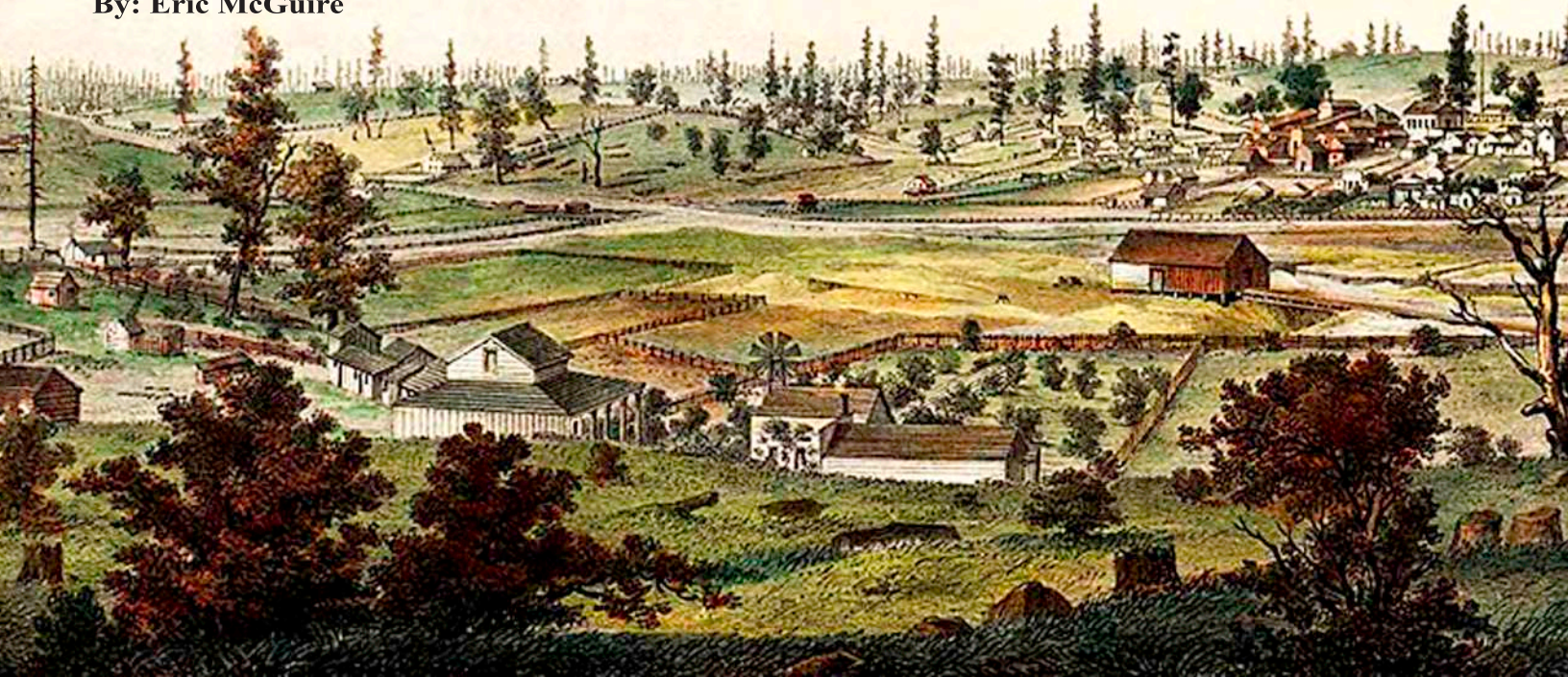


THE GRASS VALLEY

By: Eric McGuire

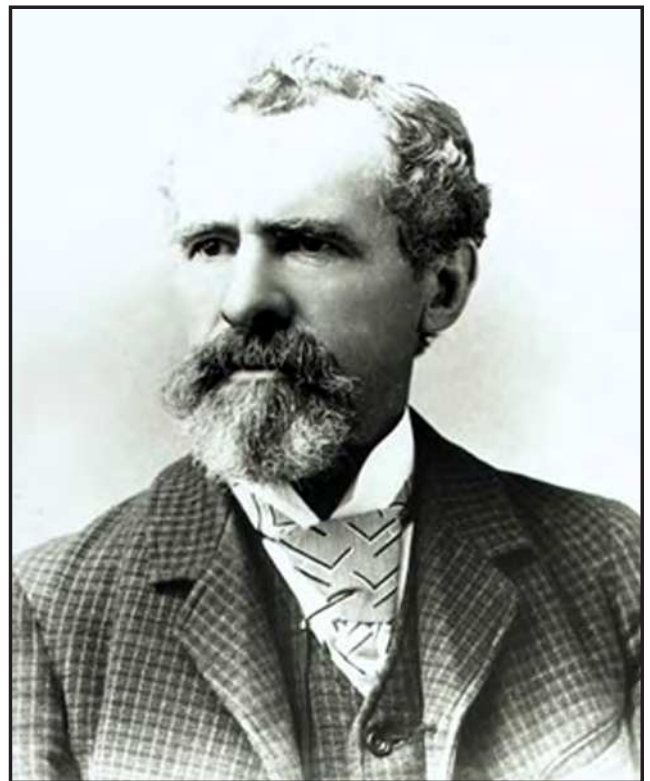


Grass Valley, in Nevada County, sprang forth seemingly overnight with the discovery of gold in its vicinity

Just as with many of the early towns of California, the bucolic sounding Grass Valley, in Nevada County, sprang forth seemingly overnight with the discovery of gold in its vicinity. Named in 1851, Grass Valley survived the playing out of easily accessible placer gold first exploited by the mass of humanity that descended on California's Mother Lode in 1849. Rich 'hard-rock' deposits were located deep underground which resulted in continued mining for many years.

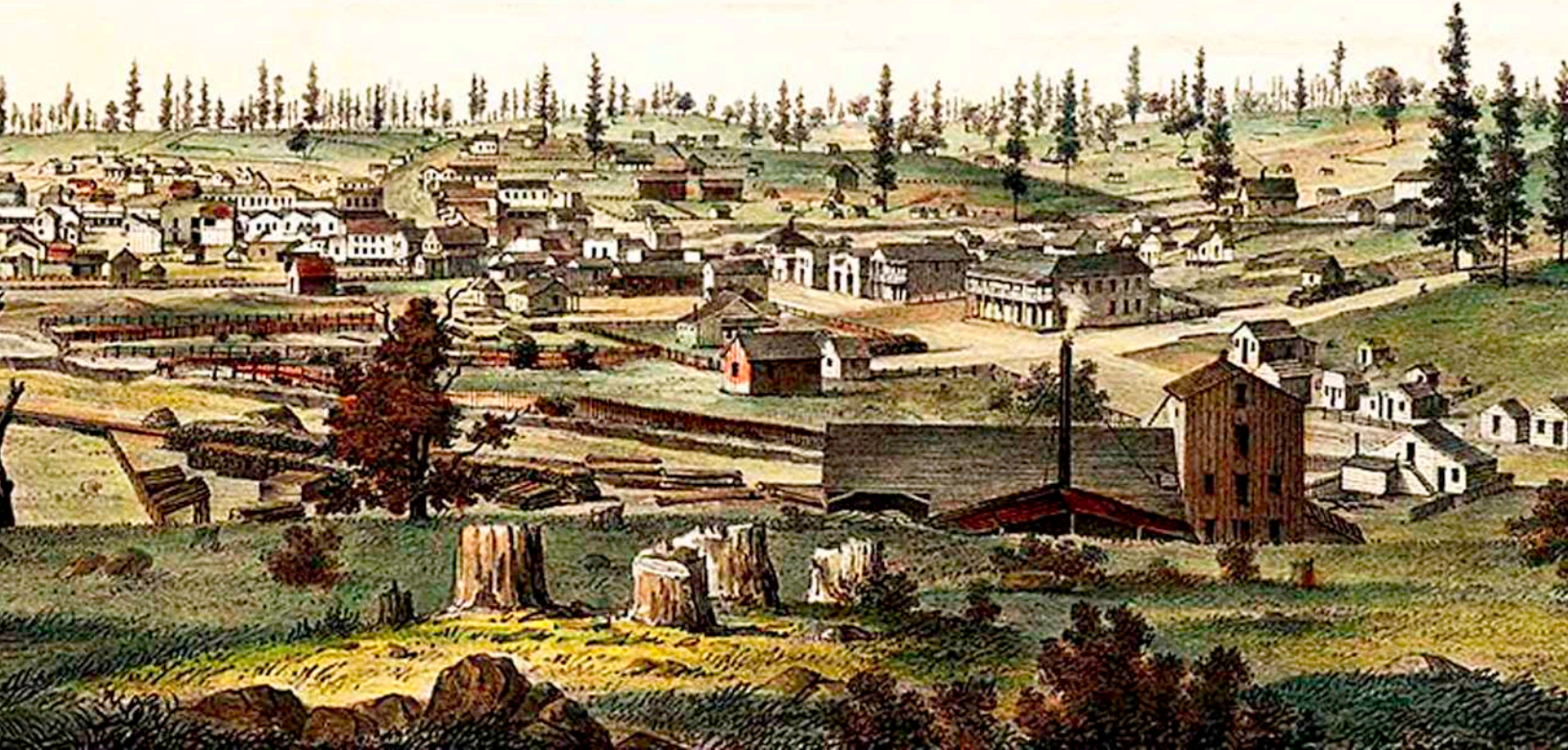
With ongoing economic support Grass Valley developed into a well established city that has survived to this day. While still autonomous it has nearly grown together with its neighbor, Nevada City, which was equally successful in its longevity, and which also became the seat of government for Nevada County. A rather mild climate, compared with the sweltering summer heat of the nearby Sacramento Valley, its sylvan landscape and historical charm, have drawn many people to the area – especially retirees.

In its early years a relatively stable and increasing population attracted a number of businesses associated with city living, including soda water companies. This article explores the history of the most dominant and best known of those establishments, named the Grass Valley Soda Factory. Begun possibly as early as the city itself, it was managed by just two individuals during its lifetime – from about 1851 to about 1887.



Wm. E. Deamer

GRASS VALLEY SODA FACTORY



James Alexander Farrell was born in Dublin, Ireland, about 1823. Little is known of his early life but family lore states that he and four siblings immigrated to the United States in the late 1840's. James and his sister came to California but the sister married and went to Australia. His brothers reportedly lived in Mississippi and Texas.

Farrell was reportedly living in Grass Valley as early as 1856, and "was engaged during all the time in manufacturing soda and mineral water." (1) Although not found in the 1860 Grass Valley census we do know he was there in 1861 when a local newspaper noted, "J. A. Farrell of Grass Valley, was thrown from a horse recently and badly hurt. His spine was injured" (2) His business interests throughout the early 1860's are obscure until another unfortunate incident occurred in 1866. "As we go to press we learn that Jack Johnson who drives the Soda wagon for J. A. Farrell, of this place, was robbed of \$14 near Penn Valley this morning." (3)

It is not known what type of bottles Farrell was using for the first decade of his soda water business. The Pacific Glass Works didn't begin operations until 1863, but all of the known bottles with his name embossed have attribution traits of the California factories along with an embossing feature that would indicate the earliest production date of about 1867. The lettering style on his bottles contain the telltale curved leg "R" commonly used by an unknown San Francisco mold engraver. The first known work of this engraver cannot be dated to any earlier than 1867 with any degree of certainty - to date. It must be assumed that Farrell was

using either unembossed soda bottles, or possibly pirated bottles, to serve his customers during his early years.

A former Grass Valley resident, William E. Deamer, had moved back to town in 1865 and entered into the restaurant business. Deamer and Farrell had probably been friends or acquaintances from the 1850's and after Deamer moved back their friendship was rekindled. It is significant to note that Farrell, who was unmarried, was even living at the residence of Deamer, his wife and two children in the 1870 Grass Valley census record. In the same year this close relationship lead to Farrell leasing the Grass

SODA AND MINERAL WATER.

THE undersigned having leased the GRASS VALLEY SODA FACTORY and business is prepared to fill all orders in that line.

WM. E. DEAMER.

Grass Valley, March 21, 1870.

TO MY OLD CUSTOMERS and friends in general I cheerfully recommend Mr. Deamer, as being prompt and attentive to business. He is also authorized to collect all bills and settle accounts due me.

J. A. FARRELL.

Grass Valley, March 11, 1870.—1m

In March of 1870, J. A. Farrell gave notice in the local Grass Valley newspaper that he had leased his soda factory to Wm. E. Deamer. (Morning Union [Grass Valley, Calif.] March 29, 1870)



Grass Valley, Nevada County, California. Page from an atlas that pictures the Grass Valley Soda Works and the Residence of Wm. E. Deamer

Valley Soda Factory to Deamer, and it appears that Farrell then stayed on and either worked with or for Deamer in a less demanding capacity. Perhaps this unusual working arrangement gave Farrell a little more free time to indulge in other civic activities, for which he was known.

The 1870 U.S. non-population census schedule for Farrell notes that for the previous year ending on June 1, 1870, he filled 8000 dozen of soda, for a value of \$6000. Also produced was \$1100 worth of cider and cronk. The total number of bottles in his inventory the he working with was noted as 500 dozen bottles with a value of \$250.

In March of 1870, J. A. Farrell gave notice in the local Grass Valley newspaper that he had leased his soda factory to Wm. E. Deamer. (Morning Union [Grass Valley, Calif.] March 29, 1870)

This unusual switch in operational management of the Grass Valley Soda Factory continued on with no known issues. Farrell was soon elected Deputy County Assessor which included the nearby Bridgeport, Bloomfield and Rough and Ready Townships. Unfortunately, Farrell's health took a turn for the worse and he had to relinquish his post. (4)

The soda works was apparently quite successful under Deamer's management, although he was reaching beyond a comfortable sphere with regard to bottle retrieval. It was even noted that, "W. E. Deamer is supplying Truckee with his delicious soda water." (5) The town of Truckee, about 50 miles from Grass Valley, was established as a key element of the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1867. It is

GRASS VALLEY SODA FACTORY.

THE lease of the Grass Valley Soda Factory to Mr. Wm. E. Deamer having expired, I have resumed the business, and thanving the old customers of the establishment for past patronage. I take this method of giving notice that I am prepared to supply customers with Soda Water, Cider and Summer Drinks generally.
Grass Valley, March 21st, 1873.
ap4-lm. **J. A. FARRELL,**

The notice provided by J.A. Farrell apprising the people of Grass Valley that he was back in charge of the soda factory. (Morning Union, [Grass Valley, Calif.] April 4, 1873).

located on the lee side of the highest point of the railroad, in the 'snow shadow' to the East of Donner Pass, at elevation 5,817 feet. The pass itself, at elevation 7,200 feet, is often blanketed with huge amounts of snow which was not a reasonable site for a critical working railroad station. Truckee quickly became a popular spot, not only for railroad workers but for tourists to experience the grandeur of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

By March of 1873 Farrell again took over management of the Grass Valley Soda Factory. There is no indication that Deamer completely abandoned his interest in the soda factory so it was probably just a titular switching of roles.

SODA BOTTLES.

IN CONSEQUENCE OF OUR LOSS IN Bottles being greatly in excess of what it should be, we respectfully inform the public that as a protection against unnecessary losses we are compelled to charge at the rate of One Dollar per dozen for all Bottles not returned. We never sell or in any manner forfeit our claim to them.

ap80-1m **J. A. FARRELL.**

Farrell must have been feeling an economic pinch when he resorted to posting this notice in the Grass Valley Morning Union of May 1, 1873, imposing a charge of one dollar per dozen for unreturned bottles.

It is still inconclusive why Farrell took a managerial hiatus from the pressures of his soda works. As his life and work unfolded it did become apparent that Farrell was burdened with issues that could be assigned to both mental and physical health. This may have been the primary reason why he leased the works to Deamer for a few years. Once he did return to his management activities Farrell noticed a decided loss of bottle inventory, which probably added to his concerns. This age old issue of bottle loss had always been the bane of the soda bottler, since it was a relatively expensive concern.

No more than a year and a half after taking over management of the Grass Valley Soda Factory, the town was rocked by an inexplicable tragedy. In an apparent moment of irrationality James A. Farrell decided to end his life with a bullet to his head, on October 18, 1874. This act came as a complete surprise to the townspeople and a grand jury inquest was held to help determine what had actually happened. The newspaper covered the probe and noted; "He had faults, but they leaned always to virtue's side. He was open handed and warm hearted. Never did anybody apply to him for assistance but that it was rendered on the instant and with liberality. He ought to have been worth a comfortable fortune by this time, pursuing the business that he did; but what he received he gave freely and generally with good judgment. No one can know why he committed the rash act of self destruction; no one can imagine the torture of body or mind that would drive one from an association of the best friends on this earth to the unknown association beyond the river." (6)



Farrell had demonstrated traits of a troubled individual as noted in his inquest. His doctor testified that Farrell was "extremely sensitive about the trouble that he gave his friends, on account of his habits, and that he frequently lamented that he did so." He also confided in his doctor that, at times, he had taken laudanum in rather large doses.

From various statements given it is apparent that Farrell had issues. The local gas-light keeper was one of the last persons to have seen him alive. He noted that when encountering Farrell the previous midnight he, "carried him to the corner of Richardson and Church streets; he leaned on my shoulder. I left him at the corner, and then returned and lit the gas in the Engine house." W. E. Deamer found his lifeless body in the morning. Deamer also noted at Farrell's death inquest, in referring to the soda works, he stated. . . . "No one sleeps there regularly, excepting Mr. Farrell. Mr. Berg slept there one or two nights last week - sometimes a friend slept there when deceased was on a spree".

DEAMER & WALLIS,
(Successors to E. Parker,)

Foreign and Domestic
WINES, LIQUORS

do., do.,
THEATRE BLOCK, OROVILLE,

WOULD RESPECTFULLY
 **announce to the public that they**
 **are located at the above place,**
and are now in receipt of goods at prices which
cannot fail to please those who purchase from
them.

ALSO, MANUFACTURERS OF
Soda & Mineral Waters!
ORDERS FROM THE COUNTRY
Respectfully solicited, and promptly attended to.

GINGER BEER!
75 cts. per doz. pints---\$1 50 per
doz. quarts.

my254f **DEAMER & WALLIS.**

Deamer was selling liquor and manufacturing soda water in Oroville, California, with B. C. Wallis, prior to moving to Grass Valley. (Weekly Butte Record, (Oroville, Calif.) July 13, 1861). The partnership was terminated in March 1864, and Deamer moved to Grass Valley in 1865, opening a series of restaurants.

That Farrell's death was somehow 'accidental' was dispelled by Cornelius Taylor, a local attorney. He was visited by Farrell about a week before his suicide. Farrell directed Taylor to draft a will for him. Taylor stated, "He directed me as to the contents of the will, and I drew it; he executed it. He assigned no reason for making the will, excepting what is stated in the will."

This writer did not examine Farrell's will, however, it is apparent that Wm. E. Deamer was given the soda works. The remainder of his estate was said to have gone to a few of his other friends.

William Elliott Deamer was born in Portland, Dorset, England in 1832 and was left an orphan at an early age. He was taken to sea by a brother-in-law as a cabin boy and served a term of five years as an apprenticed sailor. He followed the sea for some time and came to California around Cape Horn, arriving in San Francisco in January 1851.

Deamer remained in San Francisco for 1½ years and then went to Auburn and in 1854 to Nevada City, where he engaged in the manufacture of soda water. He sold out two months later and returned to Auburn. He sold out again in the Fall and went east and then to Europe, returning to California in 1855. Deamer then settled in Oroville and in 1865 came to Grass Valley.

Deamer was married in England in 1855 to Miss Martha White and had one son, William White Deamer, born in Grass Valley on November 25, 1861, and died in San Francisco on October 15, 1910, and a daughter, Josie E. Deamer, born in Oroville, California, on June 1, 1858, and died September 27, 1877, in Grass Valley, at the age of 21 years. He was operating a soda water business in Oroville at least as early as July 1856, under the name of Bordwell & Deamer.

By the mid-1870s John Matthews of New York City had become a major force in the sales of all things related to bottling soda water, especially his patented bottles with its 'gravitating stopper' closure device. The company offered exclusive rights to use of their bottles based on geographic areas – generally on a county-wide basis. By 1875 Matthews had sold exclusivity to several California areas;

- Sacramento City and County..... E. L. Billings
- Santa Clara County..... Williams Bros.
- San Mateo County Williams Bros.
- San Francisco City & County..... James McEwen
- Alameda County..... J. J. Bliven
- Oakland City..... J. J. Bliven

A year later William Deamer secured exclusive rights to Nevada County and began using the gravitating stopper bottles along with the traditional style blob top style with the wire affixed corks. For reasons not entirely clear, he established a second company by the name of NEVADA SODA WATER CO. as noted in the above

W. E. DEAMER,
MANUFACTURER OF
GINGER ALE, SODA WATER
AND CIDER,
And Agent for Pacific Congress
and Litton Springs Seltzer
Waters.

OFFICE OF THE NEVADA SODA WATER
CO., AND GRASS VALLEY SODA WORKS:
Parties purchasing Soda Water can have
their choice of the Gravitating Stopper
or Bottles filled in the usual way.
W. E. DEAMER.

SODA BOTTLES.
In consequence of our loss in Bottles
being greatly in excess of what it should
be, we respectfully inform the public
that as a protection against unnecessary
losses, we are compelled to charge at the
rate of One Dollar per dozen for all Bot-
tles not returned. We never sell or in
any manner forfeit our claim to them.
April 13-1m **W. E. DEAMER.**

Morning Union, (Grass Valley, Calif.) April 19, 1877

John Matthews, Manufacturer, First Ave., 28th & 27th Sts., New York. 41



Matthews' Patent Gravitating Bottle Stopper,
For Soda Water, Etc.

One of the principal expenses formerly necessary in bottling Soda Water, etc., was the cost of corks. The expense of corks for a bottle, used the average number of times during one season, largely exceeds the cost of the bottle, as the cork serves but once and is then lost. In consequence of defective corks much leakage ensues, causing loss of labor and materials; securing corks in the bottle by means of wires or strings also adds largely to the cost. It has been a desideratum to find a substitute for corks which would remain attached to the bottle, and serve to close the bottle a number of times.

This stopper is the most simple and practical device yet designed for that purpose, and is in actual practical use in a number of establishments which have dispensed with corks, wires, and strings altogether.

Prices and estimates for a complete outfit for a bottling establishment using these stoppers may be found on page 5 of catalogue No. 2.

An estimate of the comparative merits of this invention, compared with corks, with the net gain in one season, has been published, and will be sent to any address on application.

Prices.	
Glass Stoppers, each	4½ cents.
Hard Wood Stoppers, each	5½ cents.
Bottles, per gross	\$7.00

Bottles furnished with name and address of purchaser blown in the bottles. No charge is made for engraving or use of molds.

THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT to use these Stoppers, in accordance with our printed agreements, may be obtained for territory in the United States not already disposed of. Price two cents per inhabitant of the territory desired. See page 43, for list of desirable localities for this business where rights can be secured.

A sample bottle and stopper will be sent to any address on application.

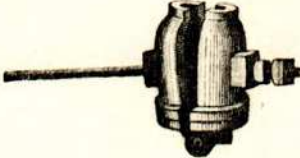
The Bottling Machine required for the bottles with Patent Stoppers is shown on page 36 of catalogue No. 2, and is rented, in accordance with our printed agreements, for \$25.00 per year. A deposit of \$100.00 is required.

This page from Matthews catalog notes that exclusive rights for the use of his gravitating stopper bottles may be secured with payment of two cents per inhabitant for the territory desired. Of course, supplies including bottles, stoppers, bottling equipment, etc., would need to be purchased from Matthews as well. Deamer had his name engraved in the mold for his gravitating stopper bottles, as was the custom.

referenced 1877 advertisement, that used only the gravitating stopper bottles. It appears that Deamer gave up the use of Matthews' gravitating stopper bottles, and sole rights to its use in Nevada County, by 1882, as that is the last year he advertised such use. Deamer's associated Nevada Soda Water Co. was also retired.

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It has not been determined if Deamer purchased the mold for his gravitating stopper bottles from John Matthews, as noted in this Matthews advertisement, or if he purchased the mold in San Francisco. What is clear is that the lettering on the mold was executed in San Francisco and a majority of the excavated bottles



MOLDS FOR MAKING BOTTLES.

These Molds are made in our factory and are of the highest quality of materials and workmanship. The engraving is in the latest style and Bottles are of best form.

Price of Mold (plain) for Soda Water

Bottles, half-pint usual size	\$15.00
Engraving of name and address	3.00
Monogram	3.75
Molds for long Ginger Ale Bottles, imported patterns	20.00

Engraving, same cost as above.

Persons ordering their bottles from us obtain bottles of superior quality, and we make no charge for Engraving or use of Molds.

It has not been determined if Deamer purchased the mold for his gravitating stopper bottles from John Matthews, as noted in this Matthews advertisement, or if he purchased the mold in San Francisco. What is clear is that the lettering on the mold was executed in San Francisco and a majority of the excavated bottles exhibit a dark aqua similar to the glass produced at both of the glass works in San Francisco.

SODA WATER

--AND--

STANDARD NERVE FOOD.

A DELIGHTFUL AS WELL AS A HEALTHFUL DRINK.

TO MY CUSTOMERS

Soda Water at Lowest Rates,

STANDARD NERVE FOOD 50 CENTS PER DOZEN.

THE CHEAPEST AND BEST.

An article that enterprise and patient application to business can produce. Orders filled and duplicated. Quantity not limited. And patronage respectfully solicited.

W. E. DEAMER,

Sole Proprietor of the Grass Valley Soda Works.

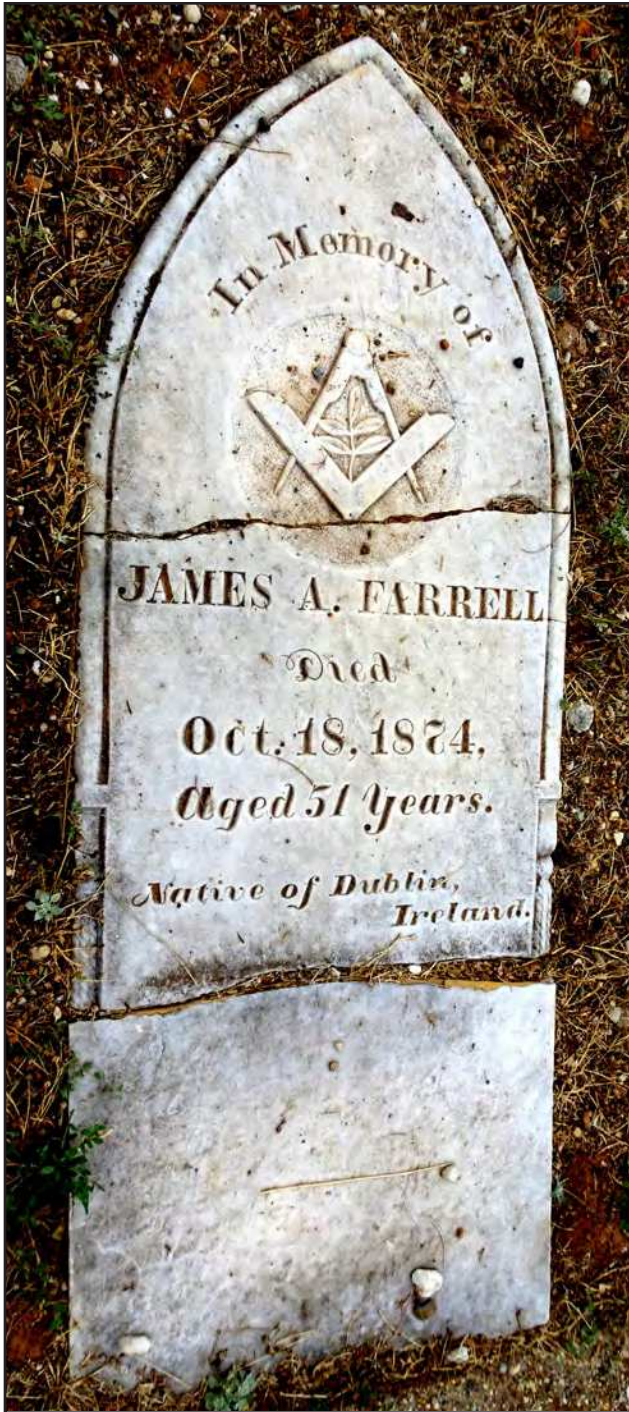
may27-1m

The last advertisement for Deamer and his Grass Valley Soda Works was located in the Grass Valley Morning Union of May 28, 1887, and ran for one month.

exhibit a dark aqua similar to the glass produced at both of the glass works in San Francisco.

In May 1884, Deamer was elected to the Grass Valley Board of Trustees. (7) He served three of the four-year post, having to resign in April 1887 because of increased pressure from his business requirements. (8) Deamer, it appears, was always experimenting with a large variety of non-alcoholic drinks. In 1884 he was producing his own cream soda, a relatively popular drink that originated on the East Coast. (9) In 1885 he concocted a new drink that he called "Cream Ginger Ale". (10) And, by 1887 Deamer introduced yet another drink that he called 'Standard Nerve Food'. (11)

As with nearly everyone on this earth, accidents happen. When one lives in a small town with its own newspaper, accidents become worthy news. Such was the case with W.E. Deamer when he chose to chop some wood on his property. . . ."while wielding the axe that implement caught upon an overhanging clothes-line. The intended blow was given with such force that when the line caught the blade of the axe, the handle was wrenched from Mr.



James A Farrell, native of Dublin Ireland

Deamer's hand. The axe fell upon the head of the gentleman, cutting a deep gash in his head from the crown nearly down to the bridge of the nose. (12) He recovered but likely wore a visible scar for the rest of his life.

As life's tragedies only halt with the final act, W.E. Deamer's wife, Martha White Deamer, took ill in 1889 and went to live with their son in Oakland, California, Wm. W. Deamer, a noted professor of languages associated with the University of California, which was closer to expert medical resources. As her health declined it was determined that as a last resort her life may be extended with surgery. The operation was not a success, from which she did not recover. Martha Deamer died in San Francisco on November 7, 1889.

With the tragic blow of losing his life partner, Wm. E. Deamer began making regular trips to Oakland, visiting his son and grandchildren. Just a few short years later the newspaper noted, "Wm. E. Deamer is dangerously ill at the residence of his son at Berkeley." (13) He died there on March 27, 1893. His obituary gives up no additional information about his final years as proprietor of the Grass Valley Soda Water Factory except for one sentence, "until a short time ago (he) was the owner of the Alta Soda Works on Richardson street." It is apparent, therefore, that a name change of his works occurred in the late 1880's. Deamer's remains were returned to Grass Valley where he is interred with his wife and daughter in the Odd Fellows & Masonic Cemetery.

The earliest reference to the Alta Soda Works was an advertisement in the Grass Valley Morning Union on July 1, 1885, with Wm. T. Richards as proprietor. A long chain of proprietors later gained control of the works but Deamer was not one of them. If he had owned the Alta Soda Works it would have to have been prior to Richards ownership. The earliest reference noted for Wm. T. Richards was his 1883 entrance into the 13th Annual Fair of the 8th District Agricultural Society in Grass Valley, of ginger ale and spruce beer. The only other entrance of similar goods was W. E. Deamer who produced his soda, ginger ale and wine cider. (14) The sweeping winner was Deamer for, "Best exhibit of spruce beer, diploma; Best exhibit ginger ale, diploma; Best exhibit cider, diploma; Best exhibit soda, diploma".

The blob top Deamer soda bottle is somewhat unusual as California made bottles go, aside from the block "F" on the reverse of most Farrell soda bottles. It is likely the only example of a California made bottle exhibiting the curved leg "R" in a block letter style. This unknown engraver must have been fiercely proud of his unusual engraving 'fingerprint'.

Of the many gold-rush period towns that dotted the Mother Lode Region of California, very few produced embossed soda water bottles in the 1860's and 1870's. Grass Valley claims three, all representing the same soda works. The J.A. Farrell bottle, made from about 1867 to no later than 1874, and the Deamer bottle, made from as early as 1870 to no later than about 1884. And, not to be overlooked is the gravitating stopper bottle made by Deamer from 1876 to possibly as late as 1881. Certainly a rich artifact history for such a small town.

References:

1. Morning Union, Grass Valley, California, October 20, 1874
2. Sacramento Daily Union, February 22, 1861
3. Morning Union, Grass Valley, California, May 16, 1866
4. Ibid, May 12, 1870
5. Ibid, July 18, 1872
6. Ibid, October 20, 1874
7. Ibid, 6 May 1884
8. Ibid, April 15, 1887
9. Ibid, September 6, 1884
10. Ibid, May 16, 1885
11. Ibid, May 28, 1887
12. Ibid, January 12, 1888
13. Ibid, January 28, 1893
14. Ibid, September 6, 1883

