

Yankee Hill Dispatch

Vol 1 No 2



July 2007

Published by the Yankee Hill Historical Society

www.yankeehillhistory.com

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

Fourth of July Celebration at the Old School! The Law Dawgs will be entertaining us with their western re-enactment at 10:00am on July 4th. Lunch will be available at high noon and a follow up re-eneactemt at 2:00pm. It will be fun for all!

Is it time to renew your dues? Please check your mailing label. If the date on your label is June 07 or earlier, your dues are now due. A membership form is enclosed. If you do not owe dues, please pass the membership form on to someone you feel might like to receive this newsletter and support the Yankee Hill Historical Society. Your membership helps fund the restoration of the old school house!

Concow Valley in the 1870's

By 1870 the town of Chico, with a population of 3,714, was growing faster than Oroville with its population of 2,430, as agriculture was outpacing mining as a source of income in the county. The Oroville newspapers were quick to report any news that favored the mining interests. Oroville's rich mining history was not going to succumb to agriculture without a fight!

So in April 1870 when the Spring Valley Canal and Mining Company was incorporated with \$800,000 in capital stock at \$500 a share, it was big news. The company was going to bring water to Cherokee so that the hydraulic mining operations could operate all year round. Previously that same year, it had been reported that the mines lost \$250,000 in revenue because of little rain that winter. Three to four months during the winter were the only truly productive months for the mines because they needed so much water to operate. With the incorporation of the Spring Valley Canal and Mining Company and the money from investors, the dream of damming the Concow Valley and year-round water for the Cherokee mines would become a reality. Cherokee was sure to become a major community in Butte County because of the large deposits of gold that could now be uncovered.

Excitement in the Hills

Articles appeared almost weekly in the Oroville newspaper about the progress that was being made in the foothills. A petition was circulated in town to repair the roads leading to Cherokee and a new stage line from Oroville to Cherokee was started by John McEldowney. By June 1870, it was reported the roads leading into the foothills were some of the best in the area. Later that same month, it was reported that 30 train car

loads of 30" diameter steel pipe, enough to stretch four miles, were already at the Oroville train station to be delivered to Cherokee. When completed, the water would travel a total of 30 miles by a system of ditches in the hillsides and steel pipe across the ravines from the creeks fifteen miles in the hills above the Concow Valley, through the valley and then onto Cherokee.

The excitement in the area brought many new residents. In 1870, Cherokee would see an influx of new people looking for work at the mines as well as the opening of a second hotel, a new butcher shop and a bakery. A local company started making the iron pipe to supply the demand for new flumes being built to carry water to the local mines. In time the Spring Valley Company would open a company store and a third hotel would follow.

Activity in the Concow Valley

Eight teams of horses were transporting the pipe to the construction sites. The July 1870 Concow Township census, which includes Flea Valley, Concow, Yankee Hill and the Big Bend areas, lists nearly 250 Chinese employed as miners or digging ditches for the Spring Valley Canal and Mining Company. The total population for the area was listed as 492, with 60 females. The real-estate value for Concow Township was listed as \$10,000. In comparison Oregon Township, which included Cherokee and Oregon City, was listed as a population of 1,132, with 538 females. The real-estate value was shown as \$231,100 with 360 dwellings. In December of 1870 the Spring Valley Canal and Mining Company tested the pipeline from Concow to Cherokee with new nozzles that were capable of throwing water 800 feet with 150 pounds of pressure.

The new dam had not yet been built but it was only a matter of time. In December 1870, Joseph Burr Mullen moved from Santa Clara to join his father, Charles Mullen, and brother on their farm in the Concow Valley. Joseph's brother, William, wrote a letter to the Butte Record in Oroville complaining that when they went to pick up his brother's shipment of luggage and household goods at the train depot at Nelson's Station, located between Chico and Oroville, they found no one present and the crates, left in an unlocked boxcar, had been broken into. Several items were damaged but mostly blankets and clothing were stolen. The Mullen family's run of bad luck continued when in April 1871 William Mullen's saw mill in the valley burned down. But things were about to change.

In October 1871, the Spring Valley Canal and Mining Company sold all its assets to an English firm for \$1,200,000. In December, the Concow Dam was completed. The following January the 80 foot dam was about to overflow because the release gates were not large enough to handle the heavy rains that winter. A cut was made in the top of the earthen dam to release water but the current soon wiped out the top 30 feet of the dam, it was later repaired.

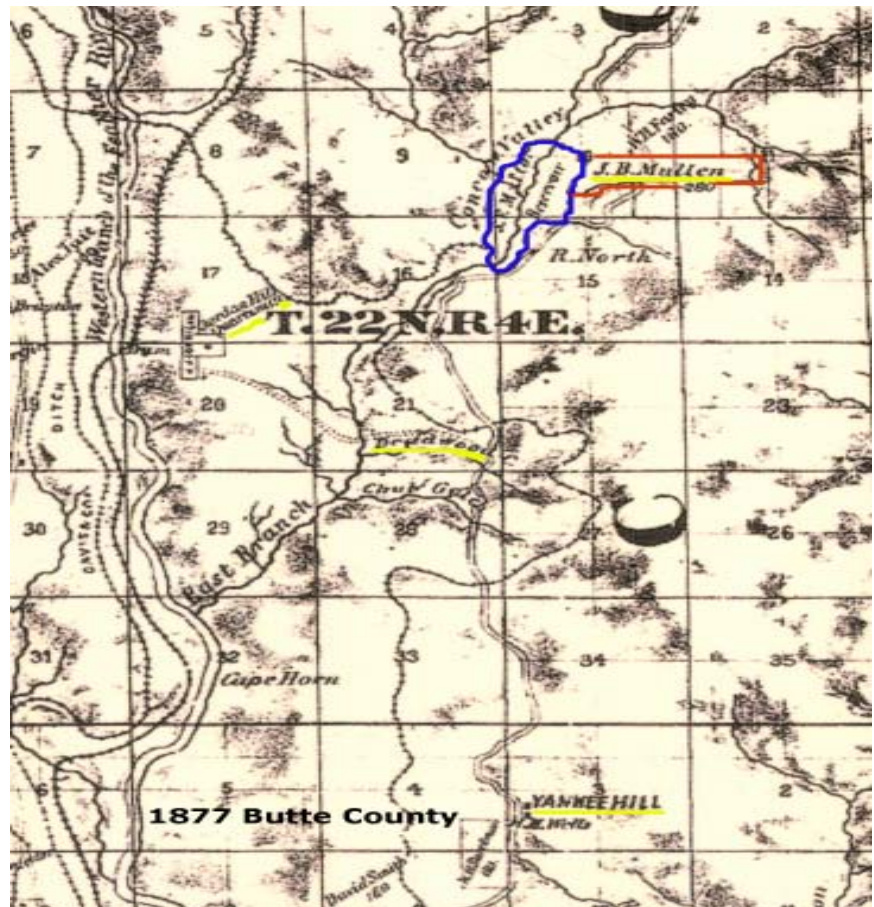
The Mullen family's 160 acre farm was located on the new Concow Spring Valley reservoir, so they now had lake front property. It wasn't long before the family offered visitors a chance to stay at their enlarged house, advertising it as a hotel. William Mullen was now employed as the Concow Road overseer. In March 1872, M.H. Wells noted in his Yankee Hill store ledger the receipt of \$75.00 from William Mullen for the use of a team for 27 ½ days to work on the bridge. Unfortunately, the entry doesn't identify which bridge. Mr. Mullen earned a salary of \$36.77 for the year as the road overseer.

In December 1872, a telegraph line was run along the Spring Valley canal through the Concow Valley. The cost of a telegram was ten words for \$.25. Later that month the Concow dam failed again because of unusually heavy rains. When the dam broke, lumber from the structure was found in the Feather River past



Mullen Family home and Hotel on Concow reservoir circa 1880's

1877 Map showing the Concow Reservoir, the Mullen's family farm, the Jordan Hill quartz mine, Deadwood and Yankee Hill. The lines with cross hatching are the various ditches or flumes that had been built to carry water.



Oroville. The original cost to build the dam was \$80,000. It was estimated the repairs would cost \$60,000 to \$70,000.

Cherokee Gold

In May 1873 a 25 pound bar of gold was sent to Oroville from Cherokee. In June 1873 Cherokee suffered several fires. The James Diamond saloon, Mrs. Jones' grocery store and several houses were lost. Two weeks later, another fire destroyed the saloon and home of Harry Delph. The Spring Valley Company was in the middle of widening the ditches in the area so they carried more water so most of the men were out of town. In September 1873 two gold bricks from Cherokee were sent to Oroville. One weighed 142 pounds and the other weighed 171 pounds. They were valued at \$150,000. They were the first shipment of gold since the dam was repaired and water was again running in the canal. The mines preferred producing heavier gold bars because it made them harder to steal. In November 1873 the Spring Valley Company was looking to purchase the water rights from additional landowners to increase production at the mines. They were also looking to purchase land downstream to dump the tailings from the hydraulic mining. Concerns were growing about the effects the mining operations had on the water quality in the Feather River.

Yankee Hill

Yankee Hill saw some growth in the 1870's. In 1871, 1872 and 1873 M.H. Wells' store ledgers show a steady stream of business, averaging about \$7.00 to \$25.00 per day. It appears in examining the ledgers that most of the sales were for small quantities of basic provisions such as potatoes, onions, flour and coffee, indicating that trips were probably made to Cherokee or Oroville for larger purchases. By the end of the 1870's, and with the burning of the Porter Quartz Mill on Jordan Hill in 1880, the quartz mining in the area was starting to subside. People had started to look for work in Cherokee or the surrounding hills.

Flea Valley

Meanwhile, in 1873 farther up past the Concow Valley, Flea Valley was experiencing increased activity as Ritchie, McGrath and Company built a new saw mill. It was to be the largest mill in the county. Over the next several years, flumes were constructed to carry lumber from Flea Valley to just below Pentz, a distance of over 20 miles. The cost for the flumes was \$3,000 per mile. In July 1877 five men were injured and two were killed when a portion of the flume collapsed. The following year in 1878, the lumber industry fell on hard times because of too much supply. It would take several years to recover.

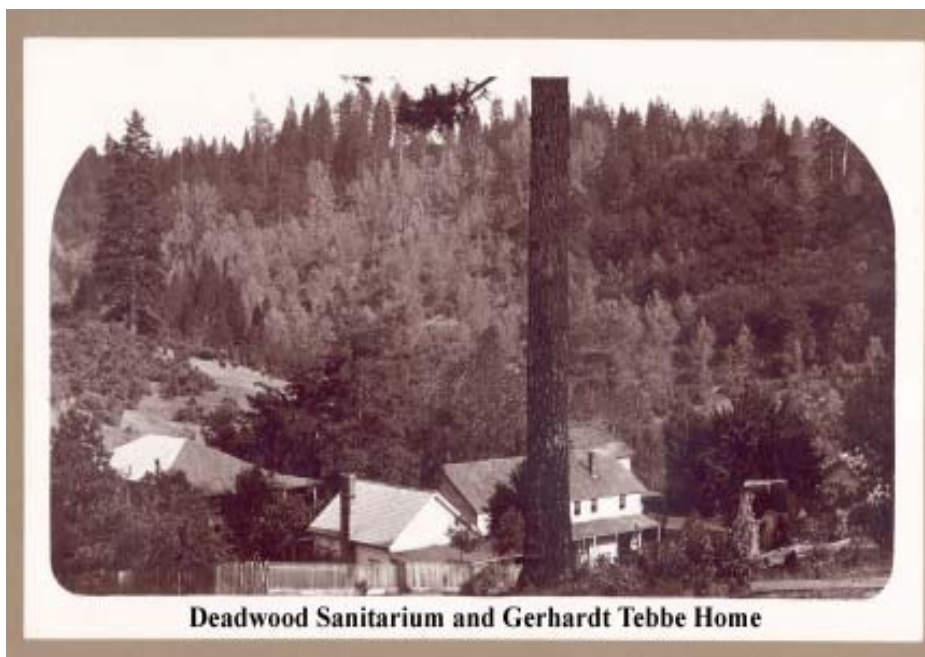
Concow Valley Gets a School and a Hospital

In February 1875 a school was erected near the old community of Spanish Town, two miles North of Yankee Hill. Today it is the site of the current Concow School. Joseph Burr Mullen, living four miles farther up Concow Road, had four children at the time with two more to follow so they undoubtedly attended the Concow School. Later in 1880, a second school called the Reservoir School was formed opposite the Mullen home and hotel. The Mullen family probably donated the land and built the school building. It was a common practice back then that the school district only provided a teacher and an operating budget; the community provided the land and the structure. The Reservoir School existed until July 1922. Unlike Concow School, Reservoir School has been forgotten over time and very little documentation exists today.

About 1875 Gerhardt Tebbe and his family moved into the family home at Deadwood. It is not clear if it was an existing structure or built by the family. Gerhardt had been a miner all his life. He had spent some time in

the Flea Valley. The Tebbe family included five children at the time, who also probably attended Concow School. Within a year, Gerhardt's oldest son George had fallen and bruised his leg. The leg got worse as time went by. The family tried several doctors with no success. A Chinese man in Gerhardt's employment, Ah Sang stated he was a doctor in China and offered to help. Soon the boy's leg started to improve. As others heard of Ah Sang's success, they would seek out the doctor. Gerhardt decided to move a mile down the road to the junction of Concow Road and Deadwood Road and build a new home and hospital where Ah Sang could practice his medicine. Over time the hospital grew and more buildings were added until it could handle 50 to 100 patients. In 1885 Mrs. Tebbe passed away. At about the same time, the family sold the hospital and surrounding grounds to Ah Sang. Apparently the Doctor was not very good at managing his finances and he sold the hospital and moved to Chicago around 1891. Dr. Sang had a rough time in Chicago. His wife left him and he lost a lot of money. Dr. Sang died in 1903. Gerhardt Tebbe was killed in a mining accident at Georgetown in 1898.

The 1870's was an exciting time for the foothills above Oroville, but by the end of the 1870's there was an increasing pressure to stop hydraulic mining because of the damage it caused in the rivers and streams below.



Deadwood Sanitarium and Gerhardt Tebbe Home



Left-Gerhardt Tebbe



Right-Ah Sang

**Photos provided by
the Tebbe family descendants**

To be Continued in the October Newsletter "THE BOOM STARTS TO SLOW!"

YHHS Happenings

School House Renovation

The kitchen is almost done! The dedicated crew is making great progress. The next project will be a wooden fence out front and work on the floors. If you would like to help the crew works every Wednesday from 8:00am to Noon. Call Jay Nicholson to confirm the day and time 533-2273

School House Rental

Now that the school house kitchen is nearly complete, the Board of Directors has decided it is time to formalize a fee structure to help cover the costs of cleanup and maintenance of the old school. We want the school to be an asset the community can use and we also want to keep it clean and well maintained. The new fees are \$10 for every two hours of use and an additional one time charge of \$25 per use of the kitchen, regardless of how many hours you rent the school house. As an example if you rent the school house for two hours and want to use the kitchen, the charge would be \$10 plus \$25 for the kitchen. If you rent the school house for six hours and want to use the kitchen the charge would be \$30 plus \$25 for the kitchen. If you do not need to use the kitchen the \$25 fee would not apply. We tried to keep the fees just enough to cover our costs to clean up afterwards and make sure the school is ready for the next group who uses the facilities. The new fees take effect on July 1st.

First Saturday each month, Bunko Party!! - The first Saturday of each month 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. The restoration crew has been feverishly working on the school and we want to make sure we can provide the materials to keep them going! The money raised from the bunko party is a primary contributor to the restoration fund. It is fun and supports a great cause. SEE YOU THERE!

Yankee Hill Historical Society Web Page - We have recently launched our new web page! You can see the page at www.yankeehillhistory.com. The web page has copies of some of the 1870's newspaper articles used as reference in this issue's article, so you can read them for yourself!

YHHS Wish List - Donations or financial assistance are always welcome!

A lockable FIREPROOF, four drawer filing cabinet - As we begin building our archives, the Yankee Hill Historical Society is in need of a lockable fireproof filing cabinet to store small artifacts, copies of pictures and other documents. If you have one you want to get rid of or you know where we can purchase one CHEAP! Please contact us.

THANK YOU! Lee and Patty Dummel for the donation of a new refrigerator for the kitchen!
Don Saul, thank you for the donation of the roofing material for the porch!

Officers and Contact Information

President: *Bob Huffman (530) 533-4132*

Vice President: *Jay Nicholson (530) 533-2273*

Treasurer: *Debbie Ingvoldsen*

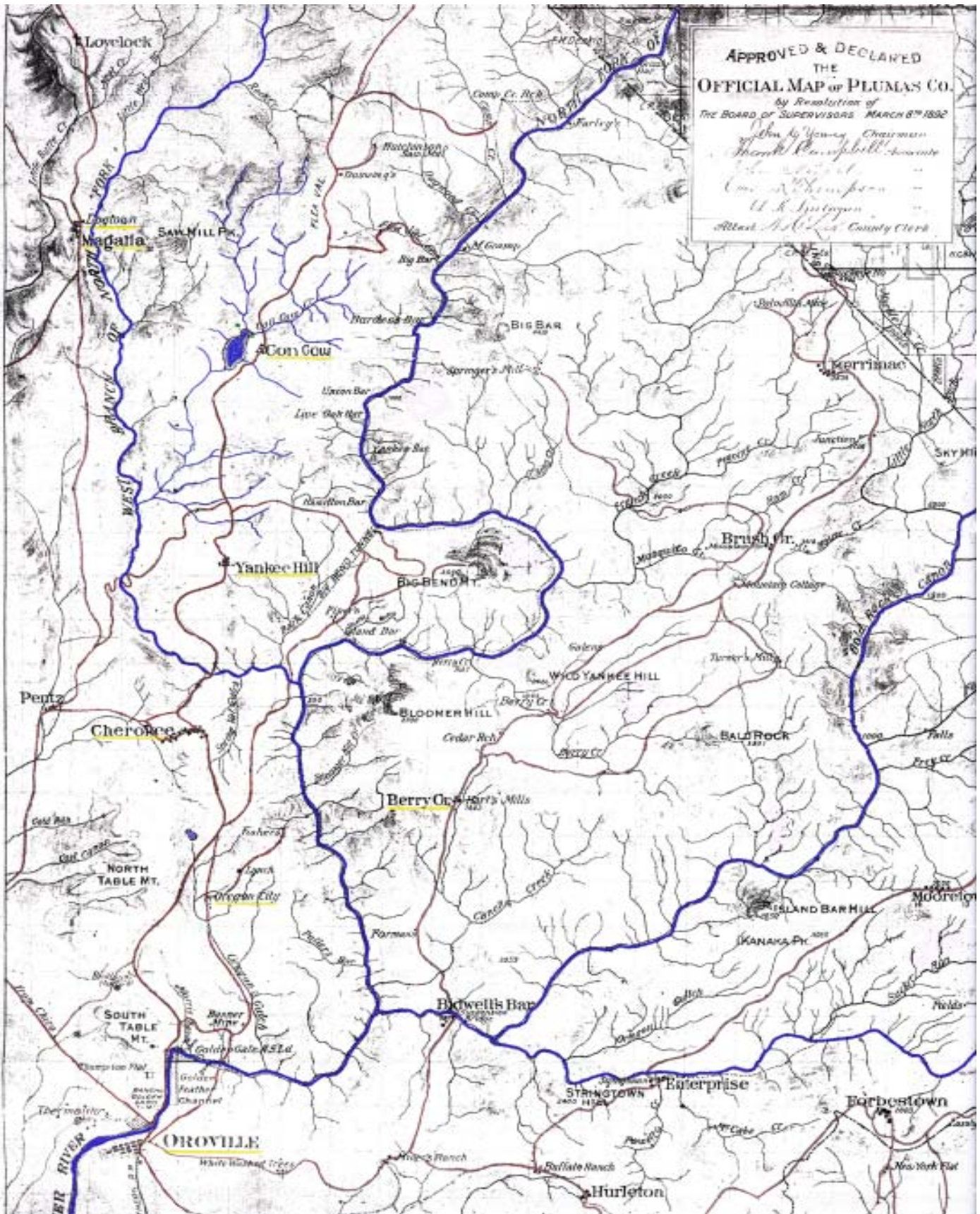
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Director: *Patty Dummel*

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The 1892 Plumas County map shows a portion of Butte County shown here. The roads are shown in brown, the major forks of the Feather River in blue.

Yankee Hill Historical Society
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“Dedicated to Preserving Our Local History”
Visit Our Web Page @ www.yankeehillhistory.com