

1-5-1967

Plan To Irrigate Semiarid Butte Land Is Developed, Would Need Reservoir

OROVILLE — A plan to provide irrigation and domestic water to several thousand acres of semiarid land near Pentz, Butte County, has been developed by Gordon L. Riggs, president of the Oroville-Wyandotte Irrigation District's (OWID) board of directors.

The plan would involve a cooperative effort by the OWID, the Pacific Gas and Electric Co., the California Water Service and the Thermalito Irrigation District.

It would utilize water presently flowing into the Feather River from the Kelly Ridge Powerhouse, a feature of the OWID's South Fork Project. The water, amounting to about 400 acre-feet per day, is not used after it leaves the powerhouse.

Produces Power

Riggs said the PG&E presently takes water from Lake Concow near Yankee Hill, Butte County, and uses it to produce electric power in the Coal Canyon powerhouse near Pentz. The water then is sold to the California Water Service for storage

at Thermalito where it is treated and used domestically in Oroville.

Riggs' plan calls for the OWID to sell water which passes through the Kelly Ridge Powerhouse to the water company at a lower cost than it presently pays for water delivered from Lake Concow via the Miocene Canal.

That water, instead of passing through the Coal Canyon power facility during the irrigation season, could instead be diverted to the Pentz land which presently has no irrigation supply. The money derived from the sale of water to the landowners would be used to reimburse the PG&E for the loss of power output.

If the plan proves feasible, it would be necessary to construct a storage reservoir in the Pentz area from which irrigation supplies could be delivered. Riggs said several landowners already have expressed interest in the proposal.

The reservoir could be built

by the OWID or the IID, Riggs suggested, since the land in question lies adjacent to the Thermalito district.

Riggs said the OWID is prepared to finance a feasibility study of the proposed plan by John Spauling and Associates, an Oroville engineering firm. He added the amount of land which could be served would be limited only by the amount of water available, but several thousand acres could be irrigated from the amount presently flowing through the Miocene Canal, which amounts to approximately 70 acre-feet per day.

Plans Presentation

Riggs said the plan, when fully worked out, will be presented at a meeting of representatives of the districts and agencies involved.

The land which will be served presently is used for cattle grazing, but has been described by agricultural experts as able to raise many varieties of crops if it can be irrigated. There also are many desirable homesites in the area.

History of Oregon City Is Recalled

The Chico
Enterprise Record
2-22-1967

PARADISE (E-R) — "Reminiscences of Oregon City" was the title of the talk given by James C. (Chet) Nisbet of Oroville at the Northern California History Class Monday evening.

Nisbet is a native of Butte County. He was born in Cherokee and attended the Oregon City Elementary School, graduated from Oroville High School and the University of California. He taught at Oroville High School for 11 years, then served as principal and superintendent for 28 years until his retirement a few years ago.

To illustrate his talk, Nisbet used a sketch map to show locations where pioneer families had their homes in the community, the settlement of which was begun in 1848 by a group of emigrants from Oregon.

Nisbet gave the names of many of the mines in the locality and told where they were located. He told several anecdotes of his boyhood and things he remembered that happened while he attended the Oregon City school. He described the society as a simple one, but pointed out the dependence upon one another

which was a part of life when transportation facilities were limited and telephone communication not available. He said that people migrated to California for various reasons, not for seeking gold alone, and those who came to the new surroundings needed a good amount of courage and faith.

The speaker showed a series of slides of Oregon City, Cherokee, Oregon Gulch and Table Mountain, several of which showed spring wild flowers and the beauty of the fall coloring. Though Nisbet has traveled widely, he emphasized that there is outstanding beauty in California, comparable to any that he has seen elsewhere.

A question-and-answer period gave class members an opportunity to get information based on the personal experiences of the speaker.

Class member Walter G. Knapp reported on the program given at the Colusa Historical Society meeting in Colusa Saturday.

Speaker at this meeting was F. Hal Higgins, curator of the Agricultural Museum on the

campus at the University of California at Davis, whose subject was "History of the Mechanization of Agriculture of the Sacramento Valley." Using old pictures and lithographs, Higgins told of the many changes in the use and development of farm machinery.

Knapp said that in 1858 there was a steam plow made and sold in Oroville, also one in Marysville. The first steam combine, a machine that cuts and threshes grain in one operation, was used in California about 1885. The first crawler-type tractor won a \$400 prize at the State Fair in Marysville in 1858, which was the last year that the State Fair was held outside of Sacramento.

When combines came into general use, the old stationary steam engines that had been used to power threshing machines were a drag on the market, so several enterprising inventors converted them into steam tractors. Some of the first builders used wagon wheels and running gear, connecting them up to the boiler with gears and chains using straw for fuel. At one of the early fairs in California a steam tractor plow made in Oroville was demonstrated.

Knapp said that in 1868 a Mr. Standish (seventh generation from Miles Standish) built the first rotary plow. Powered by a separate motor, the diggers were placed in a line under the rear of the tractor rotating in a horizontal position. It worked so well that he put a seeder in back and planted 100 acres of wheat. The yield from this planting was about double the usual harvest and some of the people who watched the digger throw sparks when it hit rocks insisted the good crop must be due to the electricity fertilizing the soil.

Class instructor Ruby Swartzlow announced that plans have been completed for a field trip to the state capitol at Sacramento Friday. Class members will tour the Capitol at 11 a.m. and the state library at 1:30 p.m. Also to be visited is the Crocker Art Gallery where several historical art objects are now on display.

Those taking the tour will provide their own transportation and meet at the Capitol rotunda prior to 11 a.m.

Oroville Mercury Register

7-19-1967

7.94 ACRE Ranchette in Concow area. 3-bdrm. home. Barns, & fenced. Ideal for horses. \$16,500

3 ACRE knoll with picturesque view of Concow Lake. \$4500.

10.9 ACRES with 453 ft. paved road frontage on Yankee Hill Rd. \$1,000 per acre.

5 ACRES bordering Oroville Lake in the Big Bend area. Beautiful trees & view. \$5950.

ROCK HOUSE CAFE and Trailer Park, 22 miles east of Oroville, on Hwy. 70. 83 acres with frontage on both sides of Hwy. Property being sold because of illness. Make offer.

Dumars Real Estate

Located at the Rock House

Hwy. 70 — 533-4015

Bids Opened On Big Bend Road Project

SACRAMENTO — Bids were opened today by the state department of water resources for the relocation of U.S. Forest Service roads northeast of Oroville.

The apparent low of seven bids received was \$188,142.00 from H. Earl Parker, Inc., Marysville.

Other bids received included J. F. Sunderland, San Luis Obispo, \$197,390; Piombo Construction Co., San Carlos, \$238,820; Harms Bros., Sacramento, \$268,150; Boyd Sears III, Oroville, \$269,640; Moak Logging, Inc., Oroville, \$297,931.29; and Robinson Construction Company, Inc., and Spencer Robinson, a joint venture, Gridley, \$374,875.

Estimate by department engineers was \$199,080.

The job involves grading and installation of minor drainage structures in constructing two U. S. Forest Service roads about 15 miles northeast of Oroville in the Big Bend area of the North Fork of the Feather River. The roads will be unsurfaced and will total approximately 4.3 miles in length.

The work, a result of contracts necessary to construct the State Water Project, is scheduled for completion in September 1968.

Lincoln News Messenger (California)
8-17-1967

Teaching the fourth, fifth and sixth grades at the Valley View elementary school this year will be Howard Duensing. Duensing is a graduate of Chico State college and has been teaching and doing substitute teaching in Placer county for some time. In addition to instructing the intermediate classes, Duensing will be acting principal of the Valley View school.

Excerpted from article entitled "Thirteen New Teachers
Hired by Western Placer School District"

Sacramento Bee

9-9-1967

KVIE Indian Program Wins \$3,000 Grant

An original program about a Maidu Indian in the Feather River Canyon has earned KVIE, Sacramento's educational television station, a \$3,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The local station was one of 20 educational television outlets throughout the country which submitted winning program proposals to the Educational Television Stations Division of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters.

Fifty-nine of the country's 130 educational stations took part in the competition. The grant total was \$101,805.

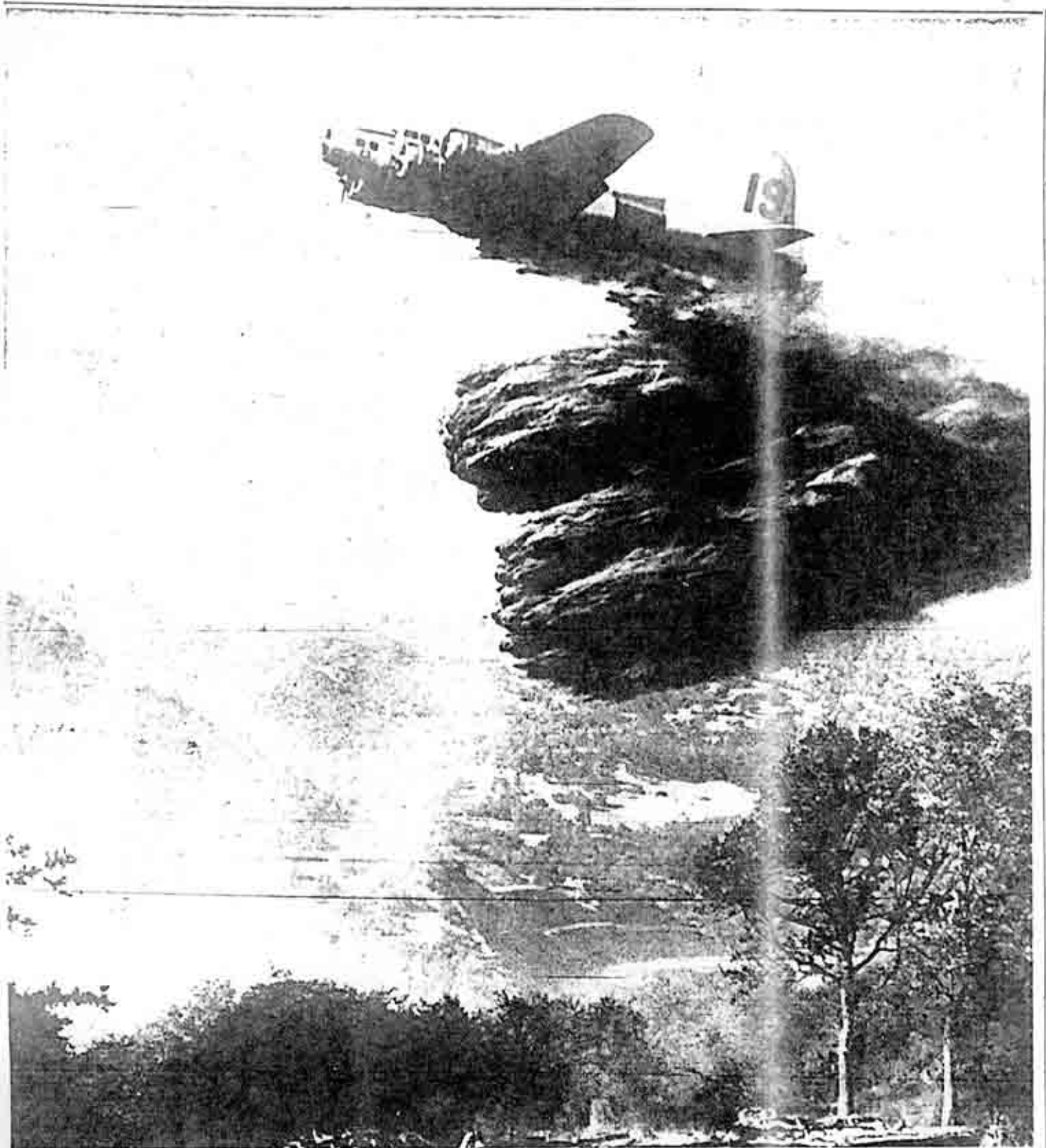
John Crabbe, manager of KVIE (Channel 6), said the local grant is based on the estimated cost of the production of the program, conceived by program producer Richard Simpson.

Simpson, described as an expert on the Feather River country and its history, entitled the program "Bryan Beavers: A Moving Portrait."

He met Beavers, Crabbe said, while shooting another program in the area.

The blending of the customs of the Maidu Indians into today's society will be depicted in the half-hour color program.

Crabbe said it is a pilot program which could develop into a full series and production will be completed by Jan. 1. It then will be submitted to the Educational Television Stations Division at Indiana University for consideration for national distribution.



CHEROKEE BLAZE — The skies above the old mining town of Cherokee were the scene of an aerial spectacular Saturday when two tanker planes made repeated drops of fire retardant to check a blaze that threatened the school house. Thanks to the tankers' efforts, and the services of 40 men,

seven fire trucks, two bulldozers, a Magalla Conservation Camp crew and a reconnaissance plane, the fire did little damage. It blackened three acres of grass and brush, and was brought under control at 5:30 p.m. It was reported at 3:49 p.m. Photo by the Mercury's Jerry Teague.

Oroville Mercury

9-12-1967

Mining Group Reorganizing Meeting Set

OREGON CITY — Persons interested in reorganizing the Butte County Mining Council are urged to attend a meeting at the historic school house at Oregon City north of Oroville, Sept. 23, 8 p.m.

The Western Mining Council, throughout the state, has granted a charter for the Butte organization. It will be entitled to delegate representation at the statewide annual meeting in Grass Valley, Oct. 1.

The Western Mining Council had its beginnings in Butte County many years ago, and for some time the "California Mining Journal" was published at Oroville before being moved to Santa Cruz by the late J.P. Hall, editor and publisher.

Featured speaker for the evening will be Allen L. Hearst, mining engineer and author. A former resident of Butte County, Hearst now resides in Reno, where he acts as a mining consultant.

Hearst has been an articulate spokesman for revival of American mining, as well as the restoration of a sound metal base for the currency of the U.S. Subject of his talk will be "Mining - Foundation of our Heritage, Key to our Future."

Those unable to attend the meeting but interested in joining the council may write to Butte County Mining Council, RR 1, Box 297, Oroville. According to Richard Mawhorter of Cherokee, temporary recording secretary, "Anyone who owns property in Butte County owns a potential mine. The increased encroachment of planners on our rights makes this council vitally necessary to the future values of our property."

40 Persons Organize Mining Group for Butte County Area

OREGON CITY — Meeting in the historic schoolhouse at Oregon City Saturday evening, over 40 persons organized the Butte County Mining Council under a charter granted by the statewide Western Mining Council.

Included in the group present were Butte County supervisors Don Maxon and Osmer Dunaway. Also present was Vincent Gianella, retired professor of mineralogy at the Mackay School of Mines in Reno.

Keynote speaker was Allen L. Hearst, mining consultant of Reno, who traced the political history of mining in the U.S. and said that Butte County is a veritable storehouse of mineral wealth which could be mined at great profit if federal mining restraints and controls were lifted.

Elected officers were Richard H. Mawhorter of Cherokee, president; Ken Clements of Oroville, vice president; and Don Brown of Oroville, secretary-treasurer.

Elected to the executive committee were A.A. Randolph of Brownsville, former national president of the Western Mining Council; Leonard Ellis of Paradise, Tom Boness of Chico, and James Lenhoff of Oroville. Hearst was named an honorary member of the committee.

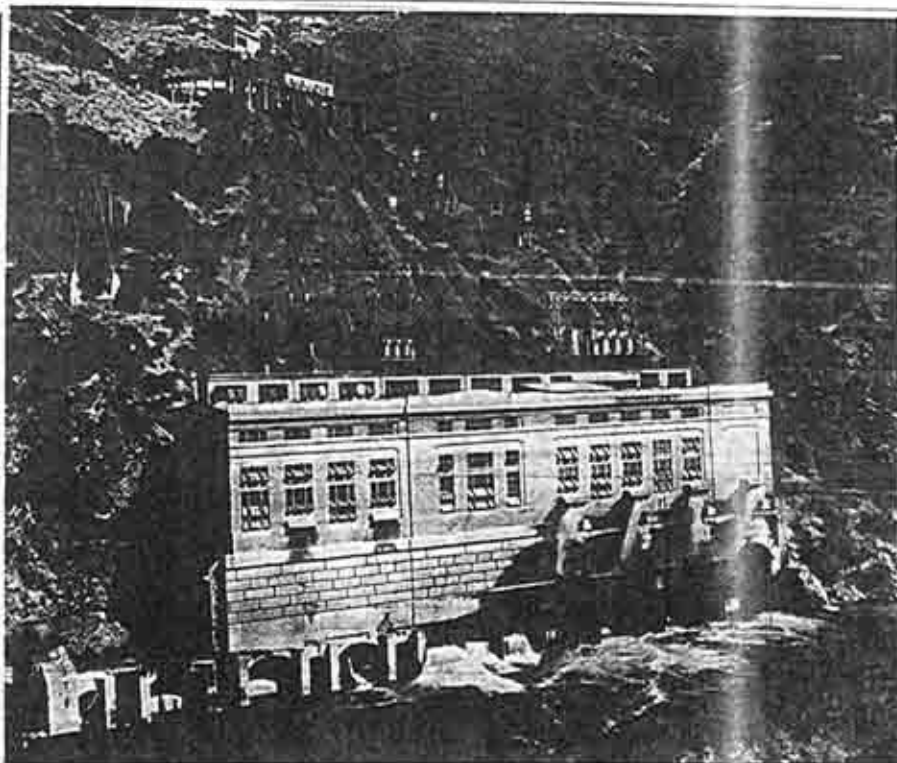
Oroville Mercury
9-25-1967

During his speech, Hearst pointed out that besides gold and some silver, Butte County possesses commercial deposits of copper, asbestos, limestone, barium, uranium, zinc and lead. He said there are known deposits of iron, oil, gas and chrome which could be developed with proper exploratory work.

However, Hearst said that numerous limitation orders and foreign trade agreements have all but ruined the American mining industry. He said that "incredible monetary policies" have not only wrecked the gold mining industry of the U.S. but endangered the future of our nation with inflation, unemployment and unstable money." He said present moves to create a world money is merely one more effort to postpone the day of reckoning with fake credits.

Dues were set at \$2 per year, which includes membership in the Western Mining Council. Anyone interested in joining may write to Rural Route 1, Box 297, Oroville, or call 533-1970.

The next meeting is scheduled for Paradise.



END NEAR—Big Bend Powerhouse on the Feather River 24 miles from Oroville will cease operation at midnight Saturday. The powerhouse has been in continuous operation since Dec. 31, 1908. The water which has passed through its

turbines is enough to have filled San Francisco Bay 11 times. The plant site will be flooded by the rising waters behind Oroville Dam by next year. It was sold by PG&E to the State of California last year.

PG&E Big Bend Powerhouse To End 60 Years of Operation

Big Bend Powerhouse, one of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's most famous hydroelectric generating plants will generate its last kilowatt of electricity at midnight Saturday.

The historic plant on the Feather River 20 miles from Oroville will be shut down to make way for rising waters behind Oroville Dam. The reservoir will eventually impound 3.5 million acre feet of water to a maximum height of 440 feet above the base of the Feather River at Big Bend.

When the last turbine stops spinning and the final electrical connection to the PG&E system has been broken by operators at the facility a career spanning nearly 60 years will have ended. The plant was placed in operation on December 23, 1908.

Dismantling Set

Almost immediately crews from a demolition contractor will begin dismantling the plant, which was sold in 1965 to the State of California as a part of the mammoth State Water Project. When Big Bend's massive concrete and steel walls are finally destroyed the foundations, driven deep into the bedrock of the precipitous riverbank will be all that remain of the plant. Since the sale PG&E has operated the facility for the state and purchased the electrical power generated by the 70,000 kilowatt capacity turbines.

During its 60 year generating career, Big Bend has generated a total of 27.6 billion kilowatt hours, equivalent to about 65 per cent of the 43 billion kilowatt hours that all 79 generating facilities of PG&E's vast

system produced in 1966.

Over its life-span Big Bend's turbines have "borrowed" 85, 182,880 acre feet of water to generate electricity. The amount of water passed through the turbines and returned to the Feather River in nearly six decades is enough to have filled San Francisco Bay about 14 times.

At the time of its completion Big Bend, then known as Las Plumas Powerhouse was ranked as the largest hydroelectric plant west of the Mississippi.

Construction of the plant by the Great Western Power Company, which merged with PG&E in 1930, and an important historical link to California's fabulous gold mining era. The 2 1/2-mile-long tunnel through the neck of the bend in the Feather River had been partly financed by Dr. Raymond V. Pierce of early day patent medicine fame. He had envisioned the tunnel as capable of drying up the Feather River so that miners could seek out the rich deposits of gold that were believed to line the bed of the river. His project failed, but the tunnel later served the useful purpose of bringing a great volume of water to turn the hydroelectric turbines of Big Bend.

Reservoir Named

Big Bend Powerhouse was operated by the natural flow of the North Fork of the Feather River, but additional hydroelectric development along the river required a large reserve of water for regulation of the stream flow during dry months and years. Such a reserve was provided by throwing a dam across the gorge at the downstream

outlet of Big Meadows and flooding the wide basin.

The reservoir that was created was named Lake Almanor. The name was devised by Julius M. Howells from the syllables of the names of the three daughters of Great Western Vice President Guy C. Earl. The girls names were Alice, Martha and Eleanor.

It was Howells who, years earlier, had seen in Big Meadows and its vast watershed an ideal site for hydroelectric development and persuaded Great Western's founders - E.T. and Guy C. Earl to transform the cattle-ranching country into a beautiful mountain lake. After two tries he constructed a dam by sliding into the area between the canyon walls quantities of gravel, sand and clay. The clay formed the core and the sand and gravel supported the outside slopes.

The original lake impounded 220,000 acre feet, one fifth of its present size, and was completed in June, 1914. The present dam was built in 1927. In 1965 PG&E constructed alterations to increase its storage capacity to 1,035,000 acre feet of water.

Era Ended

The construction of Big Bend marked the end of the early, lively competitive era of hydroelectric pioneering on the Feather River's North Fork and was the start of what is today the "Feather River Stairway of Power" where eight other hydroelectric facilities generate electricity to serve Northern and Central California and a ninth, Belden, is under construction.

The Belden site is the last area of the Feather River that can be developed economically for hydroelectric operations.

In February of this year the last residents of the tiny PG&E community of Las Plumas, which once had a population of 50, including 13 homes, a bunkhouse for single men, a community hall, post office and an enrollment of 22 children in the local school, was closed and ultimately razed to make way for the waters from the Oroville Dam project. The community was located on the opposite side of the Feather River from Big Bend.

Crews who operated the hydroelectric plant walked to work over a swaying footbridge spanning the 1,200 foot chasm between river banks.

Western Pacific Railroad served the small community of Las Plumas until the line was relocated to make way for the State Water Project.

The amount of taxes paid by Great Western Power Company and later by PG&E on the Big Bend operation are nearly impossible to calculate, but in the last year that Big Bend was owned by PG&E the tax bill totaled \$847,470.86.

The other powerhouses of the Feather River are Poe, Cresta, Rock Creek, Bucks Creek, Belden Powerhouse scheduled for operation in 1969 and now under construction, Caribou 1 and 2, Butt Valley and the Hamilton Branch Powerhouse.

12-29-1967

Injured Woman Is Found In Butte Gulley

OROVILLE — Butte County sheriff's deputies are investigating the shooting of Roba Lee Wrenn, 32, of Los Angeles, who was found lying in a gully off a logging road near Yankee Hill.

The sheriff's department had received a call shortly after 1:30 p.m. yesterday notifying them that a woman had fallen and had suffered a head injury.

Doctors in the Butte County Hospital discovered bullet wounds in both temples. The wounds were inflicted by a .22-caliber weapon.

A preliminary investigation indicated Miss Wrenn had gone hiking yesterday and had carried the .22-caliber rifle with her.

Sheriff Larry Gillick said there is reason to believe the woman attempted to take her life. He said the condition of the wound on the left side of the head indicated the bullet may have shattered against a bone and part of it glanced off the skull. He said the wound on the right side indicated the bullet penetrated the skull and then shattered.

The woman's condition is described as fair by hospital attendants, who said she was conscious and able to talk.

Miss Wrenn had gone to the Yankee Hill area to visit friends several days ago.