

1-20-1953

# Ranch Area Asks To Withdraw From New Recreation District

A group of residents from Messilla Valley appeared before the newly-formed board of directors of the Feather River Recreation, Park and Parkway District at their first meeting last night and requested that their section of the district be allowed to withdraw.

Oltman Reil, a rancher from the area, asked that the section be dropped from the district since the residents there feel that they already have sufficient recreational activities and they do not feel that they can benefit from the new district.

Del Chaffin, a member of the board, also urged that Messilla Valley be allowed to withdraw and reported that several other districts also would like to get out.

Chaffin took the stand that such areas should be allowed to form their own recreation districts and that forcing them to become a part of the new district, which was formed as the result of a vote at the June 4 election, was not a democratic way of operating since the residents of the disputed areas had voted against the district in the first place.

Morrow Steadman asked that the district be allowed to prove itself before any groups petition for withdrawal. He pointed out that

the district comprises the same areas as covered by the present Oroville High School district and that by allowing any part of it to drop out now would result in so many similar petitions that the entire district might disintegrate.

Jack Conner, chairman of the group, suggested that no action be taken last night but that it be discussed again at the next meeting, which will be held on February 9. It is expected that representatives of other areas that wish to withdraw may be present then.

In other business conducted last night the board members confirmed the election of Conner as chairman and elected Steadman vice chairman of the group.

Miss Helen Halsted, a non-member, was appointed secretary of the board and, at her request, will serve without pay.

Dick Baldry, present recreation director for the city of Oroville, agreed to work with the new board in setting up a program to cover the district and he also will work without pay.

A set of by-laws were adopted last night to govern meetings by the group, and the second Monday of each month at 8 p. m. was set as the day and time of each official meeting.

# Paradise Post

2-6-1953

## Experienced Miners Warn That Exploring Old Mines Is Dangerous

By LOUISE B. MILLER

Children playing in the woods and canyons often come upon the entrance to one of the many abandoned mines. Sometimes they go into them to explore, heedless of the danger of rotting timbers, and the even greater menace of poison gas that is often present in old tunnels.

The experienced miner points out that often a person is trespassing on private property, and his advice is a definite and positive warning to "Keep out."

There is one mine in Little Butte canyon which an earlier-day miner remarked would be there "till Gabriel blows his horn." There the McCubbins brothers, in their search for gold, dug their tunnel through solid sandstone.

Several old mines are passed on the way to the falls in Little Butte. Above the falls is the Matt and John Bader gravel mine, and the hydraulic workings can be seen. Families who came here in 1880 do not remember the Bader mine in operation at that time.

However, the mine later became known as the Morey mine, and a man by the name of Reich, from Sacramento, took it over and operated it until almost 20 years ago. Marion Larremore and Fred Buschmann uncovered one of the richest veins in the Morey. Reich boarded at the Warren hotel in Magalia and Mrs. Warren knows him well. The mine is not operating today.

Reich and a man named Nyström also had a quartz mine, and a rich quartz pocket was discovered. At the time it was one of the best producers of quartz in the country.

Still further below the quartz mine, Charlie Slocum had his tunnel.

Levi Cohn, the early-day Magalia merchant, came into possession of several mines, which he acquired for non-payment of supplies. Many were worthless, a few he sold, and some of the mines he operated quite successfully.

The Kunkle reservoir is on the land, known as the Hog Ranch, which Cohn owned. He also owned the New Jerusalem mine,

whose shaft was in Kunkle creek. His daughter, Miss Norma Cohn, who lives in Monterey, visited Paradise and Magalia last summer and remarked that there were rumors all the time they lived here that the entrance to the New Jerusalem mine was in the reservoir, sealed up by an iron door. She said this was not true, although man have searched for the mine.

In later years Cohn became interested in the Mineral Slide, and also in the old Magalia channel. Bill Lewis worked one of Cohn's mines the other side of Butte Creek and he built a cabin at the mine. Another of his mines was the Little Frog, below the new golf course. This mine still belongs to his widow's estate.

Cohn always delivered supplies to the mines in the fall so that they would have enough to take them through the winter months. However, a miner here and there working the creeks would come in to pack out his own supplies. A man by the name of Myers walked all the way from Chaparral above Inskip to Magalia to buy foodstuffs and needed items for the winter. However, he stopped first to eat at the saloon and then went to the store. While ordering, he was stricken with a heart attack and dropped to the floor dead. He was buried in the Magalia cemetery.

Shortly afterward the place next to his grave was filled by Iban, the postmaster of Magalia. He was invited to Christmas dinner in the home of Mrs. Clarenbaugh. Being a bachelor and tiring of his own cooking, he naturally enjoyed the meal. The next morning when he passed out the mail to someone at the postal window, he dropped dead of a heart attack. These two deaths so close together have been remembered by the old-timers.

Local residents will probably recall one of the most colorful miners of his day, Fred Christian. Christian, before his marriage to Lizzie McDonald, was one of the many bachelor miners who lived in the vicinity of Rattlesnake Creek and Skunk Fork.

Other miners in the area were Louey (French) Lamette, Ed Gallagher, Simon Trumble, Tom Coleman, and a man by the name of

Rice, who drove the stage across the Madelyn plains on the old Quincy road.

Lizzie McDonald lived alone after her parents passed away, and in their later years she and Fred Christian married. Their cabin was just below Sawmill peak. Christian would save many miles of travel to get to Dogtown for supplies by going across the pipeline, usually by shinnying over the pipe.

He mined at every opportunity. He also ran cattle on his place. They roamed at will and were so wild that it was quite a job rounding them up for shipment. Riders would help, but Christian never worked with a horse, preferring to hunt them up on foot. They would bring him a horse to help with the cattle, but he would lead the animal and walk at a pace the horse would have to trot to keep up.

Lizzie loved the wild life around the cabin and made pets of the deer and the birds. She gave a name to each deer and cried when one was killed by hunters. She talked to the birds, and many flew about her when she came outdoors.

As Lizzie grew older, her nephew, Harry Hooker, who lived in Sacramento, tried to persuade her to come to the city and away from her hard life, but she never wanted to leave her forest friends even for a little while.

She died many years later, and her remains were carried down the hill and through the canyon to the Magalia cemetery for burial. Christian died shortly afterward. Many years later, miners coming back to the neighborhood would inquire of these good people and were saddened to know they had passed away. Even today when one inquires about old-time miners, someone will say, "Did you know the Christians?"

Mrs. Jessamine (George) Welsh, the mother of Mrs. Steve Andrews, lived in Concow, and her parents, the Ed Stones, and her husband's parents, the Tobe Welsh family, knew the Christians well.

Ed Stone was primarily a farm-

er, raising hops, had a dry kiln plant and he also ran cattle. Mrs. Welsh met her husband when he worked for her father during haying time.

Her mother was a good friend of the Chinese doctor's wife. The doctor operated the hospital at Deadwood, a nearby community. Other doctors resented the many successful cures the "Chinese Doc" worked on his patients, sometimes using fresh killed chicken to cure swelling, or vile tasting herbs for various disorders. However, people came from far and near to him for treatment, and many hopeless cases were successfully treated, Mrs. Welsh said.

Mrs. Welsh and her daughter were both named Jessamine for the jasmine vine the doctor's wife grew at the hospital. The flower of this plant was very fragrant.

Tobe Welsh raised and sold horses to teamsters, and he always had two ten-horse teams for hauling freight for the Western Pacific and the Utah Construction and sub-contractors working on the railroad. They all

came to Concow, which was the closest road to the river. The Welshes butchered for the camps and delivered the meat on pack horses.

They also kept a road house for cattlemen and teamsters. A lot of cattle went up the road in the summer to the gravel range country.

Mrs. Welsh remembers the dances they had at Pulga in early days, to which they would all go. They would be so anxious to get the women to come that they would even go to the homes to bring them in to the dances. The Indians furnished the music, playing the violin or banjo. They were fine musicians, she said.

There was a lot of work in the busy summertime, but often the women folk would go to Oroville to live during the winter months. A Chinese cook was at the ranch to do the cooking for the men, so they were able to leave. They

The Welshes sold the Concow ranch and moved to Pentz. They came here five years ago, and a year later Welsh died.

10-10-1953

# GARDENING NEWS

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## Butte County Ranch Is Able To Grow Tropic Plants With Comparative Ease

By Mary Dunbar Lemcke

McClatchy Newspapers Service

PENTZ, Butte Co.—Favorably located in a thermal belt and sheltered by Table Mountain, the 160 acre ranch of Mrs. O. W. Baker near Pentz is able to grow tropical plants which sometimes thrive as luxuriantly as in their native climates. The ranch is about 1,500 feet up the side of the mountain.

Commercial crops are olives and oranges, but, when the three avocado trees bear, they bring in some extra income. All of this crop is marketed in surrounding towns by Mrs. Baker's son, Ivan.

### Need Right Weather

Mrs. Baker observed, "However, conditions have to be just right climatically for the trees to bear. Many years there is no crop at all."

The avocado trees were planted about 1930. They have been frozen severely twice since then.

The avocado is a tropical fruit of the laurel family. It is evergreen and has bright green, glossy foliage similar to the magnolia. The fruit on the Baker trees is about five inches long with extremely smooth skin.

### Resist Disease

Mrs. Baker says the trees are remarkably disease free. About the only care given them is irrigation.

Another tropical touch in the Baker garden is a banana tree. This is not an edible variety. The shoots of the tree grow to about 20 feet. It takes three years for them to flower and bear fruit. They then die down and other shoots come from the roots.

Other favorites in the yard are fuchsias, geraniums, cannas, dahlias and primroses.



By **BILL TALBITZER**

The secrets of the North Fork canyon, hidden in past years by its isolation from the outside world that lies less than 25 miles away, may be revealed in the wake of the murder of John Z. Rohrer.

For many years, the rugged, almost inaccessible area has been occupied by a few aging prospectors who make their living by scratching gold from the ageless hills or panning in the rushing North Fork of the Feather River.

To the few fishermen and hunters who have fought their way into the canyons each season, the old men seemed to be living an idyllic life, free from the struggle for existence that those same fishermen and hunters faced in the cities. No cares, no worries, no time clocks to punch, nothing to keep them from living a life of complete ease and independence.

#### **Fears and Suspicions**

But, in the first few hours of the investigation into Rohrer's death, officers have found reason to believe that many of the men lived in fear of each other and each was suspicious of the other.

It was only a little more than a month ago that Ernest Bauman, who is the subject of an intensive search today by a sheriff's posse, complained to Sheriff Larry Gillick that his cabin had been looted and several articles, including a deer rifle, stolen. At that time, Bauman said that his cabin had been entered on several other occasions and he named two of his neighbors as possible suspects.

Since the investigation began, others in the rugged country have told officers of cabin lootings and have claimed that they lost articles by theft.

Bauman, himself, appears to be as much of a mystery as any of the facts in the case so far. According to Chet Ramsey, former game warden for this area, who knew him well, Bauman had lived in a cabin along the river for about 15 years. He had come to this area after being freed of a murder charge in the San Joaquin valley where he was said to have killed a man in self defense during a fight. At that time, Bauman was the owner of a vineyard, the story goes, and, following his trial for murder, he came to the lonely canyon on the North Fork.

## Oroville Mercury

### 12-28-1953

#### **Buried Money Rumored**

He was a man who lived frugally and who seldom went to the outside world. He was well educated, according to Ramsey, and had told the game warden that his family were of the Russian nobility before the overthrow of the Czar. Along the river he was known as the Mad Russian, and he often told Ramsey that he had his money buried near his cabin.

Now, Bauman has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. He has not been seen in the area for over two weeks and his cabin was found occupied yesterday by Martin Tunny, 58, who is being held in the Butte county jail as a suspect in the Rohrer case.

Tunny also has a background of violence and was said to have been feared by all of the residents of the canyon when he resided in a cabin along French Creek. In April, of 1952, Tunny was declared insane and was sent to Napa State Hospital after he had allegedly fired several shots from a .22 caliber rifle at some of the prospectors and several fishermen.

The records show that Tunny escaped from Napa in February of this year and had dropped from sight until he was found in Bauman's cabin on Sunday morning.

Gillick said today that he fears that Bauman has been slain and his body concealed in the wild, rough country that surrounds his cabin, or else thrown into the river. If such is the case, the puzzle of the murder of Rohrer may never be solved, unless Tunny can shed light on the mystery or unless the natural reticence of the remaining occupants of the canyon can be overcome and the full story of the past few years in the canyon be revealed.

12-28-1953

## Feather River Prospector Fatally Shot From Ambush

John Rohrer, 61, a prospector who resided in a cabin near Isaiah, died at 11:10 a.m. Sunday in Butte county hospital from a bullet wound suffered when he was ambushed Saturday on a mountain trail along the North Fork of the Feather River.

Being held in the Butte county jail for investigation of murder is Martin Tunny, 58, who escaped from Napa State hospital on February 20, of this year, and who has been apparently living in the rugged area near Isaiah for the past several months.

To add even more mystery to the situation, a search of the area is underway today for Ernest Bauman, about 60, who has been missing from his cabin for the past two weeks and who is feared to have been slain and his body either buried or thrown into the river.

### Flags Down Train

The strange tale of murder from ambush began shortly after noon on Saturday when Rohrer, face and clothing drenched with blood, flagged down an Oroville-bound Western Pacific freight train near Blinzig siding, which lies between Berry Creek and Isaiah. Rohrer

had been shot in the face, the bullet penetrating the left cheek and emerged from the right one, clipping his tongue on the way, thus making it impossible for him to talk.

Conductor W. M. Peterson, of Portola, placed Rohrer in the caboose and the sheriff's office was called when the train reached Oroville. Rohrer was rushed to the Butte county hospital where Captain A. L. Christensen, deputy county coroner questioned him in an effort to determine how he was shot.

Conversing by writing notes, Rohrer told Christensen that he had gone to a cache, made of a large tin can, near the river where a friend, Fred McCloud, was to leave some supplies and a pair of shoes for him. It was the usual practice for McCloud to leave such supplies for Rohrer at intervals at the cache.

### Tried to Find Attacker

Rohrer said that he did not find any supplies there and had started back up the trail toward his cabin when a shot, from ambush, struck him in the face. He said that he heard the report of a 22 caliber rifle "a second after I was hit".

His note went on: "I ran down toward the river and then circled around to see if I could see the bushwacker or the crazy guy. Then went toward the railroad track to find help".

Christensen and Deputy Sheriff Fred Preston went into the country near the scene of the shooting early Sunday and stopped at Bauman's cabin and there they found Tunny who had apparently moved in and

taken possession. Tunny said that he had not seen Bauman for two weeks. However, he told officers that Bauman had another cabin a short distance away. The officers left Tunny and went to find the other cabin, and it was while they were walking along the mountain trail that Christensen looked back and saw a gun in Tunny's hand. By the time Christensen and Preston got back to the cabin, Tunny no longer held the gun and denied that he had had one. Under questioning he finally admitted that he had thrown the gun away and showed the officers where he threw it. When they found the weapon it turned out to be a .38-caliber revolver belonging to Bauman.

### Hospital Escapee

Another search of the cabin revealed two 22-caliber rifles and Tunny was taken into custody on the spot. He was brought to the Butte county jail where it was found that he was an escapee from the state hospital. He had been committed from Butte county on April 7, 1952, after he had chased several fishermen and prospectors with a rifle. In a hearing in Butte county Superior court he was found to be insane and was committed for an indefinite term.

Shortly after the officers arrived back in Oroville, Rohrer died without being able to give officers any more information.

Preston led a group of trustys into the area around Bauman's cabin today to search for Bauman and to check on the other residents of the vicinity. Most of the residents are gold prospectors who live in lonely cabins in the deep canyon along the river. Christensen today expressed the opinion that Bauman might have met with foul play since his hat, coat and keys were found in the cabin yesterday.

### In Isolated Area

According to the deputy coroner, Bauman would very likely keep his keys in his possession and would not normally leave his cabin without his hat and coat if he were to be gone for any length of time.

The area is so isolated that the only way to get into it is by railroad. The Western Pacific was furnishing transportation by motor scooter to Isaiah siding from where the search was to start.

Rohrer's body was taken to Sanford Funeral home where arrangements are pending. He is survived by a brother, Frank, of Oroville.



# Officers Believe Missing Prospector Was Murdered

By **BILL TALBITZER**

Martin Tunny, the only suspect in the ambush slaying of John Z. Rohrer, was undergoing an intensive grilling by District Attorney Raymond A. Leonard and Captain A. L. Christensen, of the Butte county sheriff's office, today in an effort to solve the slaying and the baffling disappearance of Ernest Bauman, the "Mad Russian" of the North Fork of the Feather River.

All hope that Bauman will be found alive had been abandoned, according to Leonard, who accompanied a posse to the wild fastness of the canyon near Isaiah yesterday to search for the missing man.

The officers firmly believe that the secret of the death of one man and the disappearance of the other are locked in the half-crazed mind of Tunny, an escapee from Napa State hospital for the insane.

But so far, Tunny has maintained a stubborn silence and has refused to even admit that he knew Bauman. He insists that he knows nothing about the events that led to the cold-blooded murder of Rohrer.

## Tell of Threat

Officers, however, charge:

1. When Tunny was arrested as being criminally insane on April 7, 1952, he swore at that time that he would kill Bauman, whom, he claimed, had previously turned him in to Game Warden Chester Ramsey for killing deer out of season. Arresting officers say he cursed Bauman and called him a "stool pigeon".

2. When Tunny was arrested on Sunday, he was living in Bauman's cabin — had, in fact, taken over Bauman's possessions, including two rifles and a .38-caliber revolver.

3. Deputy Sheriff Fred Preston, who led the search of the area yesterday, found two exploded 22-caliber rifle shells and a great splotch of blood at the very corner of Bauman's cabin. From there, the trail of blood stains was followed by Preston down to the river and then back up the canyon to the railroad track and along those tracks to the point where Rohrer, bleeding profusely, was picked up by the crew of a Western Pacific freight train and brought to Oroville. According to Preston, the indications are that Rohrer was shot near Bauman's cabin.

## Assume Bauman Murdered

Leonard said today, "We are going on the assumption that Bauman has been murdered and his body has been cleverly concealed".

There are several facts about the missing man which tend to back up that statement. In the first place, Bauman was so crippled with rheumatism that he could walk only with the aid of two canes. He was known to own three canes, one of them a highly polished, home-made one, that he called his "town cane", and the other two rudely fashioned staffs.

All three canes were found yesterday by the search party, the two staffs in a lean-to off the cabin, and the polished one, broken in two pieces, lying at the entrance to Bauman's mine shaft, about 75 yards from the cabin.

## Had Sought Aid

Bauman was also a man who kept close tabs on his neighbors and the happenings in the isolated canyon. In the past, he had sought help from the sheriff's office regarding the looting of his cabin on several occasions and was well-known to Preston and several other deputies. Never, in his 15 years in the canyon, had he ever been known to go away for several days without someone knowing where he was.

Yet, now, Bauman has disappeared, as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Many of his personal possessions, which he prized, have been found lying in the cabin. His clothing, including his underwear and socks, were found hanging on nails as though he had taken them off to prepare for bed. His Bible, his black suit, that he had kept, he told acquaintances, to be buried in, and some of his bedding were found piled in a disorderly heap near the river bank, and had apparently been lying there since before the last rain in the area about 9 days ago. All other articles had been watersoaked and bore evidence of having been exposed to the weather for many days.

#### **Hope Tunny Will Talk**

Officers were thwarted in their efforts to get information from Rohrer as he lay dying in Butte county hospital. He had been shot through the face and the bullet had clipped his tongue as it passed. He could converse only through writing notes and, in his dying condition, could do little of that.

Their only hope of solving the mystery of the dark canyon lies in cracking the veneer of stubborn silence that Tunny wears like a shield. That, or in combing the rugged wilderness of brush, rocks and snags, that they are certain conceals Bauman's body.

Funeral services for Rohrer will be held at the Sanford Funeral Chapel at 2 p.m. Thursday. Burial will be in Memorial Park Cemetery.

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Oroville Mercury

12-29-1953

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