

Yankee Hill Dispatch

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

The Yankee Hill Dispatch is published three times per year. In each issue we include an article about the area's history. This is the first issue of 2012, this issue covers the Williams family and their history in Yankee Hill. George Williams, Norman Williams' Great Grandfather's brother arrived here in 1866.

In August the newsletter subject will be the history of Flea Valley, Rag Dump and Ramsey Bar. In November 2012 the subject will be the history of the John Clark family and John's involvement in mining, John discovered the Surcease mine at Big Bend as well as several others.

The Williams Family of Yankee Hill

George and Solomon Williams

The Williams family has been associated with Yankee Hill since 1866 when George Williams, born in New York in 1832 and a miner by trade came to Yankee Hill. George lived in the Jordan Hill, Nelson Bar Road area and probably was first employed by the Jordan Hill mine which had a crew of about 30 people at the time. In Sept 1871 George filed his own claim near the Jordan Hill ditch, which supplied water to the area. He later filed claims with several partners including M.H. Wells, Wm. Sweetman, Wm. Farley and Wm. Perkins, all well known names in this area at the time. In 1882 George Williams filed a large mining claim, nearly 1500 ft by 600 ft on the East Branch of the West Branch of the Feather River by himself, claiming all water and timber on the property.

In 1887 George's older brother Solomon Williams, born in 1820 in Pennsylvania came to the area after his wife Nancy died in Ohio. Solomon was a painter by trade and resided in the Yankee Hill area. Both men were described in 1892 as light complexion, blue eyes and grey hair, both were about 5 Ft 4 inches tall. It appears George never married. Solomon had four children, two boys and two girls in Ohio. The two boys, Samuel and John followed their father here in 1888. John came out with his wife Elizabeth and a 1 year old daughter, Maggie. Both sons settled in Gridley and followed in their father's footsteps as painters.

John and Lizzie (Poultney) Williams

Solomon's son John and his wife Lizzie Williams had six children, as mentioned earlier, Maggie born in Ohio, Butte, William, Nathaniel, Martha and Clinton all born in Gridley. Butte Poultney Williams, born in 1890 is the father of Norman Williams who now lives on Nelson Bar Road. Poultney was Lizzie William's maiden name.

In 1907, at the age of 17, Butte Williams purchased 40 acres on Nelson Bar Road for \$10 from Wendlin Miller. The Miller brothers, Joseph and Wendlin, butchers and cattlemen by trade owned substantial amounts of property, over 4,000 acres, in Yankee Hill, Concow, Cherokee and Chico. Their older brother Enoch Miller had been a butcher at Frenchtown on Nelson Bar Rd in 1855 before leaving in 1862 to return home to Cincinnati. Joseph and Wendlin had acquired their property on Nelson Bar Road, nearly 200 acres in 1883 and 1886 from the Central Pacific Railroad which had accumulated large amounts of land in the early 1870's for \$2.50 an acre in an agreement with the government to help finance the expansion of the railroad. Joseph Miller built a two story home on Nelson Bar Rd in 1883 but moved to Cherokee four years later. Lyman Brown owned the home and surrounding property by 1920. The \$10 Butte Williams paid for his 40 acres is an unusually low price; he probably had traded something in kind as well for the property, perhaps his labor with the Miller brothers. The Miller brothers died in 1908 and are buried in the Cherokee Cemetery. In 1910 Butte Williams was listed as working at Yankee Hill in Pearson's butcher shop. Mr. Pearson rented the facilities on Nelson Bar Rd.

In 1910, John Williams would move the family to his son Butte's property on Nelson Bar Rd. The family two-story home was first built in 1908 and served as a hospital below Big Bend servicing railroad employees while the Western Pacific rails were under construction. The building was moved to the Nelson Bar Road property by John Williams. There John Williams started farming on the 40 acre parcel.

About 1912 Butte Williams worked as a surveyor for the railroad at Ramsey's Bar. It was during this time he fell from a horse hurting his arm which permanently limited its use. Because of the injury he received a \$10 a month pension from the railroad.



Williams home built 1908 as hospital on Feather River, below Big Bend, later moved (3-5 years) to Nelson Bar Rd

Butte Poultney Williams and Bessie (Croghan) Williams

Butte Williams married Bessie Croghan, the daughter of Grant Croghan, in 1915. The Croghan family has a long history in the area. Benjamin Franklin Croghan, from Iowa first came to the Kimshew area in 1892 and worked as a miner. Grant Croghan, Benjamin's son, and his wife Almeda came to the Fall Creek area

in 1894 where they farmed. Bessie Croghan was born at Ramsey's Bar in 1898. She attended the Reservoir School located across from the Concow Campground; her sixth grade teacher was Leola Lunt. In 1915 Bessie and her parents, Grant Croghan and his wife Almeda, lived on Deadwood Road.

Around 1917 Pinkston Canyon Road was created and Nelson Bar Road was realigned. The original route since the mid 1850's had been from a point almost opposite Pinkston Canyon Road on Concow Road straight up the hill through the middle of Spanishtown dropping down to Frenchtown and the Nelson Bar Bridge. The portion of the road between what is now Lunt Road and Concow road was realigned to take a more gradual climb up the side of the hill past Concow School, probably to accommodate the automobile. The effect of the change was it split Butte Williams property nearly in half. Later, Butte would deed the part of the property on the opposite side of the road to the Brown family. The road change also completely abandoned the Spanishtown site. At one time in 1856 consisting of nearly 80 structures by 1917 Spanishtown only consisted of one or two buildings. It is also worth noting that about this time Oliver Lunt purchased the first automobile in the area. The majority of the properties directly affected by the road changes were owned by the Lunt family.

Butte and Bessie rented several places in the area at different times, in 1918 they were in Flea Valley, by 1925 they were back on Nelson Bar Road where they rented the old Armbruster place. Around this time Butte Williams worked on the Concow Reservoir dam, presumably as a surveyor. The family consisted of six children, Zelma born in 1915, Robert born in 1918, Clifford born in 1920, Donald born in 1923 and Johnny born in 1925. In November 1927, Norman Williams, Butte and Bessie's fifth son was born on Deadwood Road in the old Sundhal place. Located just below Jarbo Gap, the area was known as Hungry Hollow. Peter Sundhal was in the logging business, arriving here around the mid 1890's. Peter Sundhal later lived in Chico. Norman was delivered by a midwife, Arilee Clark, the wife of John Clark who lived on Pinkston Canyon Road, the son of Alfred Burr and Yohema Clark. Vera (Clark) McKeen who passed away in 2007 at 105 years old used to tease Norman that she was present at his birth.

In January 1928, Robert Williams, age 9 died from diabetes. Several months later the family consisting of Butte and Bessie along with their children Zelma, Clifford, Donald, Johnny and Norman (the youngest child Delores wasn't born until 1931) moved into a small cabin located on the Nelson Bar Rd property adjacent to Butte's father and mother, John and Lizzie's home, the old hospital. During this period the census lists Butte Williams occupation as a road surveyor. Work was probably slow with the looming depression. This is most likely why the family had moved into the small cabin which was part of the original 40 acres.



Clifford Williams, Norman's older brother in front of the cabin

Down the road from the Williams place was the home of Oliver Lunt. The Lunt family also has a long history in this area. Edwin Lunt from Maine arrived around 1875, he married Nancy Francis Busch, the widow of Theodore Busch in 1877. Theodore Busch from Germany had been a resident of Spanishtown since the mid 1860's. Edwin Lunt taught school at Concow School in the 1880's, Oliver was Edwin's son. Oliver, his wife Leola and their son Donald Lunt would become a second family for Norman Williams. As a young boy, Norman worked for Mr. Lunt picking beans. Oliver taught Norman how to drive his 1929 Buick roadster. Oliver bought the roadster to replace his 1917 car which had broken down. The body of the 1917 car is now sitting in Norman Williams' front yard on Nelson Bar Road. It hasn't run since 1929, has no wheels and is badly rusted but Oliver gave it to Norman and he keeps it as a memento. Norman and Donald Lunt, who was 8 years older than Norman, used to take the backseats out of Oliver's 29 Buick so they could put two barrels in the back to hold their catch when they went fishing at Concow Lake



Oliver Lunt's 1917 car on Norman Williams' property today, it was the first car in this area

In March 1933 the C.C.C. (Civilian Conservation Core) was created by passage of the Reforestation Act by Congress. Working under the Department of Agriculture and with help from the Department of Forestry, the intent was to create jobs during the depression. In the first four months 588 camps were established in 32 states, when complete the plan was to have 1257 camps. In Sept 1933 it was announced a camp would be established at Concow. Located on Nelson Bar Rd at the intersection of Nelson Bar Road and Lunt Road the camp employed several hundred workers. The camp had a hospital where Norman had a broken finger attended to as a boy. Many of the roads in the area were improved by the camp. Per the papers of the period, a new process of using crushed rock and oil was developed for the roads. Construction was also started on a new West Branch Bridge during 1933. The bridge was replaced by the current bridge when Lake Oroville was created. The C.C.C. camp closed in the late 1930's.



Butte and Bessie Williams's family

In 1937 a large snowstorm hit which damaged the top story of the Williams home so it was removed, leaving only the bottom story. Later that year a fire started at Pentz and burned clear to Nelson Bar Rd. Several houses built by early settlers on the lower end of Nelson Bar Rd were lost.



Williams home on Nelson Bar Rd Circa 1970's after top floor removed, house burned in 2000.

In 1941 Lizzie Williams, Norman's Grandmother passed away. Lizzie's husband John, Norman's Grandfather, had passed away in 1930. Butte Williams, Bessie and the rest of the family moved into the main house on Nelson Bar Road where Butte and the family would raise hogs and cattle.

In the early 1940's Norman remembers walking to Pentz to go to high school in Oroville, an all day affair. He later purchased a used Ford to make the trip. He worked with his Uncle, Bessie's brother Orelly Croghan at Diamond Match sweeping floors and other odd jobs. Orelly was a surveyor by trade.



In 1946 Norman enlisted in the Army and was stationed for training at Camp Beale (Now Beal Air Force Base) in Marysville. While in a car with several friends the car was struck broadside by another car breaking Norman's back. He was transferred to Fort Miley hospital in San Francisco for treatment. Late in 1946 he was discharged because of the injuries.

Returning to Concow Norman and his brother Donald opened a service station across from the Concow School on Nelson Bar Road. It had one pump with a 500 gallon tank, a grease rack and a small office. They purchased fuel in Chico. The service station was in operation for about 2 years.

Norman Williams and Lesta (Smith) Williams

In 1950 Norman met Lesta Smith. Lesta baby sat for her sister's children at their house in Chico. Genevieve Smith had married Eddy Brown, the nephew of Lyman Brown who had lived across from the Williams family on Nelson Bar Rd. Eddy Brown and Norman were old friends.

The Smith family had come to the Chico area in 1946 and lived in Chapman Town where Lesta's dad, Lester Smith worked installing irrigation systems for farmers. Lesta's mom, Edna worked as a cook at the Chapman school in Chico.

In 1952 Norman and Lesta were married, they lived in Chico. Norman worked at the Chico Molding plant at the Chico Airport loading trucks and other odd jobs. Lesta worked as a switchboard operator for Ma Bell in Chico. They raised four children, Larry, Gary, Sandra and Floyd.

In 1954 Butte Williams, Norman's father passed away. Later Norman's mother deeded each son a portion of the family property. Norman was given a portion adjacent to the old home site. Norman cleared the property

for his father when he was young. His dad said someday it would be his, Bessie fulfilled the promise.

After five years as a Deputy Sherriff in Paradise in 1956 Donald Williams started a logging business with his brothers, Norman, Clifford and Johnny. Norman started driving trucks. Clifford would be injured while loading a truck when a log rolled off seriously hurting him, he would be plagued by pain the rest of his life. Several years later Donald Williams left the logging business and started using his equipment to build roads. He called his new business Don D Trucking. He worked on roads in this area as well as Chester, Indian Valley and the Bucks Lake area.

In 1960 Norman and Lesta decided to go into business for themselves and invest in their own truck. Norman drove and Lesta was the bookkeeper. It was at this time they started working with Tobe Moak hauling lumber from Greenville to Quincy. Relocating to Greenville, the family purchased a mobile home and lived in Greenville for the next five years. At that time truckers were paid by the board foot they hauled based on an estimated yield by the mill. Later, the standard for payment changed to the tonnage hauled.

In 1962 Norman and his brother Donald decided to go deer hunting one afternoon in Butte Meadows. The weather changed quickly and the pair found themselves in high winds and storm clouds all around. They were in Donald Williams' Volkswagen Beetle when they decided to head back to Chico. It was getting dark and they were still six miles above Butte Meadows when a tree fell and struck the car on the roof throwing both doors open, both men were thrown partially outside the vehicle. Norman suffered a fracture in his neck and Donald broke his collar bone. The car was not drivable so they started to walk back to Butte meadows. It was raining heavily and getting dark when an acquaintance from Norman's days at Diamond Match drove by in a pickup truck. Because of the weather they were lucky anyone came by to offer assistance. They hitched a ride in the back of the truck to Chico. The neck injury would bother Norman for the next twenty plus years until he finally had to have emergency surgery while visiting his daughter Sandra in Texas because he could not get out of bed. It took a four week recovery in Texas before Norman and Lesta could return home.



In 1967 it was time to move from Greenville back to Nelson Bar Rd on the property Norman's parents deeded him. They relocated the mobile home from Greenville to the property (it was later replaced in the 1980's). Nelson Bar Rd was still a gravel road at that time. Work was well underway on the Oroville dam. Because of rising water, the West Branch bridge built in 1933/34 was about to be torn down, replaced by the new bridge and the Las Plumas power house built in 1908 was about to be dismantled. The old Frenchtown ditch carrying water on Nelson Bar Road was also temporarily shutdown. When the lake was complete, an attempt was made to restart the ditch but it was in such bad shape, riddled with gopher holes and the like that it leaked so badly it was eventually abandoned. Things were changing, within several years the development of Camelot would begin and Concow and Nelson Bar roads would be paved with asphalt, the old oil and chip roads gone.

In 1974 Norman, Lesta and Norman's mother Bessie burned down the old cabin the family first lived in during 1928. The rear of the structure was already gone and the rest was falling over.



Cabin on Williams' family property where family lived in 1928 before being burned down

In 1998 Norman retired from trucking at 72 years young. His two sons Gary and Floyd living in Oroville still carry on the tradition. Larry and his family live in Redding.

In 2000 the Poe fire burned down the family home, the old hospital building, on Nelson Bar Road along with the two story Miller/Brown house built in 1883 across the street (the house was later the home of the Worchester family).

Today Norman, Lesta and several other relatives of Butte Poultney Williams still live on Nelson Bar Road. Just down the road lives Robert Lunt, Donald Lunt's son who is living in his grandfather's, Oliver Lunt's old house. Built in 1882, it is one of the last of the old homes built on Nelson Bar Road in the community once known as Frenchtown.



Lesta and Norman Williams 2012



Norman Williams with a truck just like the truck his father Butte Williams used on Nelson Bar Rd



Norman Williams with his logging truck



The Williams Family 1970
Back Row: John, Zelma, Don, Norman
Front Row: Clifford and Bessie



Almeda Ellen (Witwer) Croghan
19 Jul 1866 - 22 Apr 1901

Bessie William's Mother Almeda, wife of Ulysses S Grant Croghan

Williams – Croghan Family Members Buried at Yankee Hill Cemetery
Female maiden names are in () - If remarried noted with additional last name

George Williams	1832 – 1915	Solomon's brother, arrived in 1866
Solomon Williams	1820 – 1916	George's brother, arrived in 1886
Samuel Fuller Williams	1848 – 1916	Solomon's son
John Williams	1858 – 1930	Solomon's son
Lizzie (Poultney) Williams	1862 – 1941	John's wife
Butte Poultney Williams	1890 – 1954	John's Son
Bessie (Croghan) Williams, Thurston	1898 – 1997	Butte's wife, remarried
Robert Clinton Williams	1918 – 1928	Butte & Bessie's son
Clifford Lloyd Williams	1920 – 1975	Butte & Bessie's son
John Grant Williams	1925 - 1984	Butte & Bessie's son
Zelma (Williams) McQuarrie	1915 – 1991	Butte & Bessie's daughter
John Dan McQuarrie	1902 – 1973	Zelma's husband
John W. McGill	1874 – 1953	Cousin to Solomon Williams' wife
Benjamin Franklin Croghan	1820 – 1915	Arrived in 1892
Ulysses S Grant Croghan	1863 – 1933	Benjamin's son
Almeda Ellen (Witwer) Croghan	1866 – 1901	Grant's first wife
Hazel (Emerson) Croghan, Jones	1883 - 1952	Grant's second wife, remarried
Infant Croghan	1901 – 1901	Grant's child 1 day old
Orely Croghan	1895 – 1950	Grant's son
Charles Cumber Croghan	1892 – 1965	Grant's Son
Frank Richard Croghan Sr.	1929 – 1995	Charles' son, died in Washington
Bertha V. (Croghan) Roblee	1893 – 1941	Grant's daughter
Walter F Roblee	1883 – 1938	Bertha's husband
Gladys (Nichols) Croghan, Ronsee remarried	1911 – 1985	Wife of Charles C Croghan,

Yankee Hill Historical Society is Building Our Archives

Over the last five years we have collected a wealth of information about the area's history. Most of the information is in digital format and stored on our computer. Late last year and earlier this year we participated with Wild Mountain Productions and Sarah Salisbury in putting together several presentations on local history. We also made a presentation to the Paradise Genealogy Society on the area's history. In August we will participate with the Butte County Historical Society in mounting a display for the Butte County Fair. The information in our archives was invaluable in making this happen. The information we have gathered includes maps, local family genealogy information, newspaper articles dating from the early 1850's until today, photographs and various articles in publications referencing this area. Our focus is Pulga to Pentz and the highway 70 corridor. Recently we have printed out information and placed it in binders so others can also see what we have, these are housed at the old school house. About 60% of our information is now in binders. We have several Power Point presentations available to watch on the society's computer. We have also started a lending library of several books on the area's history. These books may be checked out by members for up to 4 weeks. We have purchased extra copies of several of these books so we can offer them for resale. Among the titles we have for lending and/or sale are the following:

Conflicts between Settlers and Indians in Northern Sierra Foothills

By Lyn Dunlap – Batt

Recounts the history of conflicts in Messilla Valley, Pence and the Concow area between early settlers and the Native Americans. 1863 to 1865 was a particularly traumatic time in White and Indian relationships in Butte County. The book also includes the history of the Messilla Valley School, now the home of the Yankee Hill Historical Society. The school is now located on Concow Road.

Normally \$27.95 plus tax, **our price \$25.00, includes tax**

Last of the Mill Creeks and Early Life in Northern California

By Sim Moak

First printed in 1923 this book describes Sim Moak's participation in the raid of the Mill Creek Indians after their attack on the Workman family in the Concow Valley in 1865. It is an interesting first person account of the events in 1865. This 2008 reprint edited by Dale Wangberg also gives some background on the early Moak family members; the family has been in Butte County since 1853.

Normally \$15.00 plus tax, **our price \$15.00, includes tax**

Indians of the Feather River – Tales and Legends of the Concow Maidu of California

By Don Jewell

Printed in 1987 this book is based on research and interviews with Bryan Beavers, better known as Poncho, a Concow Indian. Interesting book by a local author and interviews with a local Concow Indian now buried in Yankee Hill Cemetery.

A hard to find book, **our price \$20, includes tax**

Continued Next Page

1976 Concow Yearbook

Published by the 1976 Concow School Class

This is a photocopy of the yearbook which included many articles on the area's history and maps of where residents, predominantly families of the school kids, lived in 1976. Areas include are Concow, Cherokee, Coal Canyon, Big Bend, Oregon City, Pulga and Pentz. Pictures of the schools of the area, past and present are included as well as pictures of other local landmarks and old timers.

An interesting book with good information, **our price \$9.00 includes tax**

The Archives are open the third Saturday of the each month from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Stop by the old school house and see what we have, look through the binders of pictures, read the old articles. We have a 50 page timeline of the area's history you can also peruse through. The books will be there for sale as well if you are interested. If you have any pictures you would like to contribute to the archives we have a computer and scanner available so we can make copies on the spot. The archives are continuously growing!

Yankee Hill Historical Society is looking for some help!

Help with the web page: As mentioned above the Yankee Hill Historical Society has built up a substantial amount of information on the area's history. We would like to take our existing simple web page and develop it into a virtual museum and research center for those interested in history. Because much of our information is already digitized it lends itself to being put on line. For a small historical society we could have a educational, dynamic web presence with your help! Need someone with web skills to help completely redo the web page. If interested please call Larry Mauch at 532-0706, if there is no answer please leave a message and we will get back to you asap.

Secretary: In October we will be making some staff changes. We are in need of someone who would be willing to act as the secretary for the organization. Duties include taking notes at the monthly meetings held the second Tuesday of each month at 5:00 pm at the old school house. The notes are distributed the following meeting for approval. Meetings last about 1 hour and a format for the minutes is available. If interested please call Debbie Ingvaldsen at 533-1133 or Don Saul at 533-4523

Paint Party in October! It is time to repaint the old school. It has been 10 years! May was our 10 year anniversary. We are looking for some volunteers to help paint the outside of the school. The first day to start work is scheduled for Wednesday Oct 3rd. If you can help, even if only for a few hours, please call Bob Huffman at (530) 533-4132

YHHS Happenings

Archives Open - Saturday July 21st 10:00 am to 2:00 pm stop by and say hello at the old school house on Concow Road. We have books for sale and several Power Point presentations on local history you can view on our computer as well as old pictures and other historical information you can look through. Want to check out a book on local history or even buy a copy? This will be the time. Do you have old photos to share, we can scan them as you wait and return your originals immediately. Hope to see you there.

Butte County Fair - Aug 23-26 stop by the fair and see the display on Butte County history. The Yankee Hill Historical Society will contribute to the display. Fair hours are Thursday 4 pm to 11pm, Friday 3:00 pm to midnight, Saturday noon to midnight and Sunday noon to 11:00 pm. The fair is held at the fairgrounds in Gridley.

Annual General Meeting - Saturday Oct 20th we will hold our general meeting. The archives will be open at 10:00 am if you want to browse. The formal meeting will start at 1:00 pm with a brief election of officers followed by a presentation on local history. More information in the next newsletter.

Bunko Party!! - Saturday Aug 4th and Oct 6th 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 and other projects.

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*

Its that time again,

Please check your mailing label. If the date is 12/11 (Dec 2011) or earlier your dues are due for 2012 . We hope you will renew so you can receive the August and November newsletters. Some people have indicated they would like to receive the newsletter by email. If your label says "EM" then you should receive this copy of the newsletter by email as well. If you *did not receive an email version* of this newsletter and your label says "EM" please contact us at editor@yankeehillhistory.com as we will not mail a hardcopy in August as we will assume your are getting the email version instead. If you would like to receive *future newsletters by email* and your label *does not say "EM"* please check the appropriate box on the enclosed form.

Yankee Hill Historical Society Membership Application

Please printout, complete form and mail with check payable to:
Yankee Hill Historical Society
P.O. Box 4031, Yankee Hill, Ca 95965



Messilla Valley School House built in 1856

Your Support Is Appreciated!

Name: _____

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State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Annual membership Jan 1st through Dec 31st

- New**
 Renewal

**Please send my newsletter by email
to the email address above**

- Individual \$10
 Sponsor \$50
 Patron \$100

Areas where you can help:

- Handyman/Repair work
 Publicity
 Volunteer Help For Special Events
 Newsletter
 Webpage
 Other _____

Comments: (use back of page for comments if needed)

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