

Sacramento Bee

3-12-1982

Manslaughter Charge Rejected In Fatal Boat Collision On Lake

OROVILLE — Gregory Miller, the ski boat driver involved in a fatal boating accident on Lake Oroville last August, was acquitted Thursday by a Butte County Superior Court jury of a charge of involuntary manslaughter.

Eric Felthaus, 12, of Yankee Hill in Butte County, died when a ski boat driven by Miller, 27, of San Jose crashed into a small boat occupied by the boy and his parents, Jon and Deborah Klingbeil. Miller testified that he glanced back at the novice water skier he was towing but didn't see the Klingbeil boat until the moment of impact.

After the verdict was in, the jury foreman said the jurors agreed that Miller was responsible for the accident, but was innocent of the gross negligence and reckless disregard for life and limb which would constitute criminal negligence.

5-5-1982

Accidents claim pair of victims

A drowning, a railroad death and a bad accident marred an otherwise beautiful weekend for most Plumas County residents.

According to the Sheriff's office and the Western Pacific Railroad, Carroll Robblee, 54, of Portola died Fri., April 30 in an accident while working on some downed railroad cars in the Feather River Canyon. Trainmaster Jack Rich said that Robblee was inside an overturned car, cutting it up for scrap when a large section of the car fell on him.

Workers heard the piece fall in a large boom about 9:30 a.m. but did not respond immediately as large noises are commonplace on the railroad and no one saw the accident, Rich said. About 10:30, workers discovered Robblee.

Rich said the death was apparently instantaneous and the Sheriff's office noted that Pathologist Dr. William Liptrap was called in to perform an autopsy. The accident happened near the Rogers Flat area.

In the other death, Goldie Horner, 53, of Canyon Dam was found apparently drowned on Sun., May 2 in Light's Creek near Englemine by the County Search and Rescue Team.

According to Sheriff's Deputy Steve Wright of Greenville, Horner had been out looking for wood with Stanton Stokes and Linda J. Davies (her daughter) the Saturday evening previous. Returning home, the trio's vehicle got high-centered and they decided to walk to town for help along the Diamond Mountain Road.

The three had to ford Light's Creek and Mrs. Horner tripped during the crossing, Wright said. Stokes reached out for her and they both went rushing down the darkened cold stream.

Davies found Stokes about 500

yards downstream exhausted on the bank, but could not find Mrs. Horner. The pair then started walking back towards Indian Valley for help. They arrived at the Def-fanty residence on the North Arm about 3¼ to four hours after the incident, whereupon Sheriff's Deputies were called.

The Deputies initially searched the area at 2 a.m. Sunday morning, but to no avail, Wright said. The Search and Rescue Team found Mrs. Horner about 7:20 a.m. ½-mile east of the Light Creek Bridge, 2¼ to three miles from where she first fell in, Wright said.

In a two car accident on Sun., May 2, four people were injured in East Quincy, according to the Quincy office of the CHP.

According to CHP reports, Eric D. Brock, 22, of Quincy was eastbound on Hwy. 70 when he pulled out to pass several vehicles he was travelling with in a wedding caravan.

As Brock began to overtake a car being driven by Charles D. Flinchum, 20, of Susanville, also eastbound, Flinchum reportedly "skidded and swerved to the left," the CHP said, and Brock's vehicle struck Flinchum's.

The Brock vehicle continued down the road, overturning several times, the report said. Flinchum was reportedly not injured, but Brock was taken to Plumas District Hospital (PDH) in Quincy and later transferred to a Chico hospital with moderate injuries.

Debora A. Bowers, 28, of Quincy and a passenger in Brock's vehicle was also taken to PDH and then transferred to Chico. A second passenger, Doreen McGaw, 20, of Quincy was taken to PDH with

moderate injuries.

There were two passengers in Flinchum's vehicle, with Pearl M. Tillman, 18, of Reno treated at PDH for minor injuries. Ernest R. Eaton, 24, of Reno was not hospitalized, the CHP said.

In a single vehicle accident on May 1, Eugene R. Mills, 26 of Quincy was sent to PDH and arrested for an alleged charge of driving under the influence.

According to the CHP, Mills was westbound on Lee Road at a reported unsafe speed when he attempted to make a right turn onto Bell Lane. Mills failed to make the turn and struck a mobile home parked near the corner, reports said.

[Continued to back page]

Golden Feather Echoes

5-28-1982

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6-4-1982

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JUNE 4, 1982

ISSUE #266

DEATH THREATS AND VICIOUS VANDALISM

The typically peaceful and beautiful Golden Feather Community has become victim of an evil and frightening experience and calls to the authorities for assistance have been unheeded.

When Phil Meyers returned to his home in Jarboe Gap, across the road from the Rock House where he works late Friday night, May 14th, he found that his personal belongings had been scattered all about. A call to the Sheriff disclosed that no one was available to investigate. Subsequently, he received two telephone calls, seemingly from the same person, threatening his life and stating that he soon would be a dead man.

On Saturday night when he returned home from work, it was a horribly different sight -- the inside of the house was a shambles ---everything breakable was broken, furniture overturned, food stuffs from the refrigerator scattered over everything, curtains and drapes pulled from their hangers, beds torn up, and even clothing torn to shreds, and potted plants smashed over torn out rugs and carpets. Stumbling in the dark, Phil hurt his ankle and later learned it was fractured. Another call to the Sheriff reported the latest death threats and horrendous vandalism. But as before, the reply was the same "There's no one available to investigate," then added, "So go ahead and clean up the mess."

Other calls were reported to be made to other County officials and even to the Mercury Register staff requesting information which might be used to preclude further violence and danger. Now, nearly two weeks later, there is still no apparent police concern. The death threats have not been repeated nor attempted, nor has there been other known vandalism or malicious mischief. But a request has been made to alert the community to potential danger, and to admonish everyone to be fair-minded, cautious, and a vigilant good neighbor. Hopefully, we may some day soon again have a resident sheriff in the community.

The Chico Enterprise Record

6-28-1982

Rural area wants name of its own

By NICKELLENA
E-R Staff Writer

OROVILLE — Messilla Valley residents are looking for an identity.

Served piecemeal from three different cities and other local entities, the residents of the area they characterize as "no man's land" — located almost equidistant from Paradise, Oroville, Durham and Chico — want their own community established.

It would be called Messilla Valley.

Representing the petitioners, Leslie A. MacKowiak stated in a letter to the Board of Supervisors on June 11 the Butte College area on Pentz Road east of Highway 99 in which they live "is virtually a no-man's land."

"Services for our area are diversified," the letter stated. "Phone service is supplied by Paradise, Chico and Oroville. Each is considered long distance from one place to the other; mail service is provided by Oroville and, by special request, Paradise; school districts include Durham, Oroville and Paradise.

"As you can readily see, this can pose a problem, when a fairly large group of people are living together on a geographical area and services are so diversified."

The letter stated the mailing addresses are Oroville while many residents have a Chico phone number, making it difficult for residents to be located. The closest stores are in Paradise but checks are sometimes refused because of the Oroville mailing address.

"It is our consensus of opinion that we are from none of these areas — Oroville, Paradise, Chico, or Durham, but rather, are in need of our own identity ... thus, our request for an identity by being named Messilla Valley."

The writer stated the past few months have been spent trying to break through the bureaucratic process in an attempt to get the name officialized, but that "our identity crisis remains at a standstill."

Supervisor Bertha Moseley of Thermalito has been supportive, the writer stated. A request to the post office is being sent up that service's bureaucratic ladder, it continued.

The request also had gone to the county Public Works Department, but became stalled when address coordinator Ray Cobbler died earlier this year.

"We are no match for the red tape that can overwhelm everyday citizens who do not have the experience to move the bureaucrats in such a way that they can appreciate our needs," the letter stated.

The board agreed to place the proposal on Tuesday's agenda as requested by the residents.

The Messilla Valley area would extend from the Paradise city limits south to Highway 70, and from Highway 99 east to Pentz-Magalia Highway.

The boundaries would coincide with those of the volunteer fire department located at Butte College.

Shots Kill Man In Canyon Fight

By **BILL SHORT**

JARBO GAP — One man was slain and another arrested for murder last night when a fight at the Grand View Cafe on Highway 70, near here,

*Related Story,
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ended in raking bursts of semi-automatic rifle fire.

Deputies said James Doane, 34, believed to have been released recently on parole for murder, died after being hit at least five times by slugs fired from a military style Colt .223 AR-15 rifle.

Doane had recently been released after serving seven years at Folsom, officers were told by a woman from Southern California who said she was his sister.

His wife, Merrilee, said they moved from Coquille, Ore., May 9, and lived on Big Bend Road, where they both worked as caretakers.

She also said they had a son, Christopher.

Mrs. Doane, 35, was distraught and had to be restrained when a friend confirmed the body was her husband. Sheriff's Capt. Leroy Wood refused to let her enter the crime scene, telling her it wasn't something she wanted to see.

Doane had been shot twice in the face, apparently at close range. Three other wounds under his left arm appeared to have been made while he raised his arm in sort of a defensive posture, officers said.

There were three because the rifle fired so rapidly.

In fact, the fire was so rapid that witnesses in the bar thought they were hearing a string of firecrackers.

Arrested on an open charge of murder and held without bail was George Langevin, 34, of Rt. 1, Box 254X.



Victim's wife consoled by Capt. Wood

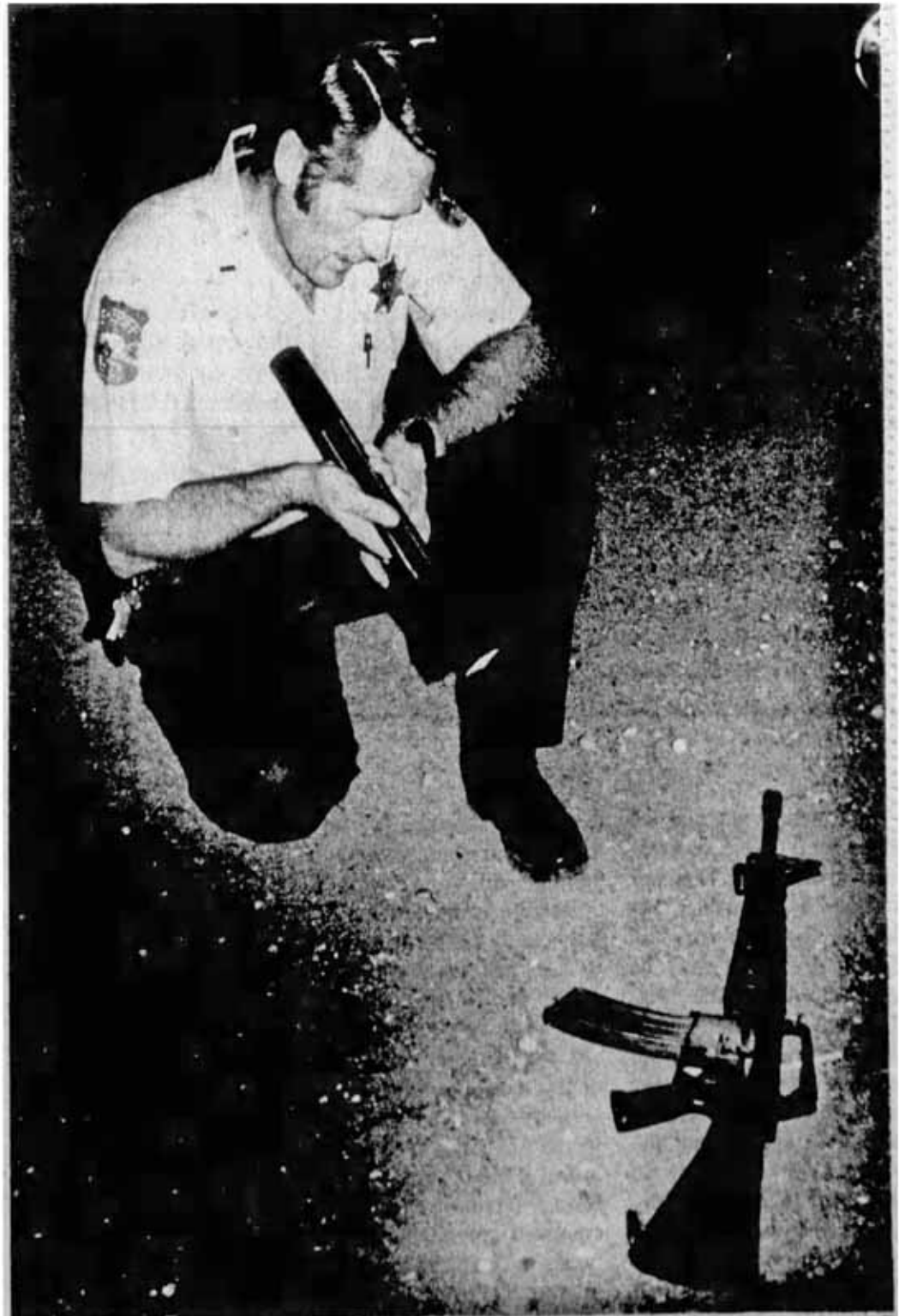
Deputies said stitches were necessary to close a wound on Langevin's left eye, an injury believed caused by Doane, who reportedly hit Langevin in the face with a rock during the earlier fight.

Witnesses told Sgt. Bert Akins that Langevin was outside the bar drinking beer when Doane and two other men approached. Langevin started fighting with one of the men and Doane tried to break it up, the witnesses said.

Doane then tried to walk away, but Langevin persisted, trying to fight with Doane, the witnesses said. Doane then turned around and beat Langevin with his fists.

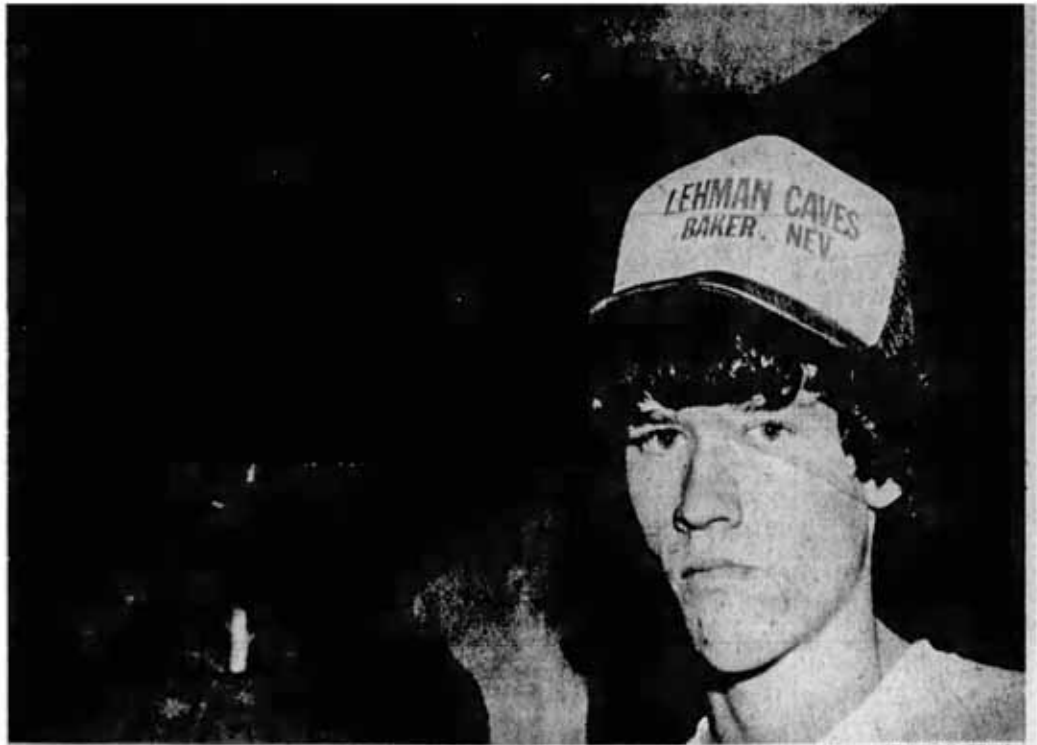
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In the fight that ensued, the witnesses said, Langevin went down two or three times and came up with a rock. Doane took the rock, struck Langevin in the face, and again started walking away, eastbound, toward Highway 70, away from the bar and in the wrong direction if he were planning to walk home.



Mercury Photos by Bill Short

Lt. Don Pederson looks at AR-15



Mercury Photo by Al Liddle

Richard Hendricks, 17, says shooting was 'bad'

Shooting Sounded Like Firecrackers

By AL LIDDLE

The witnesses told Akins that Langevin began yelling wildly, went to his van, pulled out the rifle and began spraying bullets across the dirt parking area. Everyone went for cover, Akins said, and apparently Langevin went for Doane.

Doane was found lying on his back beside the highway about 50 yards from the front of the bar where the fight occurred. The rifle, its 40-round clip completely empty, was about 15 feet away.

Lt. Don Pederson, Sgt. Tom Buttler, and Deputy Bill Sumner were first to arrive and they parked down the highway, creeping up on foot because their dispatcher had steady contact with witnesses inside the bar.

They found Langevin sitting on the front porch, his head in his hands. They approached cautiously and made the arrest at gunpoint, but he was "passive," they said, "more passive than his friends at that point."

Officers collected 37 spent shell casings in the parking lot, in addition to one that misfired.

"I thought someone had thrown a string of firecrackers," Allen Stackman said sipping his beer in the lighted sanctuary of the Grand View Cafe.

Outside and 30 yards down the highway, partially hidden by some grass, lay the body of Jim Doane. He had been killed minutes earlier after making the mistake of throwing a rock at a man with a semi-automatic rifle in his van.

Stackman said he was heading out to his truck when "I heard one of three guys holler something."

A second later the Lakeview resident said he heard two or three quick bursts or crackles and saw flashes of light and dust coming from behind a van in the dirt and gravel parking lot.

Just then, a man burst into view firing at a shadowy figure running for the cover of darkness.

"I heard that kid in the red cap say 'get the out of here' so I headed back inside," Stackman said. "I hit the door and it was locked, I about tore it off the hinges."

Inside, Ray Hendricks, who lives on nearby Big Bend Road, said the door had been locked to keep the gunman from coming inside. Stackman was let in.

Everybody in the small foothill bar-restaurant-recreation hall had "hit the floor," Hendricks said.

"A lady and her two kids went over there and lay down in the hallway," Hendricks said sitting at the Grand View bar pointing to a nearby corridor leading to some restrooms.

But Hendricks said he couldn't stay inside — "I was just trying make sure he (the gunman) didn't come back and shoot up the place...I was trying to protect what was going on — he slipped out the door and made his way behind cover

closer to where the body was.

"I heard he (the gunman) and his buddy arguing down the highway...then I heard him drop his rifle...he just walked back inside and sat down," Hendricks said.

The gunman wanted a beer.

Hendricks and another man waited with the gunman.

"We were just sitting on the porch having a beer," he said, "and then I looked up and there were barrels everywhere."

Sheriff's deputies had arrived to take the suspect away.

An hour, later Hendricks' 17-year-old son, Richard, who watched what he could from a cafe window, talked about the suspect.

"He's crazy...no one wanted him around

anyhow," he said. "For all I know, he was living in his van."

After the shooting, the gunman just sat down by the road, Richard Hendricks said.

He said the man was just "freaking out...he'd been drinking all night and he came here for a couple of beers."

Standing under the entry lights of the little country cafe, the teenager had a look of experience and confusion on his face.

"It was bad," he said, "I've never been around when a man's been shot before."

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STATE-TWIN

Sacramento Bee

8-25-1982

Boating Death Suit Filed

OROVILLE — A wrongful death suit has been filed in Butte County Superior Court by the parents of Eric Felthaus, 12, who died instantly when a ski boat crashed into his family's fishing skiff on Lake Oroville Aug. 23, 1981.

John and Deborah Klingbeil of Yankee Hill are suing Gregory Miller, 37, of San Jose, the ski boat driver, who has been acquitted of a criminal charge of involuntary manslaughter. A Superior Court jury found him responsible for the accident but innocent of gross negligence.

The Klingbeils are asserting that Miller was reckless and negligent. They are asking for compensation for the loss of their son, the loss of their boat, for funeral and legal costs and their own pain and medical expenses.

The Sacramento Bee

8-28-1982

Second Crash Victim Dies

OROVILLE — A second person has died from injuries suffered in the Wednesday night collision of a car and a truck on a highway north of Oroville.

Lisa Mastromatteo, 22, of Magalia, died Thursday night in Chico's Enloe Hospital. Deputy Coroner Lee Scoffield said cause of death was massive head injuries.

Mastromatteo was a passenger in a car driven by 54-year-old Clifford Nimz of Oroville. The Nimz car was hit broadside by a truck driven by Eric Pawson, 35, of Milpitas.

Pawson was not hurt.

Patricia Holiman, 8, of Oroville, also a passenger in the Nimz car, was killed instantly. Nimz is still hospitalized.

The collision occurred at the intersection of Pentz and Clark roads.

— Bee News Services

Fire Razes Historic Mountain Building

A mountain home that 125 years ago served as a stage stop burned to the ground last night.

It was one of three fires yesterday in the Oroville area. The other two were grass fires believed started by children playing with matches.

The former stage stop, 11489 Stagecoach Road near Jarbo Gap, was consumed by fire at 9:17 p.m., a loss of \$65,000. The fire was fought by one county engine and the Golden Feather volunteers.

Firemen said it was apparently started by faulty

wiring. The owner of the structure was Frank Moore of Concow. The tenant was the Leonard Haley family, who escaped uninjured, but lost everything.

Fourteen pieces of fire fighting equipment were sent to two fires believed started by children playing with fire.

The first fire, near the Bangor intersection of Los Verjeles and Bangor-La Porte roads, consumed an acre of grass and took two engines and the Bangor volunteers to contain it. That fire was reported at

2:48 p.m.

The second fire, behind the Oaks Mobile Home Park on Olive Highway, was reported at 4:02 p.m. and burned a spot of grass behind the park off of a dirt trail.

Six engines, a bulldozer, an air tanker and a reconnaissance plane were initially dispatched, but only two engines were needed. There was no wind to fan the flames and the firemen quickly extinguished both fires, which were dangerously close to homes.

Golden Feather Echoes

9-3-1982

Fire on Stage Coach Lane

A fire that completely destroyed the two story one hundred and twenty five year old home and stage stop occurred Tuesday night. The Golden Feather Volunteer Fire Co. #37, 2 fire companies from Paradise, #2161 and #2175 and one from Jarbo Gap could not save the old building but prevented a major forest fire. Living in the home were Leonard Haley and his wife. The cause of the fire has not yet been determined and no injuries occurred.

Medical Call-Out

The medical aid vehicle was called at the same time as the fire call went out for the fire on Stage Coach Lane. Pat Horton fell from a 14 foot ladder. She and her husband are building a new home on Truex Rd. Mrs. Horton broke her arm and was also x-rayed for possible back injuries. A quick recovery is surely hoped for!

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9-10-1982

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HISTORY LIVES ON AFTER LANDMARK DESTROYED

Fire of undetermined cause destroyed one of Yankee Hill's few remaining landmarks the night of August 31. It was the ancient residential structure on what was known for many years as the Lyman Brown Ranch.

The home was built around 1860 by Joe Miller (no relation to the present-day Millers) and originally was three stories high from ground level at the front of the house. The main floor contained 6 rooms, including a parlor with wainscoting, a large kitchen and separate dining room, which overlooked a balcony, plus an enormous pantry. The upper story had 4 bedrooms. Underneath the midsection of the main floor was a wine and beer cellar, from which Miller freely dispensed beer to his hired hands at close of the work day. The house was illumined by gaslight generated by an elaborate carbide setup, probably the most modern of its day for rural use.

The structure was anchored into the base of a hillside and was supported by a native stone wall, huge wooden pillars and massive beams. It faced the early-day road from Cherokee to Yankee Hill and for a number of years served as a noonday meal-stop for the stagecoach passengers between those two points. Susie Miller and her hired household helpers served a bountiful hot meal to the weary travelers of that era, which was one reason such a large pantry was needed. The other reason for the oversized larder was that Miller employed a number of ranch hands year-round, all of whom had to be provided with board. They were housed in bunkhouses built between the main house and the barn. Opposite the bunkhouses was a blacksmith shop sheltered by an enormous live oak tree, which succumbed to old age about 10 years ago.

Miller was an industrious German teamster who was drawn to the Gold Rush not for gold, but for the money that could be made in catering to the needs of the miners. He homesteaded a half section of land and promptly set up a slaughterhouse where he butchered beef and hogs. He then loaded the meat into his wagon and made the rounds of the mining camps in the area, selling meat to

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9-10-1982

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History (Con't.)

the miners. The imposing home he was able to build for his family was ample testimony to the extent of his prosperity. He acquired land in the Chico area and expanded his cattle and hog ranching operations until it replaced, and eventually greatly exceeded the revenue from supplying food to the mining camps, which by then were rapidly diminishing.

Following his death in the early 1900s his widow, Susie, sold the ranch to Lyman Brown "for and in consideration of the sum of Ten Dollars, Gold Coin of the United States, to her in hand paid" according to the recorded deed dated December 19, 1917.

Brown was an uncle of the Moak children, including Mary Ellen Moak Brown, John, Lyman and Tobe Moak. Tobe was born in the old house when his mother, passing the ranch on her way into town, was unable to continue the journey due to the onset of labor.

Lyman Brown subsequently eliminated the bedrooms in the upper story of the house by lowering the ceiling structure to form an attic. It still was visible, however, from high ground to the south for many miles, notably from Pentz Road on the ridge leading into Paradise.

After Brown died in 1946 the property was owned briefly by a younger brother, George. In 1948 the ranch was acquired by the late Stan Worcester and his wife, Peggy, who now is Mrs. Frank Moore and still owns the property.

Contributed by Peggy Moore

Note from Yankee Hill Historical Society March 2021: Ignatz Miller came to Frenchtown in 1855, probably living in a log cabin, which was common at the time. Joseph Miller, his brother, arrived in Frenchtown in 1858. Both were in the cattle business. When Ignatz left to go home to Philadelphia in 1862, Wendelin Miller, another brother, joined Joseph at Frenchtown. Together they expanded their cattle operations. The house mentioned in this article that burned was built in 1883. By that time, the two brothers were very successful cattlemen. Wendelin died in 1901 and Joseph in 1908. Joseph Miller had a residence in Chico at the time of his death. The Miller family had accumulated over 4,000 acres, nearly half of it located south of Chico as well as some in Glenn County. Joseph's son, Wendel Miller, established the First National Bank in Chico in 1914. He died soon afterward. One of Ignatz Miller's children, Joseph G. Miller, who was born at Frenchtown, came back out to California in 1872 and lived in Cherokee where he raised cattle and ran a butcher shop.

Feather River Bulletin

9-29-1982

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