silver* (San Francisco: Bacon & Company, Book and Job Printers, 1876), p. 78, suggests an average figure of $9 per share and a total cost of $96,300; Shinn, *The Story of the Mine*, p. 179, suggests $100,000 and Grant Smith concurs. The higher figures seem more reasonable, although perhaps still on the low side ($8.62 per share). The Con. Virginia price never dipped below $8.50 between October 1, 1871, and the January 11, 1872, election. Henry de Groot, "Comstock Papers No. 13," *Mining & Scientific Press*, December 23, 1876, says Flood bought the fifty-foot-wide Kinney claim for $1,200, however, "Burke v. Flood," *Daily Alta California*, December 10, 1880, says that Flood bought 12½ feet from G. W. Kinney for $1,250 (the reporting of sworn legal testimony); complicating matters, "Case No. 7,827, Kinney v. Consolidated VA Min. Co., et al, Circuit Court D. California, November 1, 1877," says Kinney owned "one half part of . . . twenty and one-tenth feet on the ledge" and that he sold it for "$1,200, gold coin of the United States," as entered into evidence by George W. Kinney himself. The same article records several other purchases from other small holders of Kinney (and possibly Central No. 2) ground, for prices of $390 and $655 per foot, totaling $34,875. If the Firm got the Con. Virginia at an average price of $10 per share (which I suspect is still on the low side), their 75 percent share of the mine probably cost them about $87,000. Adding the figures for the fifty-foot-wide Kinney pushes the total over $100,000. "Case No. 7,827, Kinney v. Consolidated VA Min. Co., et al, Circuit Court D. California, November 1, 1877," discusses the Firm's April 1872 acquisition of Kinney's interest in excruciating detail.

293 **three-dollar-per-share:** "By State Telegraph," *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 21, 1872, and "Telegraphic," *Marysville Daily Appeal*, March 21, 1872, both said two dollars per share, but company advertisements that ran in most early April issues of *Daily Alta California* (e.g., "Consolidated Virginia Mining Company," April 2, 1872) said that a three-dollar-per-share assessment had been levied on March 19 and was due on April 24. It seems likely the company would have corrected its ads if it had made a mistake.

293 **“all outstanding claims”:** "Case No. 7,827, Kinney v. Consolidated VA Min. Co., et
al, Circuit Court D. California, November 1, 1877,” which discusses the Firm’s April 1872 acquisition of G. W. Kinney’s interest in detail.


294 “How are stocks?”: “Mining Stocks,” Mining & Scientific Press, April 27, 1872.


Despite the common accusation among previous Comstock historians that Hayward and Jones “caused” the Savage boom as a stock manipulation (notably Grant Smith and Eliot Lord, who seem to be the primary sources cited by everybody else), it’s worth pointing out that the first major jump in Savage price occurred between February 2 and February 4, 1872—eight to ten days before “the Crown Point interest” made their massive purchases on February 12. It seems unlikely they’d have invested nearly $2 million in the mine if they didn’t think the strike genuine and substantial. (Changing perceptions of future value drive most stock market fluctuations.)


295 mule that had been sent down: Since “Mary Jane Simpson—The Wonderful Mule of the Big Bonanza,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 27, 1876, says Mary Jane Simpson worked in the Belcher for eighteen months, and “A Strike,” Mining & Scientific Press, March 16, 1872, citing Gold Hill Daily News, March 6, 1872, refers to the problematic mule as a female, it seems probable that it was the mule sent down in January that had to be hoisted out.


296 “no particular danger”: “Local Mining Summary for the Week Ending May 4, 1872,”
The mine fell from $120: “Stock Market,” Daily Alta California, May 21, 1872; the Con. Virginia’s new shares (23,600 shares instead of 11,600) debuted on May 24.
“merciless rapacity”: “A Welcome to Mr. Sharon,” Territorial Enterprise, May 31, 1872, quoted in Makley, The Infamous King of the Comstock, p. 90.
“the Commoner”: Angel, ed., History of Nevada, p. 91.
most entertaining storyteller: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 135.
the Tunnel was in 2,933 feet: Sutro Tunnel sources from the middle of 1870 to the middle of 1872: Report of the Commissioners and Evidence Taken by the Committee on Mines and Mining of the House of Representatives of the United States in Regard to The Sutro Tunnel, Together with the Arguments and Report of the Committee Recommending a Load by the Government in Aid of the Construction of Said Work, pp. 891–95; Lord, Comstock Miners and Mining, pp. 298–300; Stewart and Stewart, Adolph Sutro, pp. 91–102; “Washoe,” Mining & Scientific Press, June 29, 1872, citing Gold Hill Daily News, June 22, 1872.
at even greater depth: “Consolidated Virginia,” Territorial Enterprise, February 1, 1872.
“I’ll help those”: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 149—the quip is perhaps apocryphal, since Smith included the quote without citation.

Chapter 14: The Strike

Mackay left James Fair in charge: Mackay’s movements in the spring of 1872 are difficult to establish. Berlin, Silver Platter: A Portrait of Mrs. John Mackay (New York: Doubleday, 1957), pp. 197–201, says Mackay wasn’t able to be in Paris for Eva’s June operation. She says Mackay went to Paris two months later (August) and returned to Nevada “after Christmas.” Hers is a factually based novel that cites no sources. However, I combed over her files of extensive research in the University of Nevada archives and discovered a New York Times item typed out by a research assistant that says a “John Mackay” arrived in New York from Liverpool aboard the SS California on September 19, 1872 (Box 90-87/V/12 “Douglas, Elaine”)—almost perfectly timed to be our John Mackay arriving in New York after having received a telegraphic summons from Fair or Flood reporting the September 12 discovery of the cross-fissure. They would have used a prearranged, innocuous-sounding message to make the summons—to avoid tipping telegraph operators that something was afoot in the mine. I examined the New York Times article (“Passengers Arrived,” New York Times, September 20, 1872), and although there is nothing specific that proves the John Mackay aboard the California is our John Mackay, among the list of other passengers is one “J. M. Walker.” In the absence of other evidence, it “feels”
most likely to me that Mackay would have timed his trip to Europe to coincide with both Eva’s operation and the two months it would take to dig across the Best & Belcher, time during which there was no chance of a development significant to a Con. Virginia owner, and that he returned to Nevada after the September 12 discovery—a development of utmost significance to a Con. Virginia owner. Perhaps Mackay returned to the United States with his old Washoe partner, who is known to have done much European travel after the dissolution of their partnership. Also, Louise gave birth to Clarence Mackay on April 17, 1874, which makes the baby’s most likely conception date between July 22 and July 30, 1873, further supporting the idea that John Mackay had reached Paris before the start of August. (There are no reports of John and Louise Mackay ever having these sorts of problems in their marriage.)

302 “We’ll go broke”. Berlin, Silver Platter, p. 201.


302 in the last week of June: Rough calculations based on a drifting rate of slightly more than 4 feet per day. The drift was 50 feet from the Best & Belcher/Con. Virginia boundary on June 15, 1873 (”The Nevada Mines,” Daily Alta California, June 17, 1872, citing Gold Hill Daily News, June 15, 1872), and 100 feet into Con. Virginia ground on July 23, 1873 (”The Nevada Mines,” Daily Alta California, July 23, 1872, citing Gold Hill Daily News, July 20, 1872). That 150 feet divided by 35 days gives a rough drifting rate of 4.3 feet per day. Their drifting rate fell as they encountered increasing difficulties with heat, ventilation, and flooding.


303 almost two years before: The San Francisco Chronicle noted that fact in “Stocks,” October 13, 1872.

303 “the joke of”: Berlin, Silver Platter, p. 201.


304 likely place to find ore: “The Nevada Mines,” Daily Alta California, July 23, 1872, citing Gold Hill Daily News, July 20, 1872. For information on crosscutting west,


305 They turned the main drift: Raymond, Mining Industry of the States and Territories of the Rocky Mountains, Including Quartz, Placer and Hydraulic Mining; Amalgamation; Concentration; Smelting, Etc., 1874, p. 110; Smith, The History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 149–50.


305 “a put up job”: “Stocks,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 18, 1872.

305 purchases of Central No. 1: “Stock Market,” Daily Alta California, September 18 and 19, 1872.


305 “jumping up and”: “Stocks,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 21, 1872.


306 assessment on September 26: “Consolidated Virginia Mining Company,” Daily Alta California, September 27, 1872.


Ralston had Mills elected: Lavender, Nothing Seemed Impossible, pp. 294–360.


“very rich rock”: “Stocks,” San Francisco Chronicle, March 18, 1873. Although the article was published more than two weeks later, it said that Flood had been making this claim “a few weeks since.”


The other was the tip: Con. Virginia sources, August 1872 to March 1873: “The Nevada Mines,” Daily Alta California, citing Gold Hill Daily News of two or three days before, August 13, September 9; September 23, October 1, October 7, October 14, October 21, October 28, November 6, November 12, November 18, November 25, and December 2, 1872; January 6, January 13, January 20, January 27, February 3, February 11, February 17, 1873; also, “Washoe Mining Summary,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 23, 1872; “Washoe,” in every issue of the Mining & Scientific Press (a weekly) from August 31, 1872, to March 1, 1873.


The epizootic swept: The progress and consequences of the epizootic tracked through searches for “horse disease” and “epizootic” in New York Times’ TimesMachine,


“All of which”: “Stocks,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 18, 1873.

“the most important”: “From Virginia City, March 19th,” *Marysville Daily Appeal*, March 20, 1873.


Considering the small-town nature: The author is indebted to his son, Ryan, for this observation: “It’s like a small town. All these guys seemed to know each other, or else knew somebody who knew the other guy.”


They’d been aggressively advancing: The *Territorial Enterprise* mentioned the plan and Mr. Schussler on May 28, 1872: “Nevada Items,” *Daily Alta California*, May 31, 1872, citing *Territorial Enterprise*, May 28, 1872.


“the blowing of a whale”: De Quille, *History of the Big Bonanza*, p. 172.

“unbounded hilarity”: “Papers Just Received from Virginia City,” *Marysville Daily Appeal*, August 8, 1873, presumably quoting one of them.

Water Company were “jubilant”: “Water Flows in Virginia City,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, August 2, 1873.


running total of the two mines’ dividends: “Financial and Commercial,” *Daily Alta California*, June 8, 1873, then adding the $2 million for June.


“Whether it is”: “The Bulls and Bears,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 6, 1873.

“a brilliant operation”: “Stock Etchings,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 20, 1873.

“long-forbidden lower”: “Consolidated Virginia,” *Daily Alta California*, November 1, 1873, citing *Territorial Enterprise*, October 29, 1873.


---

**Chapter 15: The Big Bonanza**

paid $31,000 for a three-story house: Real estate agent William Magee to Grant Smith, June 9, 1930, citing San Francisco Book 724 of Deeds, p. 264, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18. (The property had changed hands for $7,000 three and a half years before—a price inflation that will feel familiar to modern San Franciscans.)


Years later, Alexander recalled: “The Mackay Family in San Francisco and Paris,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, citing a series of interviews with Alexander O’Grady. (Alexander claimed that Colonel Hungerford went with the family to Europe in 1871–73. He is probably conflating memories of the 1871–73
trip with those of later years. Contemporary newspaper articles place Colonel Hungerford in Lower California and San Francisco until April 1874. The first mention of Colonel Hungerford in Europe discovered by the author occurred in December 1875. That makes sense in light of Mackay’s rise. Mackay was a successful miner and mine owner from 1871 to 1873. Not until the opening of the Con. Virginia’s fifteen-hundred-foot level in late 1874 would he become one of the richest men in the world.


The Firm owned the lion’s share: Other Comstock historians have decried the California consolidation as a stock market maneuver, generally based on Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 158, footnote 31, which says, “There was no need to divide the bonanza between two companies. The purpose was to create a new mine for the stock market.” That is not true. Smith’s logic depends on future developments. Given what was known about the ore body in late 1873, there was no way to combine the ground between the Best & Belcher and the Ophir into a single entity in a manner fair to existing Con. Virginia stockholders—the Con. Virginia had proven ore, all of it south of the shaft, and the two Central mines did not. The only way to simplify the ownership in a manner fair to Con. Virginia stockholders was to divide the ground into two mines, one with proven ore and one without. And since Con. Virginia stockholders couldn’t be expected to give away the shaft and machinery they’d built, the most logical place to make the break was in unexplored ground just north of the shaft, exactly as was done. It must have been considered fair at the time, since every inch of the consolidation involved high-value mining property and it provoked no howls of outrage.


five Burleigh air compressors: “Washoe District,” Mining & Scientific Press, October 24, 1874.


two hundred men at work: “Consolidated Virginia Improvements,” Mining & Scientific Press, August 1, 1874.


The flurry of reports that emerged: “Nevada Mines,” Daily Alta California, December 6, 1874, citing Gold Hill News, December 3, 1874; “Washoe District,” Mining & Scientific Press, December 12, 1874, citing the same source.


“the Big Bonanza”: “The Big Bonanza,” Mining & Scientific Press, January 16, 1875, citing Territorial Enterprise, January 6, 1875.


“We are running”: “The Big Bonanza,” San Francisco Chronicle, January 12, 1875.

Mackay must have realized: In February 1875, Mackay said, “We have not yet fairly started in upon the California. It will require steady work for at least six months to show what that mine really is” (De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, p. 368); for prospecting the upper levels “very nearly completed” on June 17, 1875, see “Mining,” Daily Alta California, June 19, 1875, citing Gold Hill Daily News, June 17, 1875.

“stupendous mass of”: Raymond, Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains; Being the Seventh Annual Report, 1875, p. 196.

every foot of”: “Mining,” Daily Alta California, July 16, 1875.


“a certain amount of stock”: “Ai Peck Again to the Front,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, February 20, 1875, citing Territorial Enterprise, undated.

Ophir shares had more than doubled: “Stock Market,” *Daily Alta California*, September 26, 1874.


“Nevada enjoys the”: “Honor to Whom Honor Is Due,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 10, 1875.

more than 34,001 shares: With 34,001 shares added to Baldwin’s 20,000, it would have given Sharon control. “The Crash,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1875, reported that the Bank Ring had 56,000 Ophir shares at the mine’s December election, which implies it held 36,000 before buying Baldwin’s chunk.


Sharon pried him loose: Smith, *History of the Comstock Lode*, pp. 162–63, citing *Virginia Evening Chronicle*, December 12, 1874; Dana, *The Man Who Built San Francisco*, p. 340; Lavender, *Nothing Seemed Impossible*, p. 376; Makley, *The Infamous King of the Comstock*, pp. 107–8. I surmise that the deal most likely went down between November 11, 1874, when “Brevities,” *Daily Alta California*, November 12, 1874, described the Ophir as “the centre [sic] of attraction . . . while the struggle over Lucky Baldwin’s promising mine continues,” and November 13, 1874, when “Financial and Commercial,” *Daily Alta California*, November 14, 1874, described the Ophir as “lower, selling down to $78, indicating a settlement of control,” and “Pacific Coast Items,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, November 16, 1874, recorded control of the Ophir passing “from the management of Baldwin to that of Sharon & Co.”; the Ophir closed at $80 on November 13, 1874: “Stock Market,” *Daily Alta California*, November 13, 1875; although many sources claim this deal cemented Baldwin’s moniker, that likely isn’t the case—the *Daily Alta California* used it on November 12, 1874, before the deal closed. “Lucky” Baldwin took his proceeds and “retired from the fray,” according to Hubert Howe Bancroft’s hagiographic biography. He focused his energies on building the luxurious Baldwin Hotel at the corner of San Francisco’s Market and Powell streets and on developing an enormous forty-two-thousand-acre ranch at Santa Anita in the San Gabriel Valley, fifteen miles northeast of Los Angeles. A devotee of thoroughbred horseracing, Baldwin founded the Santa Anita Racetrack on the property. The Santa Anita’s Baldwin Stakes are run in his honor, and his name graces much Southern California geography, including the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. (Bancroft, *Chronicles of the Builders*, Vol. III, p. 347.)


“They bought fine”: “How Much Have We Lost?” *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 10, 1875.
“Go and put”: De Quille, *History of the Big Bonanza*, pp. 368–70.

$300 million: “Perhaps There Is No,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1874.

A “free and easy talker”: “Deidesheimer. His Second Glance at the Great Bonanza,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 9, 1875. The article published the day after the sell-off started, but the content and tenor of the interview make it clear Deidesheimer had been spouting that advice since his visit to the mine with Dan de Quille in early December.

less than 1 percent of the total: Statistics for sales between December 31, 1874, and January 6, 1875: “Financial and Commercial,” *Daily Alta California*, January 9, 1875.


“like leaves from”: “How Much Have We Lost?” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, February 10, 1875.

The final slaughter: For the prices at the close of February 6, 1875, see “Stock Market,” *Daily Alta California*, February 7, 1875.


in the mansion he’d built: “Pen and Scissors,” *Territorial Enterprise*, April 21, 1874.

may have simply lost touch: The author finds the common historical story of Sharon “putting up” the Ophir deal to finance his senatorial campaign difficult to credit. Rather than that “Sharon kept boosting the stock” until his election, as claimed by Grant Smith and other historians, it seems much more probable that the bonanza in the Con. Virginia seeming likely to extend through the California into the Ophir started and sustained the Ophir’s price rise, and escaping knowledge that it did not—that the Ophir was working an independent, lower-quality ore body—
caused the collapse and destroyed the wonderful fiction of unlimited wealth in the lower levels of the Comstock mines. Besides, Sharon’s election to the state legislature happened four days after the Ophir began its long slide. Considering the state of nineteenth-century political campaigns, that Sharon liberally distributed Ophir shares among candidates standing for the state legislature seems very likely—stock in a skyrocketing mine would have been an even more generous gift to a “friend” or potential “friend” than gold coin. That Sharon “put up” the market and then smashed it as part of an evil plan seems less likely. He probably bought the mine hoping it shared in the Big Bonanza and then sold when he learned that it did not.

334 “It is no affair”: De Quille, History of the Big Bonanza, pp. 368–69.
336 The first battle—a change: Angel, ed., History of Nevada, pp. 122–30; Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 204–6; Makley, John Mackay, pp. 79–81.
337 “build my own damn railroad”: The Reno Journal reported Mackay and Fair contemplating construction of a narrow-gauge railroad from Virginia City to Reno in late April: “Nevada Items,” Sacramento Daily Union, April 24, 1875, citing Reno Journal; Davis, The History of Nevada, p. 419; Makley, John Mackay, p. 81.
338 the institution’s “soul”: “O. F. Bank vs. Sharon,” Daily Alta California, December 20, 1884.
“Where is this”: Eldridge, History of California, Volume V, Special Articles, p. 437.


“a dark menace”: Lavender, Nothing Seemed Impossible, citing San Francisco Real Estate Circular, November 1874.


impact of the economic depression: Between January 1 and August 1, 1875, $19 million went east from California; $2.3 million had gone east during the same period in 1874: “Suspension of the Bank of California,” Daily Alta California, August 27, 1875. In the year ending August 1, 1875, $26.891 million had gone east: “Financial and Commercial,” Daily Alta California, August 27, 1875.


largest real estate owner: “Pacific Coast Items,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, June 3, 1875; “Real Estate Items,” Daily Alta California, June 3, 1875.

“worth at least”: “City Property,” San Francisco Chronicle, June 2, 1875. Although one of Ralston’s biographers said Sharon returned the deed two weeks later, never having paid the money (Dana, The Man Who Built San Francisco, p. 348), the registering of the transaction was announced in several newspapers. The author could find no contemporary retraction, which surely would have been interesting news.


Speculation before the Water Board: “Calaveras No More,” Daily Alta California, June 8, 1875.


“white heat of opposition”: “Brevities,” Daily Alta California, June 4, 1875, citing San Jose Mercury, undated.

he watched the examiners: Makley, *The Infamous King of the Comstock*, p. 114, citing the opinion of Superior Court Judge T. H. Reardon in *Odd Fellows Savings Bank vs. William Sharon*, December 19, 1884, and the Thomas Bell Statement, 1886.

board of supervisors formally rejected: “Spring Valley’s Ultimatum” and “Is the Dog Dead or Only Lamed?” *Daily Alta California*, July 31, 1875.


“final dicker”: “The Crash,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1875. The story says negotiations for the sale had started about a month before. It also described Ralston and “Senator Jones” representing the Bank Ring, when they surely meant “Senator Sharon.”


between $4 million and $4.5 million: Makley, *The Infamous King of the Comstock*, p. 117, citing Stephen Franklin’s biography of William C. Ralston (Franklin was the bank’s secretary in 1875) and an 1886 statement by bank director Thomas Bell, both in “Biography of William C. Ralston prepared for Chronicles of the Kings: and material used in its preparation, 1886–1889,” UCB.


left the bank shortly after 9:30: For the scene at the bank and all quotes, see “The Bank of California,” *Daily Alta California*, August 27, 1875.

directors met again at 1:00 p.m.: “By State Telegraph,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, August 28, 1875.


from the words they contained: Death of Ralston and all quotes primarily from “Dead. William C. Ralston Drowned Off Black Point,” Daily Alta California, August 28, 1875. See also, “No Proof That Ralston's Death Was Suicidal,” Daily Alta California, August 29, 1875; “The Inquest,” Daily Alta California, August 29, 1875.


“Did you do”: Grant Smith, “Ralston's Death Stuns the Coast,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, p. 449, citing an interview with H. L. Slosson.

“sad that such”: “William C. Ralston,” Daily Alta California, August 28, 1875.


“resuscitated”: “Brokers and Mining,” Daily Alta California, September 1, 1875.

“proud and manly”: “A Night of Rejoicing,” Daily Alta California, October 3, 1875.


net worth at $75 million . . . “richest man”: This is likely an estimate puffed up by the capital value of his stock holdings, which he couldn't have sold without cratering their value. “The Effect in This City,” New York Times, August 28, 1875.

“Fire!”: “Virginia City Destroyed by Fire October 26, 1875,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, pp. 455–61.


“flamed like a”: “Virginia City Destroyed by Fire October 26, 1875,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, pp. 455–61.


cyclone of fire”: “Virginia City Destroyed by Fire October 26, 1875,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, pp. 455–61.

“Oh, Mr. Mackay”: Goodwin, As I Remember Them, p. 161.

“his old miner”: “Characteristic,” Territorial Enterprise, October 28, 1875, photostat copy in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17.


“all the small”: “Latest Despatches,” Daily Alta California, August 28, 1875.

turned to light rain: For the Virginia City fire, see “Terrible Calamity,” San Francisco Chronicle, October 26, 1875; “A Disaster to San Francisco,” “A Terrible Fire!,” “Despatches to Senator Sharon,” “Financial and Commercial,” “Help Virginia City,” “The Virginia Disaster,” “Mining Stocks and Mining,” “The Very Latest on the Fire,” Daily Alta California, October 27, 1875; “Pacific Coast” and “Local Brevities,” Los Angeles Herald, October 27, 1875; “Conflagration at Virginia City,” Marysville Daily Appeal, October 27, 1875; “A Fortunate Precaution,” “The Great Fire,” and “The Vir-


357 “begrimed with dust”: “Characteristic,” *Territorial Enterprise*, October 28, 1875, photostat copy in the Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17. (Plausibly, it was Dan de Quille who spoke.)

Chapter 16: The Bonanza King

359 “determined to come”: “Virginia Rising from Her Ashes,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1875.

359 *business was O. C. Steele*: “The Burning of Virginia City,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, October 28, 1875.

359 “the Virginia sufferers”: “Virginia Rising from Her Ashes,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1875.

360 “Do it thoroughly”: Goodwin, *As I Remember Them*, p. 161. In “Noted Actors Recipients of His Bounty,” *San Francisco Call*, July 21, 1902, the number is $450,000.


360 “all right”: “Reports in the City Yesterday,” John W. Mackay to Flood and O’Brien, *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1875.

360 “coming from you”: “Reports in the City Yesterday,” President S. F. S. and E. Board to John W. Mackay, *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1875.

361 “sixty days will repair”: Ibid.


361 “Virginia comes up”: Ibid.

361 “I mean Mr. Mackay”: Ibid.


362 *seven weeks after the fire*: Raymond, *Mines and Mining West of the Rocky Mountains,*
Eighth Annual Report, 1877, p. 154, citing James Fair's annual report for the year 1875.

International Hotel rose: Drury, An Editor on the Comstock Lode, p. 121.

body was simply colossal: Henry de Groot in John J. Powell, Nevada: The Land of Silver, pp. 94–95; George Becker’s “Comstock Mine Maps, Number III,” in the U.S.G.S.'s 1882 survey of the Comstock Lode.

“about as high as”: Young, Men and Memories: Personal Reminiscences, p. 442.


Mackay's cash income: Calculations based on figures in “The Big Bonanza,” New York Tribune, August 27, 1875, which said the Firm owned 62,000 of the Con. Virginia's 108,000 shares (57.4 percent) and 295,000 of the California's 540,000 shares (54.6 percent) and then calculating based on Mackay's three-eighths share of the Firm (57.4 percent of $1.08 million = $619,920; $619,920 x ⅜ = $232,470 from the Con. Virginia dividend) + (54.6 percent of $1.08 million = $589,680; $589,680 x ⅜ = $221,130 from the California dividend) = $453,600 per month. High-end figures based on other sources claim the Firm's ownership reached 75 percent.

half the states in the Union: The Firm's nemesis Squire Dewey made the very comparison at the Con. Virginia's annual meeting in January 1877.


approximately 20,000: New York Tribune reported 25,000 in Virginia City in the summer of 1875, but Storey County's 1875 census reported 19,528 in the whole county. That number probably increased in 1876 and 1877. Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 197.

operated by the Bonanza Firm: The Con. Virginia and California mines had 933 men on their payroll in October 1876: “Mining Intelligence,” Mining & Scientific Press, October 14, 1876.

“drinking saloons more”: “The Big Bonanza,” New York Tribune, August 27, 1875. Although written the previous year, I'm confident the article's observations hold true for the summer of 1876.

“ask no better”: “Sunday on the Comstock,” Mining & Scientific Press, October 28, 1876.


John and Louise decided: Although Silver Platter, a fictionalized account of Louise Mackay's life written by John and Louise's granddaughter, Ellin Mackay Berlin, and accepted as gospel by many subsequent historians, makes much of Louise Mackay's moving to New York in the summer of 1876, having her attempts to break into "so-
ciety” brutally snubbed by Yankee aristocrats, and then boldly moving to Paris in the aftermath, events likely didn’t play out in such pat novelistic fashion. A small item in the April 16, 1876, issue of the San Francisco Chronicle gives evidence that John and Louise Mackay had the Paris move planned before they left California. The blurb said Mackay and his family would soon leave for the Centennial Exhibition and that “Mrs. Mackay will next proceed to Paris, where her father, Major Hungerford, now is.” Louise Mackay had passed through New York on several previous occasions. She was almost certainly well aware of the painful humiliations an up-jumped Catholic seamstress received in the foyers and parlors of Yankee blue-blood Protestant society. The author has found no contemporary evidence or memory attributed to one of the Mackays’ contemporaries that supports the account in Ellin Berlin’s novel, including in Ms. Berlin’s four boxes of research in the University of Nevada archives; also, the timeline doesn’t leave much opportunity for an attempted move to New York. The Mackays left California in mid-May, toured the Centennial Exhibition, then departed New York for Europe on June 10 or 11; Louise’s parents and sister had been in Paris since at least the previous November: “Californians in Paris,” Daily Alta California, December 4 and 16, 1875, and January 16 and 28, March 19, and June 7, 1876.

367 Van Bokkelen had also been: “The Virginia Calamity,” Mining & Scientific Press, July 5, 1873.
367 he sold the house: Real estate agent William Magee to Grant Smith, June 9, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 18.
367 The root problem was: “Fair’s Misleading Report,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB (box and folder unrecorded due to author oversight); Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, pp. 199–202; Makley, John Mackay, pp. 106–8.
368 “the sharpest and”: Ibid.
“hired fighters”: “The Senatorship,” Carson Morning Appeal, September 30, 1882, which said Fair had kept the bodyguard “for years.”

Those lads would”: “John W. Mackay and the Comstock Lode,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 12.


“Pat, have you”: Grant Smith, “Mackay as the Comstock Knew Him,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, citing an interview with “Pat,” who was probably too embarrassed to allow Smith to use his surname.

“What son-of-a-bitch stopped”: Grant Smith, “Mackay as the Comstock Knew Him,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, citing an interview with H. H. Bailey.

“I never received”: Sam Davis, “He Was Manly, He Was Kind, and He Was Honorable,” San Francisco Examiner, July 21, 1902.

“If I had”: Ibid.


“on good terms”: Drury, An Editor on the Comstock Lode, pp. 135–37.

“I’ve lost the”: Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 4, Folder 1, citing Robert L. Fulton, of Reno.


“It’s a John Mackay!”: Ibid., p. 65.


“We believe that”: “Mackey [sic] and White,” Daily Alta California, January 14, 1877.


relaxing with his family: “Pacific Coast Items,” Sacramento Daily Union, September 7, 1877.

absence of five months: “Brevities,” Daily Alta California, October 4, 1877.

The dividends were financing: Ron Chernow, Grant (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), p. 868.

“buy their old”: “The Mackay Family in San Francisco and Paris,” Grant Smith Col-
lection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, citing a series of interviews with Alexander O’Grady, son of Alice O’Grady, the Mackay family nurse during those years. Both mother and son lived in the Mackay household through the Paris years. (The author could find no contemporary reference to the quip.)


switching between four languages: “The Bonanza King,” Daily Alta California, October 20, 1883, citing an interview with Colonel Tom Ochiltree.


Mackay seems to have spent: “Brevities,” Daily Alta California, May 22, 1878. For Mackay’s arrival from Paris, see Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 225, citing Territorial Enterprise, October 18, 1878.


“one of the laws”: “San Francisco,” Chicago Tribune, May 12, 1878.

“Fair is crazy”: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 225, citing Territorial Enterprise, October 18, 1878.


were convicted of fraud: Makley, John Mackay, p. 133.


in carriages with General Grant: Ibid.

Both Mackay and Fair kept: “Tales of His Life,” San Francisco Chronicle, December 30, 1894.


“Mr. Mackay would make”: Grant Smith, “Mackay Obituary Comments,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17, citing New York Herald, July 27, 1902.


“’Tis a poor”: Ibid.

at around $306 million: Lord, Comstock Mining and Miners, p. 417.
381 fortune worth $36 million: Makley, John Mackay, p. 139, citing Territorial Enterprise, October 29, 1880.
382 “rotten borough”: “Mr. Fair’s Seat,” Sacramento Daily-Record Union, November 24, 1880.
382 “more well supplied”: Gold Hill Daily News, November 3, 1880.
382 Fair invested $150,000: “Pacific Coast Items,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, November 29, 1880.
383 “like a sailor home” . . . John and Louise enjoyed: Smith, “The Mackay Family in San Francisco and Paris,” citing several interviews with Alexander O’Grady, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box and Folder unrecorded due to author oversight.
383 “a sumptuous ball”: “Mackay,” Truth, March 10, 1881, article transcribed in the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/II/2.
383 had retired hours before: “Mrs. Mackay’s Ball,” Chicago Tribune, April 23, 1881.
384 He added to his collection: Makley, John Mackay, p. 123.
384 “Louise, if you keep”: For the descriptions of Mackay’s personal habits in France: Smith, “The Mackay Family in San Francisco and Paris,” citing several interviews with Alexander O’Grady, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box and Folder unrecorded due to author oversight.
385 “family pride”: “Mr. Mackay and ‘The Herald,'” New York Times, September 18, 1885, citing an interview with John Russell Young.
385 “Diamond Ball”: “Foreign News,” Sacramento Daily Union, May 14, 1881; Berlin’s Silver Platter has Bennett taking Mackay for a stroll after this party to interest Mackay in forming an alliance to fight Jay Gould’s transatlantic telegraph “pool,” but that likely didn’t happen—Gould didn’t organize the cartel until the spring of 1882.
Kardashian, and other modern social media celebrities are direct descendants of Louise Mackay's telegraphic triumphs.


386 the worst annual showing: Smith, History of the Comstock Lode, p. 230.

386 “as if he intended”: “Mackay’s Departure,” Carson Morning Appeal, July 14, 1881.


386 he penned it from Moscow: “John W. Mackay Among the Russians,” Sacramento Daily Union, October 17, 1881.

387 “the King and”: “General Notes,” Sacramento Daily Union, December 13, 1881.


388 via the southern route: “Local Brevities,” Los Angeles Herald, October 11, 1882.


388 continued across the Atlantic: “In Brief,” Carson Morning Appeal, October 20, 1882.


388 “at loggerheads”: “Nevada’s Senator,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, April 28, 1883, citing correspondence to Chicago Herald, either written on or published on April 17, 1883.


388 “countless infidelities”: “Nevada’s Senator,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, April 28, 1883, citing correspondence to Chicago Herald, either written on or published on April 17, 1883.
“soiled the senatorial”.


“suffer in silence”.

“Nevada’s Senator,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, April 28, 1883, citing correspondence to *Chicago Herald*, either written on or published on April 17, 1883.

“flashing black eyes”.

“Nevada’s Senator,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, April 28, 1883, citing correspondence to *Chicago Herald*, either written on or published on April 17, 1883.

“curtain lectures”.


“on his ancient”.

“Nevada’s Senator,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, April 28, 1883, citing correspondence to *Chicago Herald*, either written on or published on April 17, 1883.

“a chip off”.

“Nevada’s Senator,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, April 28, 1883.

liberal enjoyment of liquor.


Paso Robles:

“Late Telegrams,” *Los Angeles Herald*, April 18, 1883.

filed for divorce.


“Public opinion was”.


“a matter of regret”.


“the present Emperor”.


“the whole European”.

“Foreign,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, June 4, 1883.

“one of the most interesting”.

“Mackay Gives a Dinner,” *Los Angeles Herald*, June 1, 1883.

Mackay chatted pleasantly with:


thirty-five-year career.


best-dressed woman.


“profanely contemptuous”.

“The Mackay Family in San Francisco and Paris,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 8, citing a series of interviews with Alexander O’Grady, son of Alice O’Grady, the Mackay family nurse during those years. The O’Gradys lived in the Mackay household.

Chapter 17: The Cable War

“a heap of clothes”.


“from thousands of people”.


“an unscrupulous gambler”.


“His touch is”.

Klein, *The Life and Legend of Jay Gould*, p. 3.
and divided the traffic: The history of transoceanic cable rates is nicely summed up in “The Cable Rate War in Its True Light,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1886.


Quijotoa Mountains: “Arizona’s New Mining Boom,” *Daily Alta California*, December 17, 1883.


thank[ed] heaven”: “Another Cable,” Daily Alta California, October 29, 1883.
in the happiest”: “Sparks from the Wires,” Daily Alta California, December 13, 1883.
I’m as confident”: “Personals,” Daily Alta California, December 12, 1883.
transit a realm”: Young, Men and Memories, p. 451.
Meissonier neglected to remember: “E. Meissonier to Dear Madam,” January 11, 1882, the Ellin Berlin Collection, UNR, 90-87/II/1.
wanting in respect”: “Mrs. Mackay’s Portrait,” Daily Alta California, March 17, 1884.
While it might”: “That Picture,” Daily Alta California, January 27, 1884.
always felt well”: “That Picture,” Daily Alta California, January 27, 1884.
I wanted a”: Young, Men and Memories, p. 451.
very severe”: “Mrs. Mackay’s Portrait,” Daily Alta California, March 17, 1884.


slashed Baltimore & Ohio telegraph rates: Makley, John Mackay, p. 168.


“a marvelous exhibition”: “San Francisco Items,” Sacramento Daily Record-Union, November 12, 1885.

“usually prominent forehead”: “Death of Sharon,” San Francisco Chronicle, November 14, 1885.

lawsuits of Sarah Althea Hill: A good survey of the Sarah Hill scandal is in Makley, The Infamous King of the Comstock, pp. 157–83.

“keen eyed”: “Keen-Eyed Ki,” Daily Alta California, November 18, 1885.

his youngest son died: “Death of Ah Ki’s Boy,” Daily Alta California, November 26, 1885.

December 9: “Ki’s Petition Granted,” Daily Alta California, December 6, 1885.


Queen Victoria’s drawing room: “Mrs. Mackay’s Diamonds,” Russian River Flag, April 14, 1886, citing New York Sun, March 24, 1886.


Three weeks later he was back: “John W. Mackay Returns Home,” New York Tribune, August 8, 1887.


“Whatever may be”: “A Talk with Mr. Mackay,” San Francisco Chronicle, August 29, 1887.

$5.5 million: Makley, John Mackay, p. 184.


“I have tried”: Young, Men and Memories, p. 450. (If there is a contemporary reference for this quote, I have been unable to find it.)
Chapter 18: Twilight

“[Mackay] never seemed”: “Mackay’s Fortune,” Grant Smith, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 4, citing Edgar Bradley.


“Billy was my partner”: Young, Men and Memories, p. 443; also, “Very Near Death,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 21, 1893.

Willie began serving: J. W. Mackay, Jr., was listed among the Commercial Cable Company’s directors in “Commercial Cable Company Affairs,” New York Times, March 21, 1983. He may have gone on the board earlier.

gave it to Louise on the occasion: “Leinster House, the . . . ,” Sun and the Erie County Independent of Hamburg, New York, May 1, 1891.


“It was plain”: “Always an American,” San Francisco Chronicle, April 11, 1893.

“a few days’ rest”: “Mrs. Mackay Resting,” San Francisco Call, April 12, 1893.

“enjoyed a drive”: “Mackay Takes the Air,” San Francisco Call, April 13, 1893.


“From this window”: “John W. Mackay and His Friends,” New York Times, July 27, 1902. The house itself was long gone.

$175,000 per annum: “Tired of Her Prince,” New York World, November 29, 1893.


“Fair did not have”: “Fair’s Will Filed,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 30, 1894.


to have Dr. Bryant’s body moved: Pioneer Memorial Park to Grant Smith, September 2, 1930, Grant Smith Collection, UCB.


“Oh, God, what”: “The Death of John W. Mackay, Jr.,” Grant Smith, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box and Folder unrecorded due to author oversight, citing Edmond Godchaux, one of the two San Francisco friends who stayed with Mackay that awful night.

“the saddest journey”: “The Death of John W. Mackay, Jr.,” Grant Smith, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box and Folder unrecorded due to author oversight, citing John Rosenfeld.


“one of the very best”: “John W. Mackay Is Dead,” *Brooklyn Daily Double Eagle*, July 21, 1902.


at the opera in 1900: “Conversation with James Walsh, March 17, 1930,” Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 1, Folder 17.

“subsidy or guarantee”: “A Submarine Cable to the Philippines,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1901.


“as you know”: “An Old Friend’s Tribute,” *Salt Lake City Tribune*, July 21, 1902.

“stormed the strongholds”: “John W. Mackay,” *Goodwin’s Weekly*, July 26, 1902.

“Of all the millionaires”: “Mackay’s Life and Career,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 21, 1902.

“the highest of all rich men”: “John W. Mackay,” *Goodwin’s Weekly*, July 26, 1902.


enormous chunk of ITT stock: Grant Smith, “Cable Business,” p. 692, Grant Smith Collection, UCB, Box 2, Folder 4.

one of the most influential articles: Ian Frazier’s article “The Cabaret Beat” in the February 23 and March 2, 2015, issues of *The New Yorker* centers on Ellin Mackay’s article.