

# *Yankee Hill Dispatch*

*Vol 1 No 1*



*April 2007*

*Published by the Yankee Hill Historical Society*

[www.yankeehillhistory.com](http://www.yankeehillhistory.com)

P.O.Box 4031, Yankee Hill, Ca 95965

**Welcome:** This is the first issue of the *Yankee Hill Dispatch!* The new format for the Yankee Hill Historical Society newsletter! We will be publishing the Dispatch three times per year. The primary focus will be bringing you up to date on what we are doing, but we will also try and include an article about the area's history in each issue. This issue also announces the launching of our new website [www.yankeehillhistory.com](http://www.yankeehillhistory.com). The newsletter will also be available online at the website approximately two weeks after its mailing. Both the newsletter and the webpage will be a work in process, improving as time passes. Our contact information is included inside. Enjoy and give us your feedback!

## **The Concow Valley**

Most people are aware of Cherokee's history as a gold town. A few people are aware that Yankee Hill was another smaller community just on the other side of the Feather River also trying to make a name for itself as a mining town. But few people know the role the Concow Valley has played in history other than perhaps its association with the Konkau Indians who lived here. The Concow Valley has had its own unique history because of its altitude, year round water supply and abundance of various species of pine trees. While there were some successes in the search for gold, it would be the Valley's other natural resources that guaranteed its place in history and encouraged businessmen to invest large amounts of capital in the Valley's development.

### **The First Inhabitants**

It is believed the first Native Americans, probably of Asian descent, migrated into California from the North around 12,000 years ago. As the population grew, there was a gradual migration away from the major water sources into more remote locations. It is believed the first Native Americans migrated into the Concow Valley around 800 AD. The population in the Valley has been estimated to be as high as 700 individuals at its peak. The Konkau Indians in the Concow Valley, unlike the Southern tribes which were exposed to European explorers and the Spanish mission system, probably had little or no contact with outside civilization before the gold rush. European explorers did visit Butte County and may have reached the site of present day Oroville, but there is no evidence they visited the Concow Valley. (Note: The Concow Valley is named after the Native American inhabitants of the Valley, the local inhabitants were members of the Konkau Village who were part of the larger KonKow Indian tribe who inhabited much of Butte County. The KonKow tribe is part of the Maidu language group. The references above are specific to the Konkau Indians who were members of the village located in the Concow Valley.)

## **The 1850's**

In 1849 the Concow Valley, like all areas in California with running rivers, was explored by miners searching for deposits of gold. Because the first newspaper in Butte County was not established until late in 1853 at Bidwell's Bar, the early history of the area is a bit sketchy. Sometime around 1850 it is believed the community of Spanish Town was founded. A small cluster of mining cabins was established near the site of the current Concow School. The census of 1860 lists eleven cabins in the area identified as Spanish Town, all unoccupied. About the same time Rich Gulch, two miles south was founded. Unlike Spanish Town, Rich Gulch and nearby French Town continued to grow and by 1856 were known as Yankee Hill. On the other side of the West Branch of the Feather River, a small community called Cherokee was founded. It too would flourish and by the 1870's it would become the most prominent mining community in the area. Meanwhile the inhabitants of Spanish Town had moved to other areas, some farther up the Concow Valley, a few even on to Flea Valley, an area fifteen miles further north.

The early gold seekers were primarily panning for gold and using small sluice boxes. By the mid 1850's the surface gold in areas already mined was gone and for the most part the days of using simple panning methods were over. Larger operations using multiple sluice boxes were in use. This method required large amounts of water traveling some distance in ditches and wooden flumes in order to reach the mining site. While the Feather River had plenty of water, it was of little use in the surrounding hills because there was no way to pump it uphill. So attempts were made to tap into the smaller water supplies in the hills above the mining operations. Meanwhile, there was a growing need for lumber for cabins, business establishments and flumes to carry water to the mines.

In 1851 a meeting was held at Bidwell's Ranch in Chico with the headmen of the KonKow Indian villages to try to negotiate a treaty of "Peace and Friendship". At that time 227 square miles of land between Chico, Oroville and Nimsheew were identified as land set aside for the KonKow tribe. The Federal Government rejected this agreement in 1852. In 1853, 40 Indians died at their village near Cherokee from pneumonia. It is estimated that up to that time as many as 800 Indians had died in all of Butte County from disease brought in by outsiders.

Access to the Concow Valley was difficult at first because you had to cross the Feather River. Late in 1854 W.E. Singer established a new stage route from Marysville to Cherokee. The stage left Marysville at 6:00 am and arrived in Cherokee at 3:00 pm the same day. Charles Curtis ran a small ferry across the West Branch of the Feather River; in 1858 he built a bridge across the river at Nelsons Bar, South of the Concow Valley. In 1859 a bridge was built across the Feather River at Whiskey Town, near present day Magalia, to reach Saw Mill Hill and the Flea Valley, North of the Concow Valley. Prior to 1858 when the post office was established in Yankee Hill in M.H. Wells's general store, residents of Yankee Hill and the Concow Valley had to make the trip across the Feather River to Cherokee in order to receive mail.

In 1855 Cherokee voters cast 124 votes for Supervisor; Rich Gulch (Yankee Hill and Concow area) cast 51 votes.

In the late 1850's Joseph Burr Mullen and his son William H. Mullen acquired a 160 acre piece of property along the Concow Creek, which ran through the Valley. The Mullen family came West in the early 1850's from Iowa. They raised cattle, farmed and were involved in the lumber industry. Undoubtedly, Joseph Mullen, who was a brick layer by trade, created a small dam in the creek to create a small reservoir which supplied

year round water for his large ranch. Also living nearby were G.G. Marquis and A.W. Thompson, both listed as farmers in the 1860 census.

### **The 1860's**

In 1861 the Concow Township was created from the Oregon Township. Everything from the mouth of the West Branch of the Feather River to the Plumas County line that was between the West Branch and the North Fork of the Feather River was part of the newly formed Concow Township. This area included Yankee Hill, Big Bend and all the land along the Concow River, including saw Mill Hill, opposite Dogtown (Magalia) and the area North, past Flea Valley. Cherokee remained part of the Oregon Township.

The civil war created a demand for new sources of Turpentine. Turpentine was manufactured from the pitch of pine trees, much of which was produced in the South. By the mid 1860's Dogtown (Magalia) had a thriving turpentine manufacturing business. By 1865 there was also a distillery at Pence's\*\* ranch. The Oroville Union Record in April 1864 reported that 20,000 trees were being tapped for their pitch in the Concow Valley to produce turpentine.

In 1863 M.H. Wells of Yankee Hill and G.G. Marquis of Concow led a group of men who rounded up 350 Indians from their villages in an effort to send them to a reservation in Humboldt County. Wells reported that of those, 220 were from the Yankee Hill/Concow area and 53 were from the Cherokee area. A group of Indians returned to the area in 1864 and were reported in a letter sent ahead by the agent at the reservation to be hostile.

In 1864, the preliminary meeting of the voters from this precinct appointed G.G. Marquis as the delegate to the County Convention and it was resolved to support Abraham Lincoln for reelection as President.

That same year a new road was graded in the Concow Valley. The old route over the top of Concow Hill was too difficult for the horses to pull their heavy loads. This new road was cut in the sides of the hills so it was more level and an easier haul for the loads of pitch and agriculture products. This new road would travel up "Deadwood and Spanish Ravine to Yankee Hill and French Town Road". The Oroville Union Record in an article about the Concow Valley suggested the road could be continued up the Valley and connected to the Dogtown and Honey Lake Road with little effort.

The Porter Quartz Mill was established atop Jordan Hill in 1865. By January 1866 this mill had twelve stamping machines driven by steam. At that time the mill employed 30 people. The Porter mill operated until October 1880 when it burned down.

In August 1865 a group of Indians attacked the home of Robert Workman, a miner whose house was near the home of G.G. Marquis in the Concow Valley. Mr. Workman was not home but his wife was severely beaten and her sister, Miss Smith, was killed along with a hired hand named John Banks. After ransacking the house, \$3,000 was stolen. After regaining consciousness outside the house, Mrs. Workman managed to make her way 200 yards to Mr. Marquis's home where Mrs. Marquis gave her assistance. Word was sent up to the Porter Quartz Mill to notify the workers. Fifteen men, including Mr. Porter met at the home of Wm. Mullen and a party set out to find the responsible Indians. The incident was reported in detail in the papers as the Concow Massacre. The following week a long report was given in the papers about the men finding a group of 25 Indians and the ensuing fight. At least a dozen Indians were killed and more were injured. In February the following year another group of 5 Indians were killed who were supposedly tied to the incident.

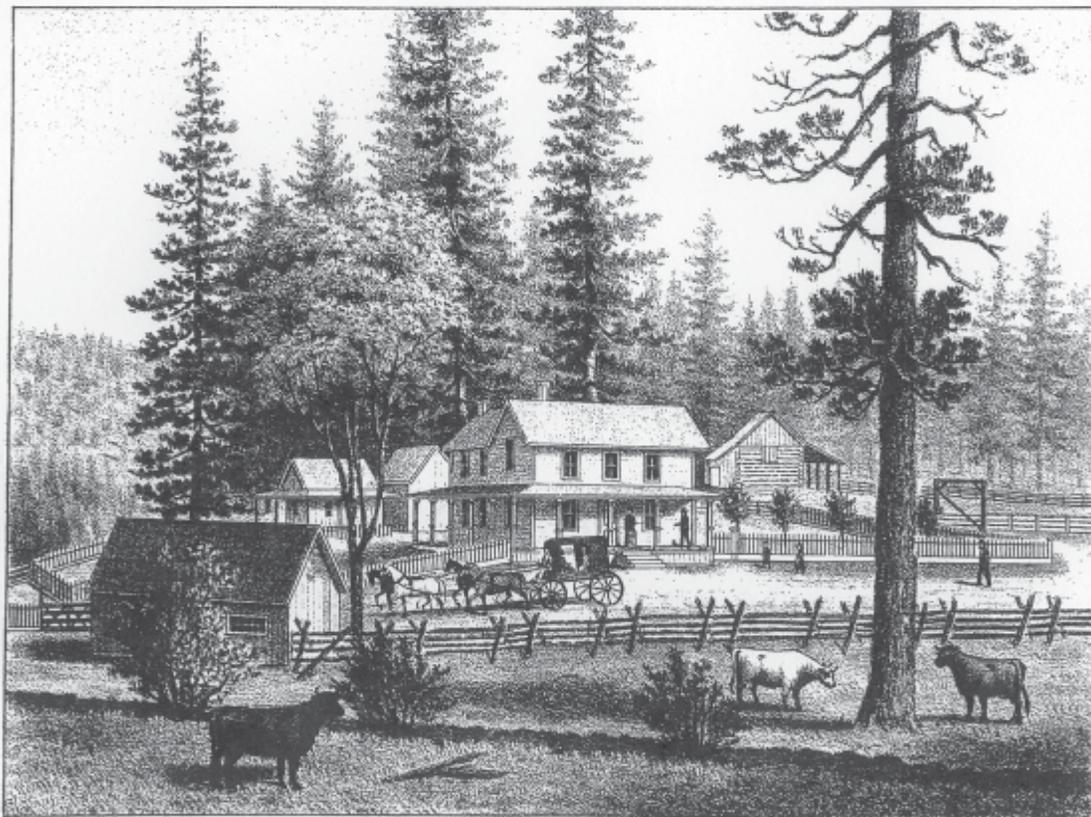
Mrs. Workman died several years later. Sometime after 1870, Robert Workman moved to Plumas County and remarried. Mr Workman's new wife Susan, a Native American, was a widower with two sons. In 1876, they had a son, William Workman.

Meanwhile in 1866, Cherokee was producing large quantities of gold but only during the winter months because the process required so much water. In February 1866 an article in the Oroville papers suggested the Concow Valley and its valuable ranches should be purchased and a reservoir created. "Agricultural interests will no doubt gracefully give way and the inhabitants of this beautiful mountain retreat seek homes elsewhere." This plan had been talked of in the past but no action was taken.

In late 1869, Joseph Burr Mullen, living in Santa Clara was preparing to join his father and brother at their Concow ranch.

\*\*Pentz was the spelling used when the post office was created near the Pence family ranch.

**To be continued in the July newsletter "The 1870's, Dam This Place!"  
Also the Chinese Doctor**



**RESIDENCE AND HOTEL OF J.B.MULLEN.**  
CONCOW, BUTTE CO. CAL.

**The Yankee Hill Historical Society lost a dear friend recently with the passing of John Felder. John helped with the restoration of the school house, working at various jobs, including refurbishing windows and the bookcase inside as well as helping in other areas. John will be missed and we offer John's family and friends our sincere condolences.**

## **YHHS Happenings**

### **School House Renovation - Jay Nicholson**

Since our last newsletter in April 2006, the volunteers have been busy with many restoration projects.

- In the Spring of 2006, we started clearing brush and overgrown Willow trees that were blocking the school from view. Fortunately, Butte County Jail provided a work crew or we would still be working!
- Deck boards for the side porch have been installed. Bob Anderson milled 2 x 6's from Cedar logs that were donated by Marji Cory.
- The bathroom is now completed with new siding and is ADA compliant.
- The handicap ramp has been finished and makes the schoolhouse wheelchair accessible.
- With the donation of roofing material by Don Saul, the porches and kitchen are finally dry.
- Currently the new kitchen addition is progressing nicely.
- Remaining projects will include installing cabinets in the kitchen. A new refrigerator will be donated by Lee and Patty Dummel.
- And finally, the classroom floor will be refinished.

**Saturday April 14th - Tom Truex is providing a tour of the site of the old West Branch Bridge over the Feather River and the adjacent Truex property. Afterwards Lunch will be provided at Don Saul's house down the road. Please RSVP with Don by calling 533-4524. We will meet at the Chicken Coops, just off the highway on Truex Road at 9:00 am. It should be fun and a unique opportunity, so we hope you can be there. But please RSVP! There is no charge, but donations are always welcome!**

**July 4th-Old West reenactment by the Law Dawgs followed by lunch at the Concow School. This year we will have another old west demonstration by the Law Dawgs, including a real stage coach holdup and other demonstrations. The show begins at 10:00am and the food will be served at 12:00. If it is not too hot, another demonstration will be held at 2:00pm. Last year this was a fun event and enjoyed by all so we look forward to seeing you there! A committee will be contacting members about preparing food. We will also have several areas set aside with tables for rent for a good old fashion rummage sale! If interested in renting a space please call Marji Corey at 534-3045.**

**First Saturday each month, Bunko Party!!** - The first Saturday of each month at 1:00pm we have a bunko party at the old school. Prizes and a raffle are held to raise funds for the school restoration. The restoration crew has been feverishly working on the school and we want to make sure we can provide the materials to keep them going! The money raised from the bunko party is a primary contributor to the restoration fund. It is fun and supports a great cause. SEE YOU THERE! (**Note:** There is no bunko party in April because of the Easter holiday.)

**Grand Prize Winner:** Eula Nelms won the Feather Falls Casino Crystal Gayle tickets and a \$50 dining voucher at the Feb Bunko Party.

**Yankee Hill Historical Society Web Page** - We have recently launched our new web page! You can see the page at [www.yankeehillhistory.com](http://www.yankeehillhistory.com). Currently you can find directions to the school, see the school restoration progress, see a list of events sponsored by the Yankee Hill Historical Society, read previous newsletters, print out a membership form and contact us via the web. Also we have provided links to other historical societies and research facilities in Butte County. As time passes we will add additional features. Now when you want to let someone know about us, tell them to check [www.yankeehillhistory.com](http://www.yankeehillhistory.com)!

**YHHS Wish List** - Donations or financial assistance are always welcome!

A lockable FIREPROOF, four drawer filing cabinet - As we begin building our archives, the Yankee Hill Historical Society is in need of a lockable fireproof filing cabinet to store small artifacts, copies of pictures and other documents.

### **Officers and Contact Information**

**President:** *Bob Huffman (530) 533-4132*

**Vice President:** *Jay Nicholson (530) 533-2273*

**Director:** *Marji Corey*

**Director:** *Leatrice Lubner*

**Newsletter Editor:** *Larry Mauch (530) 532-0706 [editor@yankeehillhistory.com](mailto:editor@yankeehillhistory.com)*

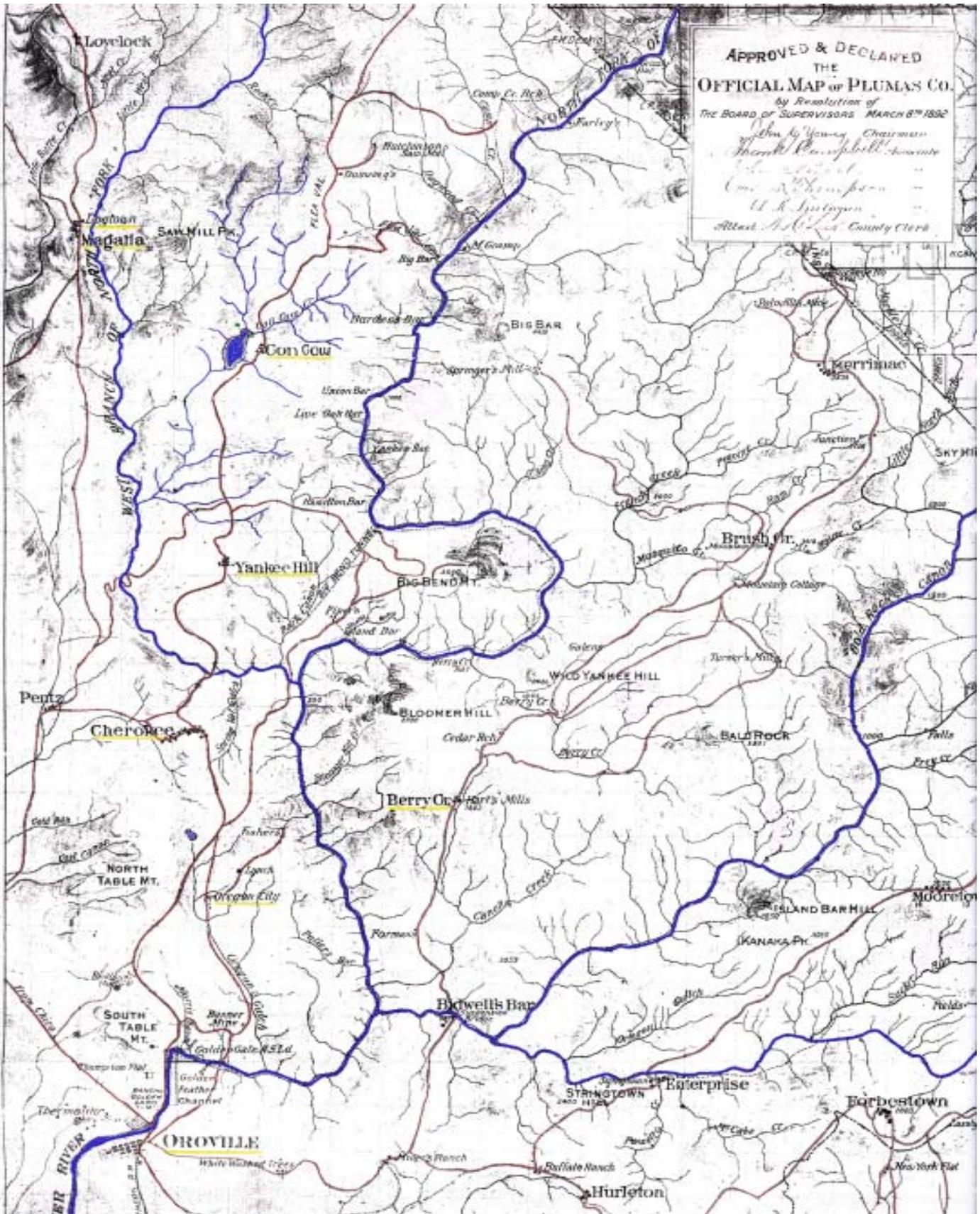
**General Correspondence:** [information@yankeehillhistory.com](mailto:information@yankeehillhistory.com)

## **Hands up!**

**You are about to become a supporter  
of the  
Yankee Hill Historical Society!**



Photo of "Law Dawgs" stagecoach holdup reenactment



The 1892 Plumas County map shows a portion of Butte County shown here. The roads are shown in brown, the major forks of the Feather River in blue.

Yankee Hill Historical Society  
P.O. Box 4031  
Yankee Hill, Ca 95965

*“Dedicated to Preserving Our Local History”*  
*Visit Our Web Page @ [www.yankeehillhistory.com](http://www.yankeehillhistory.com)*