

# *Yankee Hill Dispatch*

*Vol 3 No 2*



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

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

## **Black Bart Visits Yankee Hill!**

On Saturday, May 15th the Yankee Hill Historical Society will sponsor a presentation by Lee Dummel and Vern Stephens on the life and times of Black Bart. Tickets are \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children under twelve. Held at the Old School house, the event starts at 1:00 and runs until 2:30 or until all questions have been answered. One of Black Bart's stage holdups was at Berry Creek. To learn about this and his other escapades as well as new information about what happened to Black Bart after his release from prison, be sure and attend! This presentation has been well received by other historical societies and will be well worth attending.

In this issue our article is about Spanishtown. The information here has never been recorded in local histories and is taken directly from Oroville newspaper articles from 1856 & 57. Spanishtown was located right here in our backyard. We hope you enjoy reading about a rip roaring community that was a big part of our early history. It should be noted that the articles have not been edited and are a reflection of the harsh times in early California's history.

## **SPANISHTOWN!**

Sometimes recorded history intentionally or unintentionally distorts the truth. Yankee Hill has been presented in the 1882 and 1918 Histories of Butte County as being the largest town in Butte County on the North side of the West branch of the Feather River. In reality, Yankee Hill has a long history but was always a relatively small grouping of buildings: a hotel, store, blacksmith shop, stage stop, post office and several houses and cabins which provided services for a large geographic area. Research shows that Spanishtown, established in 1856 was the largest gathering of people and businesses in the area that we would traditionally view as a town. In its short history Spanishtown was every bit as exciting and notorious a place as Hangtown or other well known California gold rush towns.

In the early years of the gold rush, hastily established mining communities came and went. Tents were set up and cabins were quickly built only to disappear or be abandoned when the gold was gone. In many cases, it was a matter of months before they were gone. In some cases, it was several years and in a few cases they developed into permanent towns. With the exception of the latter, we only know of the existence of these short lived communities because of references to their colorful names in old history books or on early maps.

In the foothills North of Oroville, the earliest mining communities North of the West Branch of the Feather River were Rich Gulch circa 1850, Frenchtown circa 1854 and Spanishtown circa 1856. But by 1858 they were all declining or had vanished and history would record them as the forerunners to the community that we now know as Yankee Hill. As it is with most of the early short-lived mining towns, little is known about Rich Gulch and Frenchtown. We get a glimpse of Spanishtown's unique history because of one of the town's early residents and his own personal story.

C.W. Stiles is a mysterious character from Butte County's early history. Born in New York, the 22 year old Stiles ended up in Sacramento in 1850. By 1853, he is located in Butte County at the town of Bidwell. Although a miner by trade, in November of 1853 he forms a partnership with L.P. Hall, Harry Decourcey and James Kerr and starts the Butte Record, the first newspaper in Butte County. Mr. Stiles has a printing press shipped in his name to Bidwell. Unfortunately, Hall and Decourcey do not get along and Decourcey stabs Hall. One ends up in the hospital and the other in jail. Three months after starting the paper, C.W. Stiles sells the printing press and the paper to George Crossette. It is because of their continued relationship we learn about Spanishtown.

By September of 1856, C.W. Stiles is living in Spanishtown and sends several letters to the Butte Record describing the town, which had been established several months earlier. He signs most of his letters not with his name but just "Spanishtown". Spanishtown had a brief but colorful existence. Spanishtown's heyday was from August 1856 to August 1857. Letters written by Mr. Stiles and published by Mr. Crossette in the "Weekly Butte County Record" published in Bidwell and the "Daily Butte County Record" published in Oroville, undoubtedly helped promote the fledgling town. The promise of rich deposits of gold and the soon to be available year round water supply via man made ditches brought a flock of gold seekers to Spanishtown. The rapid growth and resulting clashes between Peruvian, Mexican, Irish and American miners in the town are the stuff old west legends are made of. Fortunately for us, the early events were recorded by Charlie Stiles in 1856 and later in 1857 by someone who signed Phelix and Philus Julious (both were a fictitious pen name) for posterity. Several of the correspondences with the local papers are included in this article.

### **Oroville, "Northern Californian", Sept 10, 1856**

*"Spanishtown is going ahead very rapidly. There have been thirteen fine new buildings put up in the last three weeks in the town and immediate vicinity. There are a number of others in the course of erection, but the difficulty we find is the want of lumber. There is no sawmill for fourteen miles, though we have now made arrangements with Mr. Nance of Dry Creek Mills to establish a lumber yard here. He has four ox teams daily hauling lumber, and there will soon be plenty for all to build. You would say this was a young Oroville, to hear the sound of the hammer and saw. The ditch so long talked of will be in full operation next week. If we had the water here now, with the diggings that we have, I will venture to say that there would be more gold taken from this precinct this winter than from any other in Butte County. There is a company of Chilenos just below our town that take out daily from three to five ounces to the hand. There is an old colored man that has been mining here that took out a little over seven hundred dollars as his share in three weeks' work, and then he sold out his claim and went below to get his wife. Yesterday he prospected the same ground to show his wife the prospect, and washed out eleven dollars the first pan. We have but one American lady living in this vicinity, Mrs. Morquis. She washed out one pan of dirt yesterday and got one dollar thirty-seven and one-half cents. We have a daily stage from Oroville running here. There have been quite a number of persons here in the last four weeks who have good claims recorded. This is a new place, and the diggings here were first struck last winter by a company of Chilenos and Mexicans. The town is situated on Spanish Ravine, which empties into Chub Gulch. These and Blair's Ravine are considered the richest diggings. Our town is twenty miles from Oroville and one mile from Frenchtown. We had two gentlemen to call on us yesterday who came in a buggy, the first buggy that was ever seen in this part of the country. There is a good mountain road from*

*Pence's Ranch to the place. Mr. Snyder, Mr. Pierce and Mr. Reed have been sinking a shaft on what is called Yankee Hill for hill digging.*

Spanishtown quickly became a destination for many. The Black Republican Party spoke at the Golden Gate Hotel at Spanishtown in October 1856, those in attendance cast 46 votes in a straw vote for President of the United States.

**MEETING AT SPANISHTOWN.**  
Gen P. H. HARRIS, A M ZABRISKIE,  
Esq., and others, will address the citizens of  
SPANISHTOWN, Butte County; on SATUR  
DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 18th, on the polit-  
ical questions of the day

### Weekly Butte Record 10-18-1856

The new town was a rough and sometimes violent place. Charlie Stiles tried to organize a citizen's police force in October. In the months from October 1856 to May of 1857 the Oroville papers reported 5 people murdered and over a dozen others were injured in gun fights or stabbings in Spanishtown. On Oct 19<sup>th</sup> in 1856, a Sunday, the most noteworthy disturbance started in a dance house.

#### **Oroville "Butte Record", Oct 29, 1856**

*Dear Crossette:*

*You have no doubt heard 'ere this, that Spanishtown was something of a place, and I do assure you that I have seen sufficient of it myself, to say that the half has not been told. In many respects it excels any mining or mountain town that I have seen and reminds one of the past and exciting times of -49 and -50 when money was plenty, diggings good, whiskey run freely, and consequently to cut, shoot, play cards, and kick up rows, was the order of the day.*

*The white population hereabouts are as a general thing, a peaceably inclined, jolly set of fellows—once in awhile some "rip-roarer" spoils for a fight, and he don't have to look far to get it.*

*The Mexicans, Peruvians and Chilians stir us up very often. Last night, they had a bloody fight at a dance house and at which at least a hundred shots were fired. The balls went whizzing in every direction. One man, a Peruvian I believe, was killed. One woman, a Portuguese, shot in the arm. Two men in a cabin, Peruvians, one shot in the right shoulder, the other cut badly with a sword. Two Chilians shot; one in the back, the other in the leg.*

*The diggings here are certainly rich. The town is full of people. Hotels are crowded, the Golden Gate, Cary & McClellan proprietors, is the principle house in town.*

*Buildings are rapidly going up. The ditch will be completed in about six weeks. Aman W. Fargo, the Superintendent, certainly deserves credit for presenting this work as he has, and from the known reputation of the officers of the company, insures its speedy completion.*

*There is no doubt but that the clean Democratic county and township ticket will be elected. Jesse Morrison, one candidate for the legislature, is very popular here.*

*Some little attempts have been made to nominate township officers, but as yet nothing has been done.*

*Yours Sc,*

*SPANISHTOWN*

**Oroville "Weekly Butte Record", Nov 22, 1856**

*Fight at Spanishtown – We learn that a fight occurred at the above place on Sunday night between an American and an Irishman wherein both parties were severely injured and one of them had a large piece bitten out of his chin. Nice, moral place, that Spanishtown!*

When the official election results for President in November 1856 were announced, 253 votes were cast in the Spanishtown voting precinct. The precinct included all the mining communities in Butte County North of the West Branch of the Feather River.

By the end of 1856 Spanishtown supported 3 hotels, (The Pioneer, The Golden Gate and The Union), a meat market, a dance hall, a sawmill, numerous residents (one source reported 85 dwellings and a population of 500) and was serviced by 3 stage coaches daily.

**DYER'S DAILY EXPRESS !**  
From Oroville to Spanishtown  
AND FRENCHTOWN.

**T**HE undersigned will run a Daily Express between Oroville, Spanishtown and Frenchtown. All letters and packages entrusted to his care will be delivered with promptness and despatch.

Agents, WM. C. PAYNE, Oroville,  
DR. WALDRON, Spanishtown.

sep19-1m\*

**Oroville Daily Butte Record 9-23-1856**

As for Charlie Stiles, he ran for Justice of the Peace of Oregon Township, which included Spanishtown, in the November 1856 elections. After he lost the election, he was seen a week later leaving town on a jackass loaded with provisions asking where the richest diggings were located. Stiles ended up in Ukiah in 1860 before returning to New York.

In January 1857, it was announced that an application for a permanent bridge at Nelson Bar, crossing the West Branch of the Feather River, had been filed. Prior to that time the area was served by a ferry. In February it was also reported that Spanishtown had 3 hotels as mentioned earlier, 4 dance halls, 8 billiard saloons, 3 stables and numerous stores and private residences. Mining, drinking, gambling and prostitution were all thriving businesses. It was reported that 6 respectable families now lived in the area. That same month it was also reported that a large number of the Peruvian and Mexican miners left the area to go to the new rich diggings at Helltown and Dogtown, implying at the time that Spanishtown would be a safer place.

**Oroville Butte County Record Jan 22, 1857**

*Spanishtown, Jan. 22, 1857*

*Mr. Editor, Sir: Noticing no correspondence from this section of the globe since the departure of the "Judge", and believing our town is worthy of notice, I have taken it upon myself, to send you a few*

*lines by way of a slant, but as for giving you news, I cannot, as our town is like most mountain towns, of that dull, monotonous character, which admits of little comment; yet we have had for the last few weeks, subjects enough to give you volumes, if it suited our taste to tell you of fast whiskey-fighting men, or fast riding, even like unto Jehu the son of Nimshi, yet all these are commonplace, occurrences, and notwithstanding they are evidences of the life and action of our flourishing town. I had rather tell you something of our doings in a more substantial way.*

*Our town has been very dull, but for the last two weeks times have greatly improved and indeed it now looks but little like the Spanishtown of a month ago.*

*The late rains have furnished a bountiful supply of water in the main ravines, and our miners have met with much better success than was anticipated. I hear of very few that are not doing well, yet diggings without some failures, is what I have never seen.*

*Mr. White's company of three men, took out the last three days of last week \$180. The Spanish claim took out six ounces to the pan yesterday, and all that have claims on the main ravine seem to be doing a land office business.*

*I understand from Mr. Rafell, that he has fully tested his quartz lode near Jourdon Hill, and that it will yield from \$55 to \$250 per ton. With rastras this is big pay, and from the appearance of the quartz, I have seen in this vicinity, I do not doubt but that this is as rich a quartz section as there is in the State, and I do think this will be an important and extensive branch of our mines.*

*Under the management of Mr. Dickey, our big ditch is progressing finely and in about three or four weeks we will have an abundance of water on our highest hills.*

*Through the politeness of the accommodating agent of the Pacific Express Co., the benevolent countenance of the Record greets us daily. Yours in haste, Phelix*

### ***Oroville Butte County Record Jan 29, 1857***

*Communicated Spanishtown, Jan. 27, 1857*

*Editor Butte Record – Sir: Our town has been the scene of a robbery which for boldness and daring, would compare successfully with the acts of Joaquin or Bell – About 2 o'clock this morning three men entered by a back window, the Young American building, occupied as the Pacific Express office, and robbed it of about one hundred and seventy-five dollars. Mr. Cramner, the agent, was sleeping in the office and was awoke by the thieves as they drew the money from under his head: He immediately caught one of them, when a scuffle ensued, and notwithstanding threats of murdering him, Mr. Cramner held to him and endeavored to give the alarm. The thief tried to cut him but only cut his shirt and gave him a slight scratch on his breast, when Mr. Cramner caught the knife by the blade and held it for some time but it was drawn thro' his hand, cutting it slightly, when the other two villains who had left the house on the first scuffle, returned, and between the three Mr. Cramner was left stunned by many kicks and bruises, while the thieves made good their escape. There was about \$800 in the office at the time, but fortunately it was overlooked by the thieves. As yet there is no clue as to their identity; Mr. Cramner describes the one he had hold of as a powerful man and as speaking good English.*

*Our town begins to assume a lively appearance, and we count the days as they pass, seeing that each day our town is improving. New houses are going up in different parts of the town and all seems life and bustle.*

*The White claim took out on last Saturday, 14 ounces. The Spanish, Darby's, and Grun's claims, continue to pay well.*

*Messrs. Murphy & Co., of Concow, have recently struck rich paying dirt, and are now engaged in cutting a ditch for a short distance to furnish water for their claims.*

*Mr. Hart has been up to see us and intends to shove our ditch along to a speedy conclusion, and I have been informed intends to put about fifty more men to work this week. Under the present able*

management we are sure of having plenty of water soon, which is all that is required to develop as rich a mining section as any in the State.

Yours, in haste, "Phelix"

P.S. The agent of the Pacific Express remonstrated with us for sending our last communication "by way of a slant", while there is a well regulated and prompt express to carry our letters, so we have concluded to send this by the Pacific.

**Oroville Daily Butte Register, Feb 5, 1857**

Spanishtown Correspondence

Spanish Town Jan the 31, 1857

*Mr. Crossette: Sir I suppose you have heard 'ere this what a lively little town we have up here in these Nefarious Mountains. In fact, it has been quite lively here the last week, more so than usual that is in the way of stealing, robbing and attempt to murder and in place of it getting any better I am afraid it will get worse from present appearances. The fact of it is there are about three hundred Mexicans and Chileans living here and a great many thieves among them and there is also several of our own people here that are as bad as the Mexicans and they are well known. I will just give you a list of the robbers and fights of last week as I wish it to appear in public print so as to let the people know what we have to resort to for our own protection. On last Monday night the Pacific Express office was robbed by three men supposed to be Mexicans. On the following Tuesday night an old gentleman hard working miner was knocked down in his cabin, his head badly cut and robbed of \$18. The same night there was a fight started in the dance house between some Mexicans about a Mexican woman, that there has been two men killed here, about there was two shots fired, no one hurt on Wednesday night, there was two cabins broke into but nothing found and Mr. Coopers kitchen was broke in by two Mexicans. They stoles some eatables when they were heard and made quick their escape. On Thursday there was free fight; on that night there was no robbing. On Friday night a young man by the name of Ward was robbed of \$7 cash, gold watch chain and knife by Mexicans. On Saturday night about the hours of one or two they tried to break into a French store but was frightened by a candle being lit in the house above. They were Mexicans and had almost succeeded. On Sunday at about 11 o'clock, fighting commenced between two Mexicans, one the keeper of dance house and the other a gambler when it sort of became general free and then it was sort of kept up the balance of the day (by the American and Spanishtown whiskey) to cap the climax that night two Mexicans in the dance house, the keeper of the house was choking a Chilean when another Chilean interfered and he was knocked dead with pistol when there was several pistol shots fired. There is not dollar in the town nor a hope of any until the ditch comes in. Mr. Dickey has been up here and put some one hundred men to work on the ditch and it is going on lively. It is expected the ditch will be finished by first June then look out for the oro, all we want is water. We have the diggings but the town is gone in, you may say for two months, then you Oroville folks will have a sister village in Butte that will be worth noticing. The general impression is that we can beat Oroville or any other location in the county in regards to diggings that will pay from one ounce up to three per day to the hand. We hope 'ere spring to get rid of some of our worthless citizens and do most heartily hope for the benefit of the community that our present coming grand jury will be so kind to inflict a fine on every gambling house in this town if we have to drive out these Mexicans and thieves in this town. Please put this letter in print to let the public know what it was done, for that we as peaceable citizens did not begin too soon, we have put up with it all winter, tis time to stop it if we want to live.*

Yours, Philus Julius

Please publish this letter just as it is; I will write you again when there is anything new.

Union Hotel & Stage House,  
SPANISHTOWN, BUTTE CO.

RIPLEY & STANIELS,.....Proprietors.



THE UNDERSIGNED inform their friends and the public generally, that they have just opened a NEW HOTEL in Spanishtown bearing the above name, and having provided it with all the arrangements that constitute a first class Hotel. clean and comfortable Beds, bountifully furnished Table, and a Bar supplied with the best of Wines, Liquors and Cigars, they solicit the patronage of the travelling public.

The California Stage Company make this house the head quarters for their Coaches in Spanishtown.

J. P. RIPLEY,  
JOHN S. STANIELS,

Spanishtown, December 20, 1856.

d20-1f

Oroville Daily Butte Record 12-24-1856

*Oroville Daily Butte Record, June 2, 1857*

*Murder at Spanishtown*

*Mr. McConkey, constable at Spanishtown, has furnished us with the following particulars of an atrocious murder committed in Spanishtown on Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. Cary, the murdered man, is said was an estimable gentleman, and universally esteemed.*

*It appears that two Spaniards and a man named Wilson arrived at Spanishtown, with a pair of dark bay horses on Sunday morning which they offered for sale. A Spanish residing at Spanishtown appeared to be acquainted with them, and was in their company most of the day. It was generally suspected that they had stolen the horses, and they did not succeed in disposing of them. Towards night, they left with the horses for Frenchtown, when the Spaniard residing at Spanishtown, went to Mr. Cary's house, and asked him if he had said that the horses were stolen? Mr. Cary put him off with an evasive answer, and turned him out of doors. The Spaniard returned a short time afterwards and breaking into the house, stabbed Mr. Cary to the heart. He cut the Spaniard severely before he fell.*

*The Spaniard was arrested and had an examination before Justice Steward, who committed him for trial, and he was lodged in our jail yesterday morning in company with the other three persons who were in possession of the horses.*

*Mr. Cary formerly resided in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

*The horses are well matched dark bays – American. One of them has no brand but has a small burst on the under side of his belly. The other is branded D on the left shoulder, and J. H. on the left hip. They are now in the possession of the Sheriff.*

Spanishtown's rapid growth made its importance evident, not only in the immediate area, but in all of Butte County. Several of the newspaper articles reported here were also quoted in the Sacramento Daily Union. At the time there was only one large town in Butte County, Oroville. In the September 1857 Butte County Democratic vote for District judge, Spanishtown cast 90 votes, Frenchtown 30 votes, Concow 17 votes, Cherokee 14 votes, Bidwell 109 votes, Chico 97 votes and Oroville 1350 votes.

By the end of 1857 Spanishtown's growth was soon on the downslide, partially because as it was with many of the early mining communities, the surface gold played out quickly. Also its reputation for violence probably didn't help. By 1858 Spanishtown is rarely mentioned in the papers. Michael Henry Wells, one of the original investors in the 49 & 56 mine located a half mile away on Yankee Hill was opening a store, by 1858 the post office for the area would be located in his store. The official name assigned the new post office was Yankee Hill.

For whatever reason, the story of Spanishtown has never been told in past Butte County histories. The town was just a footnote in the history of Yankee Hill. It is clear from the articles in the papers that in late 1856, Spanishtown was the prominent gathering place for the miners in Butte County on the North side of the West Branch of the Feather River.



**1862 Map of Frenchtown, Spanishtown, Yankee Hill  
and the Monte Vista Quartz Mills  
(Note: Nelson Bar Bridge at left-bottom)**

What became of the Spanishtown site? As was common practice in those days when a town was deserted many of the structures were torn down by their owners for the lumber. By 1860 the census notes Spanishtown consisted of 11 empty cabins. In 1874 Michael Linnin operated a 10 acre ranch and vineyard nearby and Theodore Busch owned a house in old Spanishtown. In February 1875, the Concow School was established ½ mile from the old town site. Years later, Miller's corner and the Pines Store occupied part of the site near the intersection of Concow Road and Pinkston Canyon Road.

## **YHHS Happenings**

**Bunco Party!!** - Bunco will be held Saturday **June 5th, July 3rd, Aug 7th, Oct 2nd and Dec 4th at 1:00pm** we have a bunco party at the old school. Prizes and a raffle are held to raise funds for the school restoration. The money raised from the bunco party is a primary contributor to the restoration fund. It is fun and supports a great cause. **SEE YOU THERE!**

**“Spring Fling” Saturday May 1st.** Stop by the Spring Valley School between 10:00am and 2:00pm and enjoy all the activities. Yankee Hill Historical Society will have a table, **stop by and say hello!** Fun for everyone!

**Saturday May 15th 1:00pm to 2:30pm “Black Bart revisits Butte County”**  
We hope to see you at the old school house. Refreshments will be served. See the flyer in this newsletter. Admission \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children under 12. **We suggest you leave your gold at home!**

**Membership Dues - The Yankee Hill Historical Society dues are now due for 2010.** If the label on this newsletter states 2009, then your dues are now due. If the label states “C” or “2010” or later you owe no dues.

Individual Membership is \$10 and runs from Jan 1st thru Dec 31st. You can mail your dues along with your contact information to Yankee Hill Historical Society, P.O.Box 4031, Yankee Hill, Ca 95965.

### **Officers and Contact Information**

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

**Vice President:** *Patty Dummel*

**Treasurer:** *Debbie Ingvoldsen*

**Secretary:** *Don Saul*

**Director:** *Marji Corey*

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

**General Correspondence:** *information@yankeehillhistory.com*

**Yankee Hill Historical Society**  
**Presents**  
**Black Bart revisits Butte County**



The Life and Times of Black Bart, as portrayed by Old West Historians and Re-enactors, Lee Dummel, as Black Bart, and Vern Stephens as Wells Fargo Detective, James Hume.

The presentation will take place  
from  
1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Saturday May 15, 2010

**Admission Prices**

\$6.00 for Adults  
\$3.00 for Children under 12  
Fundraiser for old school house

**Location**

**Historic Messilla Valley School House  
11666 Concow Rd., Concow**

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

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