

Yankee Hill Historical Society

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

Yankee Hill Dispatch

The Nov 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County, Ca was devastating to many people in Butte County. The ramifications of the fire will not be completely known for years to come. The spirit of the people in Butte County will prevail and we will come back stronger. We wish you all the best in your endeavors to continue on, whatever road you choose to take. For those who lost loved ones, we offer our deepest sympathy and hope you find comfort in their memory.

With this issue, we will begin a series of articles that cover the history of some of the structures lost or damaged in the fire. The first in the series is about a local landmark.

The Rock House 1937-2018



The Rock House in 2015

In 1915 Frank Barton Jr. moved to Yankee Hill with his father Frank Barton Sr. They filed two mining claims near the site of the future Rock House. In 1925 Frank Barton Jr. and his father each filed a homestead on different plots of land, one along the current Detlow Road near Big Bend and another which contained the future site of the Rock House along today's Highway 70.

In 1933 Frank Barton Jr., deeded a 120-foot easement across his land to the state to construct a new highway. Known first as Highway 24 in 1926, the rerouting became known as alternate Highway 40. The roadway was realigned again and renamed Highway 70 in 1957.

After his father died in 1935, Frank Barton Jr. sold the land to Stephen Detlow. Both parcels consisting of 332 acres total sold for \$1400. Detlow, born in 1887 in Germany, was an industrious man who ran a produce business in Richmond, Ca. Stephen married Ester Holzem while in Richmond. In the 1920 census, Ester (born in Missouri in 1899) was listed as a trained nurse in Richmond, Ca.

In 1937 the Detlow's filed a 20-acre mining claim near the Rock House site on the property they acquired. Stephen also started building several stone structures on the property along the new highway. When completed, its impressive stone structures served as a gas station and eatery which also served alcohol. It was originally called "The Detlow". Some years later, the name was changed to the "Rock House". It was the first such place along that section of Highway 40 that served food and gas. At some point several small cabins were added.



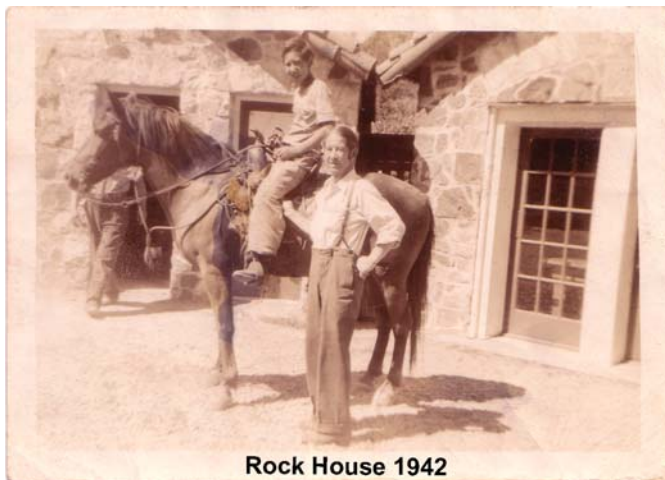
In 1939 the Detlows leased 1200 feet of their property along the highway, including the “The Detlow” to Oscar Sorenson and his wife for seven years with a total rent for the period of \$8,800. The name was changed to “Sorensens.”



Circa 1939

In 1941 Stephen Detlow released all his rights in the Butte County property to his wife and returned to Richmond, Ca. In 1941 Ester deeded property along the highway to PG&E to run new power lines up the canyon.

In 1942 Oscar Sorenson sublet the “Sorenson/Rock House” property to Emory (Ed) Chadwick and his wife Alma. It appears this was the first use of the name officially as “The Rock House”. Their 14-year-old granddaughter, Florence Owens, lived in a room upstairs in the Rock House. The Chadwicks operated the Rock House for several years.



Rock House 1942



Left: Emory (Ed) Chadwick and youngest son James (Jim).
Right: Jim and cousin Florence with baby Donna (relationship unknown)

In 1944 Oscar Sorenson released his rights to the lease on the Rock House property back to Ester Detlow. The Chadwicks now leased directly from Ester.

In 1945 Ester Detlow moved back to the Rock House property and apparently operated it herself, renaming the place “Esterville” and the restaurant “The Rock House”.

ESTERVILLE
— . —

SUNDRIES RESTAURANT
ACCESSORIES REFRESHMENTS

↙ ↘

SHELL PRODUCTS

Above: Facimily of Esterville sign shown below left along with Rock House sign to the right. Notice the added building on the left below.



In 1949 Ester attempted to sell the Rock House to Samuel Silver and his wife Mary. As part of the sale the right to the name Rock House was included. The Silvers apparently made some improvements, but the sale was never finalized.

In 1951 Ester Detlow leased Esterville and the Rock House restaurant to August and Hanna Byers and it was then known only as “The Rock House”. Included in the lease was the liquor license. The Byers operated the Rock House until at least 1957. Meanwhile, Ester returned to Oroville and opened a real-estate business at 2157 Myers Street.

In 1957 Ester Detlow, now living in Thermalito, granted the state additional property along highway 40 (about 18 acres) to facilitate the expansion and realignment of the new highway 70 project.

In 1962 Ester married Melvin Earnest of Yankee Hill. The following year she began to sell much of her real-estate holdings. She did retain the Rock House property, apparently still leasing it out.

In Sept 1963 Ester (Detlow) Earnest passed away while visiting relatives in Contra Costa County, Ca. Her former husband Stephen Detlow, who built the Rock House, died six months later also in Contra Costa County.

In 1966 the estate was settled and two of Ester's brothers, Joseph and Fred Holzem, assumed management of the Rock House property.

In 1970 the Rock House property was acquired by George Boozer. Boozer sold the property in 1974, carrying a note for \$55,000 to Robert Ausmus.

In 2007 Ausmus passed away and relatives continued to operate the property. By 2014 serious restoration was needed and the Rock House was only occasionally open when it was sold to the current owners, Karen MacGowan and her husband David. Under new ownership, the extensive restoration was progressing steadily, and The Rock House was nearing its former status as a well-maintained facility and a fine place to eat and gather with friends.

Unfortunately, much of it burned in the Nov 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County; a large portion has only the thick rock walls still standing. One smaller building is still intact, which they hope to reopen soon.

The 2018 fire was devastating to thousands of people and several communities; several of these communities are in a struggle to retain their identity. Paradise is the largest community affected. Concow and Yankee Hill were always small communities (approximately 300 people total) with few amenities, but their history goes back to the 1850's. This area was blessed with several historic structures from the past. Unfortunately, in 2018 we lost the 1882 Lunt home, the turn of the century Armbruster home, both on Nelson Bar Road, the 1949 Grange building on Big Bend Road, the 1940's bungalow at the Concow Camp Ground and now the future of the Rock House, just up the road, is in question. The only places left in Yankee Hill and Concow area after the fire for the local population to informally gather are the old one room Messilla Valley School House on Concow Road and two eating establishments, The Rock House and Scooters. (Scooters just recently reopened). We need to support these few remaining historic structures in rebuilding, so these important fixtures in the community's identity still exist for the current residents and those that want to rebuild and return in the future.

***Editor's Note:** The granddaughter of the Chadwicks, Florence, relayed that the reason her grandparents gave up their lease at the Rock House was because during WWII California banned slot machines and similar forms of gambling in the state. The Rock House had pachinko style games you could bet on. When they were removed because of the changes in the laws, there was a serious decline in revenue at the Rock House.*

In 1949, Florence and her first husband Alvin (Skeet) Smith, a truck driver, purchased most of the property that comprised Yankee Hill, nearly 260 acres. Soon after acquiring the property, a resident of the 1856 Yankee Hill Hotel kicked over a Kerosene lamp starting a fire, destroying the hotel and several other buildings. After Skeet's death, Florence sold the property in the mid 1960's. Florence would later own and operate a bar in Forbestown for about 10 years. In 2008 she placed a stone marker at the Yankee Hill site dedicating it to the pioneers of the past.



THE LORD OF THE PLAINS

The Stirling City Historical Society Presents

The Saga of the American Buffalo

A historical account of their slaughter by the "Hide Hunters" from 1865 thru 1884. Also, an exhibition of firearms used by the buffalo hunters. Personal accounts of "Hide Hunters" Jim Ennis, Ella Bird and Lee Dummel, will be given.

This presentation will be performed by Lee Dummel, Old West historian, re-enactor and exhibitor of 1800's firearms. Lee is joined by Mary Schaefer, re-enactor of historical personages, including Ella Bird, 1800's Female Buffalo Hunter.



Annual Tea and History

Saturday April 13th 11am to 2pm Presented by

The Yankee Hill Historical Society

At the Old School House located at 11666

Concow Road. \$20 donation requested

Tea and sandwiches will be served .

Only 48 spots are available.

Contact Deb Ingvoldsen at

530 519-5953 to reserve a spot

March 17, 2019

Dear Yankee Hill Historical Society Member,

November 8th was a day we will all remember. It changed our community. Good News is Yankee Hill Historical Society's 1856 Messilla Valley Schoolhouse survived the Camp Fire. Concow School shared their water with YHHS and unfortunately the system did not survive the fire. It is scheduled to be repaired in July. We received a grant from North Valley Community Foundation for an ADA portable bathroom and hand washing station, so we are open for business again.

Yankee Hill Historical Society held our first meeting on Tuesday, February 12th. Our last meeting was our October 20th General Meeting and Election of Marjorie Corey and Don Saul as Directors. We finalized our election in February with Jeff Evans elected as President. Don Saul will serve as our Vice-President.

We are notifying you it is time to renew. **The dues are \$10 per person per year.** Membership is due in January of every year.

We have scheduled our Tea for April 13th from 11-2. There are 48 places available. The donation is \$20 per person. **Please email me to reserve a seat.** djingvoldsen@gmail.com or you may call me 530-519-5953.

Completed projects: Yard watering system and a variety of planted perennials, a new front gate and beautiful new porch metal railings.

Your Yankee Hill Historical Society membership supports the preservation and promotion of Yankee Hill, Concow, Big Bend, Pulga, Cherokee, Pentz and Messilla Valley's rich history of Butte County. Each member is very important to our Society and its ability to maintain our 1856 schoolhouse and history.

We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Deborah Ingvoldsen, Secretary Treasurer

**Yankee Hill Historical Society
P.O. Box 4031
Yankee Hill, CA 95965**

YHHS Happenings

Yankee Hill Historical Society Web Page: You can visit our web page at www.yankeehillhistory.com. The web page has something for everyone, a Theater, a Book Store, past Newsletters and extensive on-line Archives for those who choose to do their own research. The Book Store on the web page is always OPEN! You can pay by check or use PayPal.

April 13th, Saturday, 11-2, at the old school house, Tea, Food and History - The Stirling City Historical Society will present a presentation on "The Lord of The Plains", the history of the buffalo hunters. Lee Dummel will give a presentation on the history of the hunts and his personal experience as a young man attending an organized buffalo hunt. Mary Schaefer will re-enact several women who participated in the hunts and later wrote books about their experience. This is a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics and the colorful people that led to the near extinction of the buffalo. Tickets are \$20, call Deb Ingvoldsen at 530 519-5953 to reserve a spot, only 48 seats are available. Last year's event was a great success!

Time to renew your membership. See your mailing label, if the date is 12/19, then you are up to date! If you receive the newsletter by email, see the body of the email for your status. See attached letter for dues amount and mailing information.

Officers and Contact Information

President: *Jeff Evans (530) 228-9156*

Vice President: *Don Saul*

Secretary and Treasurer: *Debbie Ingvoldsen (530) 519-5953*

Directors: *Don Dooling, Marji Corey*

Newsletter Editor: *Larry Mauch (530) 588-6944 editor@yankeehillhistory.com*

General Correspondence: information@yankeehillhistory.com

*Visit Our Web Page @ www.yankeehillhistory.com
"Dedicated to Preserving Our Local History"*

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