

# *Yankee Hill Dispatch*

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*The Yankee Hill Dispatch is published one time per year in September. In each issue we include an extensive article about the area's history. Occasionally we will have a special, additional edition, like this one during the year. The Yankee Hill Historical Society also publishes the YHHS NEWSLETTER twice per year, in March and June. For membership information and to read past articles see our web page, the address is shown above.*

## **Flea Valley, Rag Dump and Beyond**

If you drive out Concow Road from Highway 70, seven or eight miles out you reach a point where the pavement stops. It quickly becomes obvious that from this point on the road is not traveled except by those looking for adventure. The road continues for miles as a dirt road with some gravel that has mostly eroded away from the rains each winter. The county maintains the entire road so it is easy to assume the pavement defines where civilization ends, and today that is true. For most people today, the Concow area is the destination when traveling the road, but that has not always been the case. In 1862 Concow was not the destination but rather a midway point on your travels to Flea Valley. Beyond Flea Valley you could go on another 2 miles to what is today called Rag Dump and 5 miles beyond that to the mining community of Little KimsheW near what is today called Ramsey's Bar. After 1909 you could go all the way to Stirling City, above Magalia. Today it is a long and tedious trip by motorized vehicle that requires good ground clearance and in some cases 4 wheel drive. But in the 1860's when the road was first cut it only required a good horse, and the ride was no more strenuous than the ride from Pentz to Yankee Hill. Adventure by today's standards was part of your daily routine.

## **Life in the Area in the Early 1850's**

Rich Gulch, along highway 70 was first visited as early as 1850. In 1852 a few people settled in Concow Valley, homesteading 160 acre farms from what is today's Concow Campground to Camelot. Oregon City, Cherokee and Frenchtown (located on Nelson Bar Road) had been settled since 1854. Yankee Hill and Spanishtown (located above Concow Road opposite Pinkston Canyon Road) had been settled since 1856. The growth had been mostly propelled by the search for gold. The area between Spanishtown and Flea Valley had very little gold production, other than small amounts that had washed down from above in the creeks, because it was mostly decomposed granite in that area, not usually a good source for the precious metal. By the end of 1857 most of the surface gold between Yankee Hill and Spanishtown area had played out, only hard rock mining or tunneling was prevalent. In Aug 1857 an article in the papers talked about gold deposits being found 15 miles above Spanishtown. Individual miners in the area were moving on farther past Concow

Valley and even beyond Flea Valley towards KimsheW Creek, named after the KimsheW Indians that had inhabited the area. On the route to KimsheW Creek, thru Flea Valley, the level terrain and the flow of miners made the area a natural spot for a hotel and ranch. At the time the only hotels in this area were at Yankee Hill and Spanishtown (Note: A couple of rooms to rent out and offering meals qualified you as a hotel).

## May 12, 1857 Oroville Daily Butte Record

### Correspondence.

OROVILLE, MAY 11

I feel disposed to give you some items of a flying trip to the Mountains, but doubt whether you will consider them worthy of being made public. I will not attempt to describe the beautiful panorama on either side of the road from Oroville to Pence's, nor the magnificent views about the West Branch, as most of your readers about Oroville have probably seen them. At Pence's we had to leave the Dogtown stage and take horses to Frenchtown, (which was very inconvenient for those having baggage,) where we took mules for the rest of our trip. Going through Spanishtown, we took the pack trail leading through Concow and Flea villages to KimsheW. Concow and Flea villages are respectively five and nine miles from Frenchtown on the ridge north of Concow. It commenced raining and hailing and by the time we reached Flea Valley the storm came on so hard that we were compelled to halt at a small cabin at the head of the valley. Soon after stopping a regular snow storm set in, which decided us upon camping for the night and returning the next morning. We found the cabin occupied by Mr. Sanford, who extended to us every kindness possible. He with Mr. Fairbanks of Frenchtown have taken up Flea Valley as a ranch, and intend building a public house (a thing much needed at that point,) as there is a great deal of travel through the valley all summer. As we were about starting on our return yesterday morning, Messrs. Fargo and Evans arrived

at the cabin; from them we learned that there was a good waggon road from Spanishtown to within one mile of Flea Valley; over which teams are hauling heavy loads of lumber for fluming the Frenchtown ditch. Mr. Evens thinks it will be completed in ten or twelve days. We were also informed by several parties who seemed to be familiar with the country, that a wagon road could be easily made through these Valleys to Honey Lake, but all said the road through Dogtown would be the most practical and less liable to obstructions from snow, and far easier and cheaper than any other route. Returning, we had from the top of the ridge south of Concow Valley a splendid view of the Coast Range, Sacramento Valley, Butte Creek, Table Mountain and the Buttes. At Yankee Hill we found the "Virgin" Company rolling the rich quartz down a long chute to their new Mill. The Mill is built for twenty stamps, but they will commence crushing with ten or fifteen, their engine and machinery is on the ground and they are putting it in place as rapidly as possible. Adjoining them on the south, is the "49 and 56" Company, and on the north, the Butte Quartz Mining Company. Mr. J. F. Johnson the energetic President of the Company has a force of men actively engaged in sinking shafts and opening the vein. They have gone down thirty two feet with one shaft and found rich rotten quartz; they propose sinking the same shaft a few feet further and then drilling to, and cutting through the ledge. The vein extends some 7,000 feet and the croppings along the whole distance are very rich. I will give you a few more items when we renew our trip and penetrate further into the mountains, if acceptable.

Yours resp't. H.



## The Flea Valley Ranch

Mr. Sanford, mentioned in the 1857 article on Flea Valley, does not appear in the 1860 census for Butte County so he must not have stayed long. The Mr. Fairbanks was Henry Augustus Fairbanks, born in 1830 in Virginia. He first lived in Frenchtown, later moving to Cherokee. His neighbors were Hiram Clemons, A.J. Foster, Manoah Pence and James Arbuckle, all of whom would become involved at some point with the Flea Valley Ranch. The 1858 Butte County tax records indicate that the Flea Valley Ranch consisted of 160 acres assessed at \$266 with improvements assessed at \$1500. \$1500 was a lot of money to spend on improvements in 1858; a typical house would be assessed at \$150 to \$200. The location of the property was at the intersection of Concow Rd and Dixie Rd, (although Dixie Rd did not officially exist until much later).

There is also a strong possibility that Fairbanks never intended to live there full time, possibly because of the winter snows, because he kept his home in Cherokee. Fairbank's savings must have been drained by the Flea Valley Ranch because in Dec 1858, Henry Fairbanks mortgaged his interest in the Flea Valley Ranch to A.J. Foster, his neighbor in Cherokee in consideration for a \$760 loan due in 12 months. The loan was considered paid in full in June 1860 when Fairbanks deeded 80 acres of the ranch to Foster in lieu of payment. In July 1860, Fairbanks took out another mortgage for 80 acres, the balance of his holdings, with his brother Augustus Fairbanks in consideration for a \$500 loan for 3 years. In August 1860, Foster sold his half interest in the Flea Valley Ranch plus his ranch near Cherokee to Manoah Pence for \$770. Foster would leave the area, moving to Santa Clara, Ca. In Oct, two months later, Manoah Pence sells the half of Flea Valley Ranch he acquired from Foster to Hiram Clemons, a miner, for \$1,000. Hiram Clemons and his partner Lucius Snow held mining claims farther north on the Little Kimsheew Creek. In July 1861 Henry Fairbanks sells his half interest in the Flea Valley Ranch to Clemons as well for \$1300 and pays off the mortgage to his brother. Hiram Clemons now was sole owner of the ranch, paying \$2300 for the property. In August 1862 Hiram Clemons married Lucy Buxton of Frenchtown at the Flea Valley Ranch. Michael Wells of Yankee Hill and Justice of the Peace performed the ceremony. Meanwhile in June 1863 Henry Fairbanks married Charlottie Whitelow of Cherokee, where they would continue to live.



Site of Fairbanks Home - Duensing Hotel Flea Valley Oct 2012

## **Flea Valley Ranch Changes Hands Again**

In March of 1865 the Flea Valley Ranch was sold by the Oroville Sheriff to settle a debt owed to J.C. Orr of Cherokee by Hiram Clemons. It appears Clemons's wife had left him. The sale price was \$1098 and the buyer was Garhardt Tebbe who would later own the Deadwood Sanitarium on Concow Rd. Tebbe's sister, Johanna Thunen and her husband William Thunen also lived at Flea Valley. In April 1867 the Tebbe's and the Thunen's decided to move closer to town, Gerhardt Tebbe sold the 160 acre property to J. M. Arbuckle and A. L. Fairbanks, as joint owners for \$500. James M. Arbuckle was the neighbor of Henry Fairbanks in Cherokee. As mentioned earlier, A.L. Fairbanks was Augustus Lorenzo Fairbanks, the brother of Henry Fairbanks, the original owner and founder of the Flea Valley Ranch and hotel. In March 1868 Arbuckle sold his half to the older Fairbanks so now Augustus Fairbanks was the sole owner of the Flea Valley Ranch and hotel. The fortunes of the Flea Valley Ranch and hotel were probably not helped when Concow Lake was established in 1870 and J.B. Mullen opened his own hotel on the shores of the lake.

Apparently the Flea Valley hotel still brought in income. Miners were working claims farther up Concow Road in the area that is today called Ramsey's Bar, named after William Ramsey, an early miner. Back then the area was called Little Kimsheew. The area was the same area where Clemons and Snow (mentioned earlier) had their mining claims. In 1867 Little Kimsheew had 30 registered voters, Concow had 20 registered voters and Yankee Hill had 34 registered voters. Only men could register to vote at the time. Business at the Flea Valley Hotel was also helped by the new business started just up the road in Nov 1873.

## **The Flea Valley Lumber Mill**

The lumber output in Butte County had increased from 6,000,000 board feet in 1868 to 62,000,000 board feet by 1873. The need for lumber in California and the surrounding states was rapidly growing and a number of new saw mills were established.

*Butte Record Nov 8, 1873*

**NEW SAW MILL.**—We understand that Messrs. Ritchie, McGrath & Co., have commenced the erection of a saw mill, probably the largest in the county. The mill is situated about 17 miles from Cherokee at what is known as Flea Valley. The machinery for this mill was purchased in Marysville.

The site for the Flea Valley Mill was about 2 ½ miles above the Flea Valley Ranch on Concow Rd. Today maps show the area as Rag Dump, but that name was not used until the 1930's. Ritchie, McGrath and Company mentioned in the newspaper article consisted of John Ritchie, Eugene McGrath, J.G. Orr and H.P. Hobbs; all were from Cherokee. It appears McGrath was the one with lumbering experience and the force behind the group. He had previously been associated with a mill above Magalia. Two days after the article appeared in the Oroville paper announcing the building of the mill at Flea Valley, a series of buyouts occurred. Richie and Orr were bought out by David and John Daniels of Cherokee. John Ritchie received \$500 for his share in the Flea Valley Mill property and apparently left the area. Eugene McGrath increased his share and also ended up owning the new mill equipment that was on the way from Marysville to Flea Valley.

In March of 1874 Joseph Willit of Cherokee sold his cabin and mining claim on Fall Creek known as the Rowbore and Stanely claim to the newly incorporated Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company for \$75. In May and July of 1874 what were known as Water Claims were filed for water rights on Little Rock Creek to supply water to the new mill via a ditch or flume. On the claims H.P. Hobbs was listed as the secretary of the organization. There were restrictions on how much water you could claim so that you could not have exclusive water rights. It was not uncommon for mines or saw mills to make claims on water from several creeks or rivers nearby to support their operation.

### **Wooden Flumes Used to Carry the Lumber to the Finishing Mills Below**

In March 1875 a claim was filed for water rights on Camp Creek and all its tributaries for the purpose of running a flume to the mill's dumping ground near Pence's Ranch. The claim was filed by the Superintendent of the mill Daniel Hilton who was also from Cherokee. The 1874/1875 tax rolls listed the assets of the company as 160 acres in Flea Valley valued at \$200, 3 wagons valued at \$275, 14 oxen valued at \$700, implements and steam engine to run the saw valued at \$1500. The concept was to rough cut the lumber at Flea Valley in to planks and then send it via the flumes and ditches to Pentz for the final milling to size.

The cost of building the wooden flume and digging the ditches from Flea Valley to Saw Mill Hill and on to Pentz was nearly \$3,000 per mile. About half the distance was traversed via elevated wooden flumes and half via ditches in the ground. The concept of using water flumes to float the lumber to the mill had been developed in Nevada several years earlier. Although the initial costs were high to build the flume, over time the costs were recovered by not having to pay the high cost of teaming the lumber with wagons and oxen to the mill. But the high upfront costs soon required new investors in the venture. In July 1876 another water claim was filed by the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company for the water rights on Little Kimsheew Creek and all its tributaries starting at a point ½ mile below William Ramsey and Company's mining claim for the purpose of running a flume to the head of Fall Creek and on to the Defiance Mill, the name given the company's mill at Flea Valley. The claim was filed by the new Secretary of the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company, Henry Fairbanks, the founder of the Flea Valley Ranch and Joseph M Brock, the owner of the largest hardware store in Oroville which specialized in mining needs. Brock's hardware business had been in Oroville since the late 1850's. Soon, David Perkins another successful Oroville businessman would join the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company. He owned the Oroville grocery and provisions store founded by his brother George Perkins in the 1850's. George Perkins would become Governor of California from 1880 to 1883. These new partners provided supplies and much needed capital for the building of the flumes and expansion of the business.

By 1876 strong competition was forming with a new lumber company located in Chico, the Sierra Lumber and Flume Company. The company was created by the acquisition of several smaller lumber companies, each of which had their own mill. The new company was well financed and grew quickly. They, too, used water flumes to carry timber to Chico from Butte Meadows roughly paralleling what is today's highway 32. Prior to that time, saw mills in Butte County were small locally owned operations.

### **Rock Creek Lumber Company, Flume and Mining Company**

Eugene McGrath, the original founder of the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company decided to open a second mill 2 ½ miles above the Flea Valley Mill in 1876 as a separate venture called the Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining Company. Perhaps he started this venture because his share had been diluted by the new investors in the Flea Valley venture, or perhaps he was bought out. The Rock Creek mill built a flume connecting to the Flea Valley mill's flume so they could transport lumber to the lumber dump at Pentz as well. That same year in November, Columbus Augustus Leamon and John Adam Heckart filed a patent at Pence's Ranch for a water powered cart that would allow several people to ride the flume in both directions with

and against the water current. This would significantly speed up transportation between two places. It is not clear if the cart was capable of climbing the steeper grades like the grade up the hills to Flea Valley from Pentz. The cart probably benefited the flume tenders the most (people hired to check sections of the flumes for damage and lumber pile ups. It was not uncommon for the tender to live in a cabin near the flume).



Dr Enloe and family riding the flume



Sierra Lumber Co Flume

The use of flumes was dangerous. Large trees were initially milled at the upper mill sites into large boards that would be milled again at the lower sites into smaller boards as needed after they traveled the flume. But while no logs traveled the flumes the larger boards still occasionally caused damage to the flume. In July 1877, five people were inspecting the flume (Charles Campbell, a man named Stevens, Patrick Bacon, Richard Watson and a Chinese man.) They found a lumber jam and were trying to break it loose when the shaking of the lumber by the men caused 200 feet of the elevated flume to collapse. Patrick Bacon and Richard Watson were killed; the man named Stevens was seriously injured.

## **The Financial Panic of 1877**

In May of 1877 the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company purchased a block of Downtown Oroville located at Bird and Huntoon Streets to be used as a lumber yard. The price was \$2,000 paid to Callow and Stevens who owned the Ohio Livery Stable in Oroville. Callow and Stevens were also investors in the corporation. In Sept 1877 the Bank of America failed in San Francisco. The Sierra Lumber Company in Chico, now the largest lumber company in the area saw demand drop from 40,000,000 board feet per year to 10,000,000 board feet per year; the company was \$600,000 in debt. The sudden drop in demand also saw the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in Flea Valley face financial hardship.

In May of 1878 the tax records indicate the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company assets were given a value of the following: mill and machinery \$5,000, wagons \$900, horses \$600, oxen \$3240, lumber \$3,000 and 14 miles of wooden flume \$14,000. It appears only the wooden flume was taxed, not the ditches. At the Rock Creek Mill, located further north, the assets were given a value of the following: 320 acres with a mining claim \$300, oxen \$700, engine \$2,000, taxes paid were \$107 or about 3 ½ %. The Rock Creek mill was clearly a much smaller operation with less than 1/3 the equipment of the Defiance Mill in Flea Valley.

In June 1878 J.M. Brock sued the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company to settle a debt owed him (probably his store for provisions) by the Corporation. He had to list his fellow investors as defendants; they were George Perkins, David Perkins, James Logan, Thomas Callow, George Stevens, N Cohen and S Cohen. Fairbanks and McGrath were not listed so it is assumed they were no longer involved. Joseph Brock purchased the assets during the sheriff's sale in Oroville for \$94,716.67 which is probably the amount of debt owed him. The Rock Creek mill assets were not involved.

## **Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining Company Changes Owners**

In 1878 the Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining operation was also sued for \$12,984 in unpaid mortgages by John Davis, a miner living in Cherokee. The shareholders in the Rock Creek Lumber Corporation were listed as Eugene McGrath 990 shares, Abram Wolf 990 shares, Charles Wright 990 shares and Henry Fairbanks 50 shares, all from Cherokee, as well as John Dana 990 shares, of Little Rock Creek. Abram Wolf, who was President, held a mortgage for a \$12,984 loan he made the Rock Creek Lumber Corporation. John Davis had made a loan to Wolf in the amount of \$5,000 and claimed Wolf pledged the mortgage he held on the Rock Creek Mill as collateral for his loan to Wolf. Wolf had recently died, John Davis wanted to collect the \$12,984 owed Abraham Wolf on the mortgages, so Davis sued the Rock Creek Lumber Corporation. During the trial, George Parry acquired 75% of the company's stock and J.S. Bassett became President. Parry was a miner and a carpenter by trade living in Cherokee. Bassett was also a miner and lived in Concow. The Rock Creek Lumber Company held 21 mining claims along the Little Kimshew Creek at the time of the suit. Davis's case was denied by the California Supreme Court because there was no documentation supporting Davis's claim that Wolf pledged the mortgage as collateral on his loan, and in fact it would have been illegal if Wolf had committed the shares without the other stockholder's approval. However, Parry loaned the corporation \$5,000 and took over the mortgage that Davis claimed he owned in his suit. It is assumed the money was given to Wolf's wife to settle her debt with Davis. In late 1878 Parry filed suit for default on the debt owed him by the Rock Creek Lumber Corporation. The assets of the Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining Company were returned over to George Parry in Feb 1879.

The assets that were considered valuable were the mining claims; the mill equipment was included but only briefly mentioned in the three page mortgage. It appears Eugene McGrath was more interested in mining than the lumber business when he founded the Corporation. The lumber business was probably just a way of supporting the mining business. That may have been McGrath's inten-



tion when he formed the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Corporation earlier. When the Oroville concerns came into that corporation and acquired all the stock and invested money to build the flume to the Pentz lumber dump, their primary focus became lumber rather than mining. McGrath, now on his own, continued mining in Butte County until 1891, in fact he was partners with George Parry in other mining ventures in the area. He later moved to San Jose, Ca where he was Superintendent of a mine there, presumably the Almaden Quick Silver Mine, the primary mine in the area.

### Oroville Lumber Company

Joseph Brock became ill shortly after he purchased the assets of the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company and made one of his employees, Floyd Taber, a partner in the store in Oroville which was renamed Brock and Taber. Later in 1879 Brock moved to Oakland leaving his partner Floyd Taber and son-in-law Milton Green, an accountant by trade, to run the store. Interestingly enough, Green had previously been David Perkins' accountant, Brock's partner in the Flea Valley Lumber Company operation. Before Brock became ill he leased the mill at Flea Valley to Charles Holbrook. In 1879 Holbrook incorporated the Oroville Lumber Company with \$200,000 in capital. Interestingly the partners in the old Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company would become shareholders in the Oroville Lumber Company. It makes you wonder how much of the \$94,716 that Brock paid for the assets of the old company really changed hands. This practice of reorganizing with the same shareholders was common at the time; Sierra Lumber Company in Chico did the same thing.

*Chico Weekly Butte Record 10-4-1879  
First ad with Oroville Lumber Co name*

**OROVILLE**  
**LUMBER COMPANY!**

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**C. H. Holbrook,**  
SUPERINTENDENT.

Lessee of the  
**Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining  
Company's Property.**

**M**ANUFACTURE and Sell at Wholesale  
and retail all kinds of

**Lumber and Building Material,**  
COMMON LUMBER, RUSTIC, FLOORING  
CEILING, SIDING, SHINGLES,  
SHAKES, etc.  
DOORS, WINDOWS AND BLINDS,  
For Sale at Lowest Market Rates.

Flume Dump, Pence's Ranch. Butte County.  
1879 C. H. HOLBROOK,  
Superintendent

Holbrook had been previously associated with the Clipper Mill in Butte County, which was purchased by the Sierra Lumber Company. He managed their books.

In November of 1879 the Sierra Lumber Company in Chico lowered prices putting pressure on the Oroville Lumber Company operations in Flea Valley.

*Chico Weekly Butte Record Nov 15, 1879*

**LUMBER!**

**REDUCED FROM**

**\$18 to \$15**

**Per Thousand Feet.**

—o—  
**F**ROM this date, until otherwise ordered, the  
**SIERRA LUMBER COMPANY**

will sell COMMON LUMBER from 12 to 20 feet in length, at its yard in Chico, at the above reduced rate. The rates on all other qualities of Lumber have also been reduced.

**Special Rates for Cash and on Large Lots.**

A. C. WOODSUM,  
General Superintendent

Chico, Sept. 2, 1879.—M

In 1880 the Oroville Lumber Company's taxes were assessed with a value as follows, Mill and Machinery \$2500, 10 wagons \$750, 14 Horses \$800, 40 oxen \$1400.

In 1881 Joseph Brock sold the Oroville Lumber Company section 22 of Township 23 NR4E, totaling 640 acres for \$1600. The property was about 1 mile southwest of the Flea Valley Mill; the land was purchased for the timber it held. (see map)

By 1879 the feasibility of the flumes and their costs, especially their unexpected high maintenance costs, were being questioned. After a recent storm, an article that appeared in the Chico papers raised the concerns.

*Chico Weekly Butte Record 12-27-1879*

**The Flume.**

We have been unable to ascertain anything definite as to the amount of damage sustained by the Sierra Lumber Company to their flume property. We understand, however, that there is thought to be a good many breaks in Chico canyon, and the telegraph wires being down, there has been no communication between the Chico office and the mills for several days. We understand, also, that the Blue Ridge and Antelope flumes, in Tehama county, sustained considerable damages. Previous to the construction of these flumes the lumber business was a profitable one for all who engaged in it. Now, it puzzles us to name any of those who have in any manner been connected with the flume business who have not been brought to the verge of bankruptcy and carried others with them. The flume property has been looked upon as a great source of profit, but the expense of building it through the canyons, and keeping it in repair after it was built, has cost them more than the primitive method of teaming lumber from the mill to the valley. Perhaps this is a mere assertion which cannot be maintained, but a comparison of the prosperity of the lumber business of 1871, 1872 and 1873 with that of 1878 and 1879 justifies the assertion. But not only has the fluming enterprise proved ruinous to those engaged in it, but it has been a death-blow to all the teaming interests of Chico, retarding instead of advancing our prosperity. It is to-day an apparent fact that not one single redeeming feature of the flume enterprise can be pointed out as conferring a benefit upon any one.

## **Oroville Lumber Company Assets Sold**

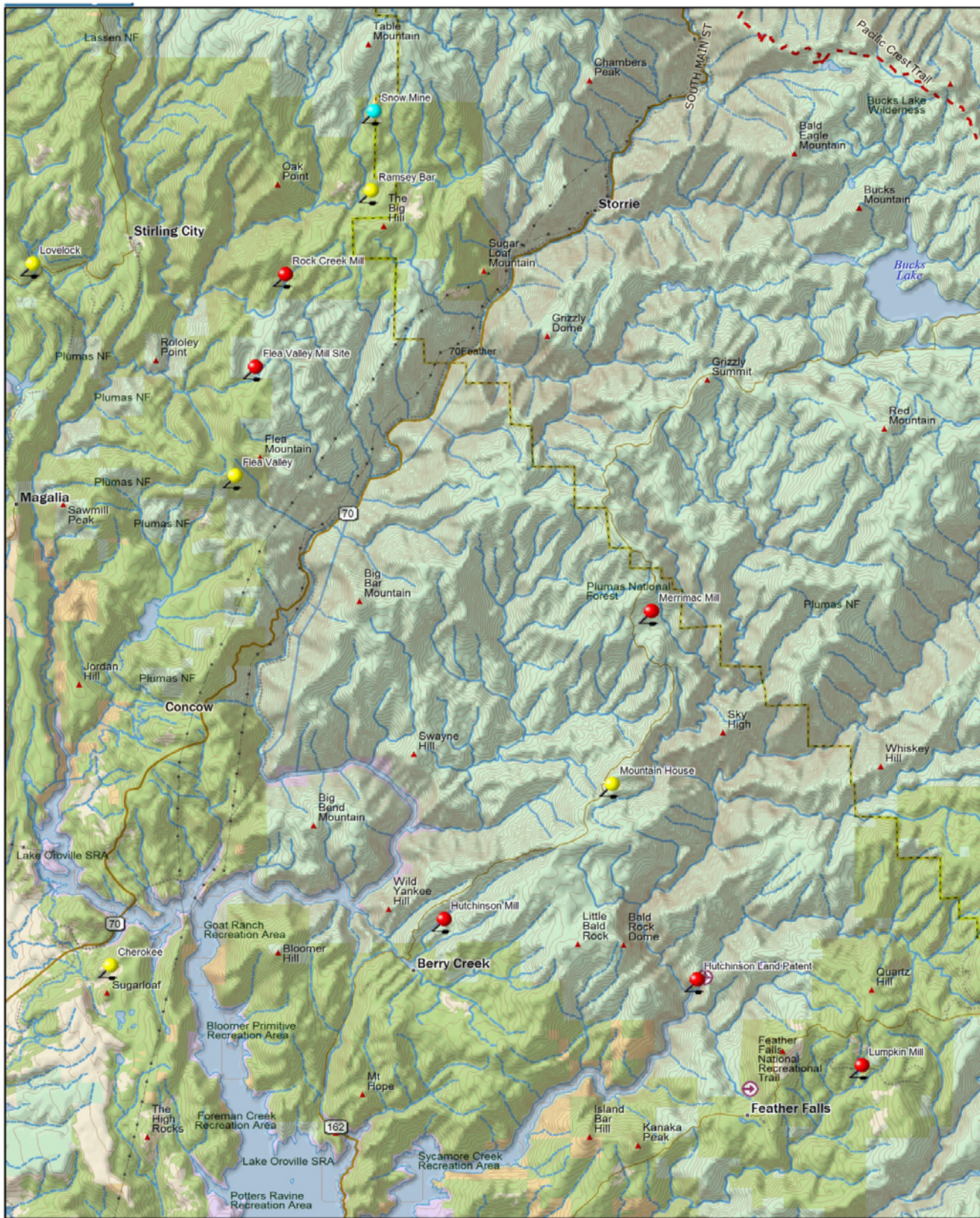
The poor profit returns forced the assets of the Oroville Lumber Company to be sold in April 1882 to Sylvanns Farnham, a banker in Vallejo. His brother Ellison Putnam Farnham had been in the lumber business in Butte County since the mid 1860's, first with a mill at Mountain House. In 1882 he owned a major share in the Lumpkin Lumber Mill which he sold and started the Merrimac Mill in 1883. Soon after acquiring it, Farnham shut down the mill at Flea Valley and removed the equipment, but continued the lumber dump at Pentz. The land at Flea Valley was listed as owner "unknown" in the tax records recorded in late 1883. No equipment was listed in the land's description.

Before the sale to Farnham, Daniel Hilton, former supervisor of the Pentz lumber dump and at the time the President of the Oroville Lumber Company, donated 5 acres of land adjacent to the dump site to the Messilla Valley School District in May 1882 for \$1.00. The school had been relocated to the site in late 1879. Charles Holbrook, the former President of the Oroville Lumber Company continued to operate the lumber dump with a partner named Phelps. They processed and sold lumber at the site. The tax records in 1883 stated they had 10,000,000 board feet in stock valued at \$11,000. The lumber inventory at the dump in 1883 had grown from 1,000,000 board feet in 1882. The assets in 1883 were described as 6 mules, 6 wagons, 12 horses, 20 oxen and 30 tons of hay. The milling machinery at Pentz in 1882 was valued at \$1,000 but it was not listed in 1883, indicating it had been removed.

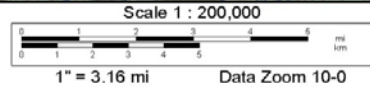
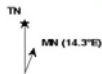
In December 1883 the papers reported the following about the lumber industry in Butte County. "It takes 15 to 20 men a day to produce a carload of lumber. Oroville has shipped 400 carloads in 1883. Each carload holds 10,000 feet of lumber. The cost is from \$23 to \$25 per thousand feet. The cost to haul the lumber by wagon is \$9 to \$10 per thousand feet. On Monday 5 teams drove in lumber from Flea Valley, 12 teams drove in from the Lumpkin Mill. Next year Merrimac Mill at Peavine (Farnham's new venture) will produce 400 carloads."

The Oroville Lumber Company Dump at Pence continued on until late 1884 when it was also closed. The reason the dump at Pence stayed open was possibly because of the Rock Creek Mill, which still existed, and its ability to supply lumber for sale at Pence. Farnham had acquired the rights to the flume from Flea Valley to Pentz when he acquired the Flea Valley mill; it is assumed he tore down the flume before the lumber dump at Pentz closed in 1884. This may have contributed to the large lumber inventory build up at the dump site at the end of 1883. After the dump closed the remaining lumber was probably sold by Farnham via his Merrimac Mill distribution connections.

I could find no references to the Oroville Lumber Company after 1884. It is interesting to note that the property purchased by the Sugar Pine Lumber Company in downtown Oroville in 1877, by 1884 was owned by David Perkins, a previous investor and operated as a lumber yard. Where he acquired his lumber inventory after 1884 is not known. Charles Holbrook, operator of the Oroville Lumber Company, purchased a home in Oakland, Ca in 1880 where his family lived. In 1900 he was listed as manager of a lumber mill in Siskiyou County. In 1895 James Hutchinson operated a mill at Flea Valley, perhaps the old Rock Creek mill; it only operated a few years. Hutchinson purchased land above Berry Creek in 1902 and built a mill there that he ran until about 1916.



- Lumber Mill Site or Land Holdings
- Town or Community Site
- Mining Site



## **Troubles at the Flea Valley Ranch**

In 1875 Augustus Fairbanks married Margaret Kenyon of New York and continued to live on the Flea Valley Ranch. The 1875 tax rolls listed the assets of the ranch as 160 acres valued at \$200, improvements valued at \$300, 1 wagon worth \$25, 2 horses valued at \$60, 4 cows (milk cows) valued at \$80, 6 cattle (beef cows) valued at \$70, 6 hogs valued at \$15, poultry valued at \$8, tools valued at \$12 and furniture valued at \$100, total taxes paid \$17.40. The Fairbanks family would have three children in Flea Valley, Mabel in March 1876, Willard in 1878 and Monroe Sanford Fairbanks in 1879.

Augustus Lorenzo Fairbanks, who lived on the Flea Valley Ranch since 1867 sold his ranch in December 1882 for \$1200 to David Perkins, the owner of the grocery and provisions store in Oroville and an investor in the Flea Valley Lumber operation. The formal land patent request was not applied for by Fairbanks until this time, probably as a condition of sale by Perkins. The sale was probably prompted by his wife leaving him. Fairbanks moved back to Cherokee after the sale. You probably are assuming his wife got tired of living in Flea Valley and moved away, but she purchased the Flea Valley Ranch back from Perkins in February 1883 for \$1050. The hotel must have still been a viable business and a nice place to live. But in 1888 Perkins would sue Mrs. Fairbanks for an unpaid debt of \$1175 resulting in a sheriff's sale and the property reverting back to Perkins. The deed to Perkins stated Margaret (Mary) Fairbanks had remarried and was known as Mary Cowen. I believe she left the area before she remarried. There is no record of a divorce from Fairbanks on file in Butte County. By 1918 she and her two sons were living in San Francisco.

## **Duensing Family Runs the Hotel**

Florence Danforth in her articles published in the 1940's in the Oroville newspapers entitled "Old days in Butte" reported that Betty Duensing operated the Flea Valley Hotel from 1886 to 1907. She states the Duensing family had been living in Flea Valley sometime before that. Betty Duensing divorced her husband George Frederick Duensing in Feb 1894. Betty filed a land Patent in Feb 1894 for 40 acres in Flea Valley adjacent to the old Fairbanks claim. It is unclear when she first inhabited the 40 acres as claims were often filed years later. The Duensing family may have lived on the 40 acres just behind the Flea Valley Ranch in 1886 as the property was also granted to her in the divorce settlement, implying it was a shared asset. Filing the land patent would have formalized the deed.

David Perkins never lived in Flea Valley so allowing Betty Duensing to rent the hotel on the adjacent property during this time would have made good business sense. Betty married Jacob Hottman in Nov 1895. They continued to live at Flea Valley. In 1907 Jacob Hottman died and Betty Duensing Hottman moved to Oroville.

## **Flea Valley Turns to Cattle Ranching**

The Butte County census shows the population for the Little Kimsheew Creek area above Flea Valley dramatically dropped by 1900 as mining was dying out in that area. In 1909 Diamond Match Company built a railroad from Stirling City to Ramsey Bar, five miles above Flea Valley ending near Concow Road, where they had a saw mill. The railroad would have had minimal benefit to the Flea Valley Hotel as the railroad was self sufficient, supplying their employees meals and cabins. The Diamond Match Company operated the railroad and mill until about 1915; the U line road somewhat follows the path of the old rail bed to Stirling City.

In November 1894 David Perkins died after a wagon carrying mining supplies got away from him. As he was standing next to it, the horses spooked and the wagon went off the road running him over. He was alone at the time. His son found him hours later and he died three days later at home, he was 50 years old.

In 1895 the Perkins estate sold 160 acres in Flea Valley located below the old Flea Val-

ley Ranch and hotel to Charles Campbell of Cherokee for \$140. In 1898 Charles Campbell also purchased the adjacent 160 acre Flea Valley Ranch site for \$500. The Campbell family must have continued to let Betty Duensing run the hotel until 1907

The following article talks about herding cattle to the mountains in 1895.

Oroville Register 5-16-1895

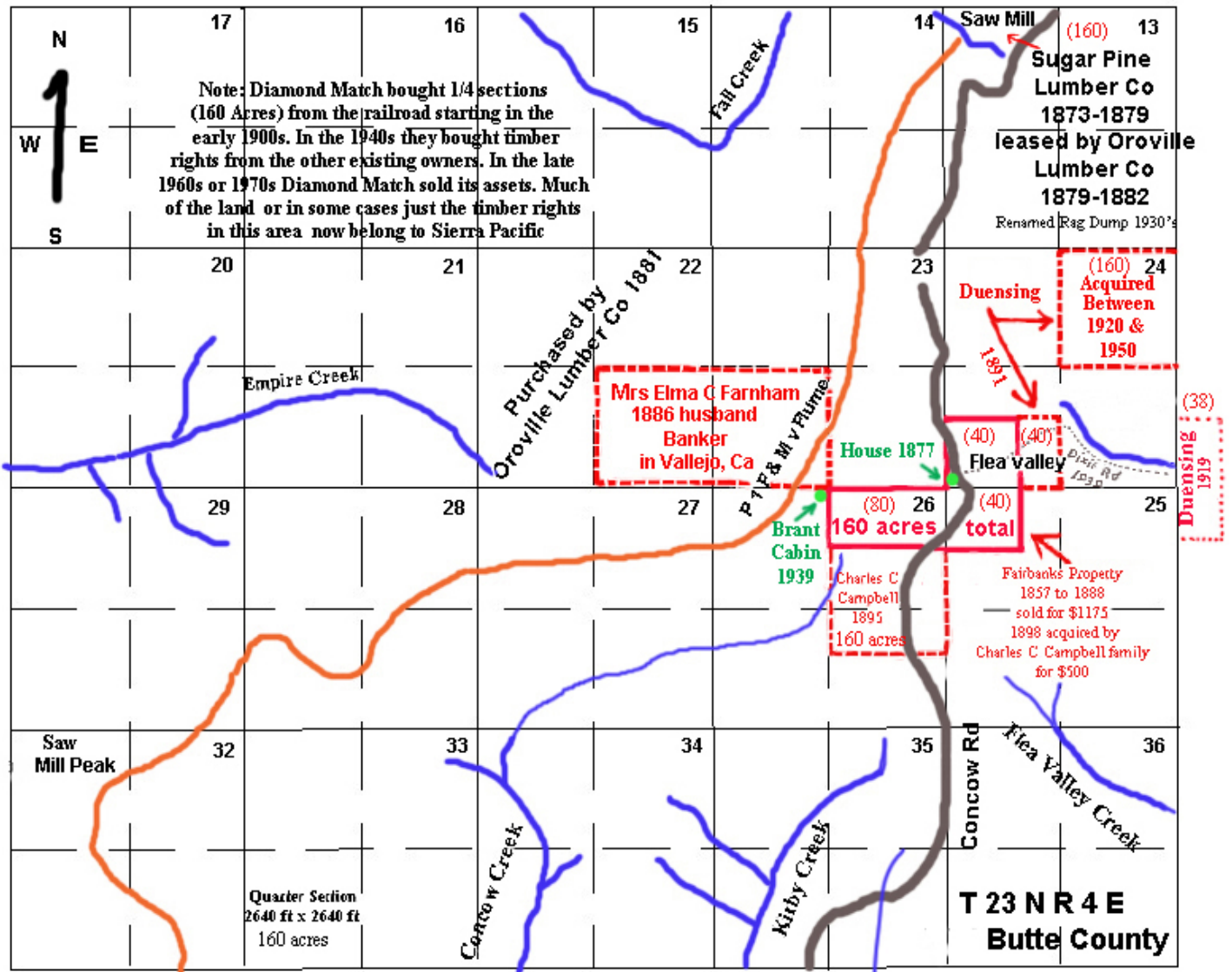
### Cattle in the Mountains.

From Thos. Retson we gather some facts concerning cattle amid the mountains of this county. Mr. Retson and his brother are extensive stock raisers near Table mountain and in summer they drive their stock to the West Branch. They will send up this month about three hundred head. Miller Brothers summer there 600; Jones Brothers of Oregon City, 200; Chas. Campbell 150; H. C. White 150; D. C. Morgan 125; W. H. McKay 150 and Messrs. Elliott, Thompson and Stokes over 100 each, making in all about 2,000 head that range between the West Branch and Golden Summit. The stock fatten on the rich grass and on sweet larch. The seeds of this shrub are very fattening. Only four or five men remain to look after the cattle in summer and few head are ever lost or stolen. Once in a while a bear gets away with one or a California lion makes a meal of a calf. The animals are sent to the range in May and brought back in October.

Between 1900 and 1920 there was a buying spree of property in the Flea Valley area to secure timber rights and cattle grazing land. The Central Pacific Railroad owned 34,000 acres in the Ramsey Bar, Flea Valley and Concow area in 1883. The railroad was selling the land they acquired in the 1870's; several local families as well as the Diamond Match Company were buyers.

About 1915 the Forest Service established a fire lookout at Flea Valley, it operated there until around 1928 when it was moved to Rag Dump, the old Flea Valley Lumber Mill site, where it operated until the early 1930's.

In 1919 the children of Betty Duensing Hottman and George Duensing, George Jr., Adolph and August Duensing purchased an additional 38 acres located on the back side of Flea Mountain for \$10.



In 1939 Diamond Match, who purchased the Sierra Lumber Company in Chico and had acquired large amounts of land in this area around 1902, purchased 5 large trucks so they could haul lumber from the mountains to the Stirling City Mill. The Lodi Sentinel ran an article on the operation and said they could make the trip from Stirling City to Flea Valley in 1 hour; the dirt roads must have been in great shape then, this likely is when the P line road was constructed from Stirling City to Flea Valley.

In 1944 Charles Campbell's widow, Alice Campbell sold Diamond Match the timber rights on the Campbell family property for \$10, probably because their focus was on cattle ranching. With the land cleared they could graze more cattle. As part of the agreement Diamond Match was allowed to tear down any structures on the property. The Flea Valley Hotel was probably taken down then if not before. Diamond Match was also given the right to build a railroad on the Flea Valley property if they so desired, it did not happen.

By 1950 the Duensing family would own another 160 acres in Flea Valley.

In 1950, the 38 acres located behind the Flea Valley Ranch Site was transferred to the Duensing children, one of whom was Katherine Duensing Campbell, the daughter of George Duensing Jr. and the wife of Carrol Campbell. Today the 38 acres in Flea Valley is owned by Dug Ringel and an Uncle. Katherine Campbell was Dug's Grandmother. The site is referred to as the Campbell Meadows.

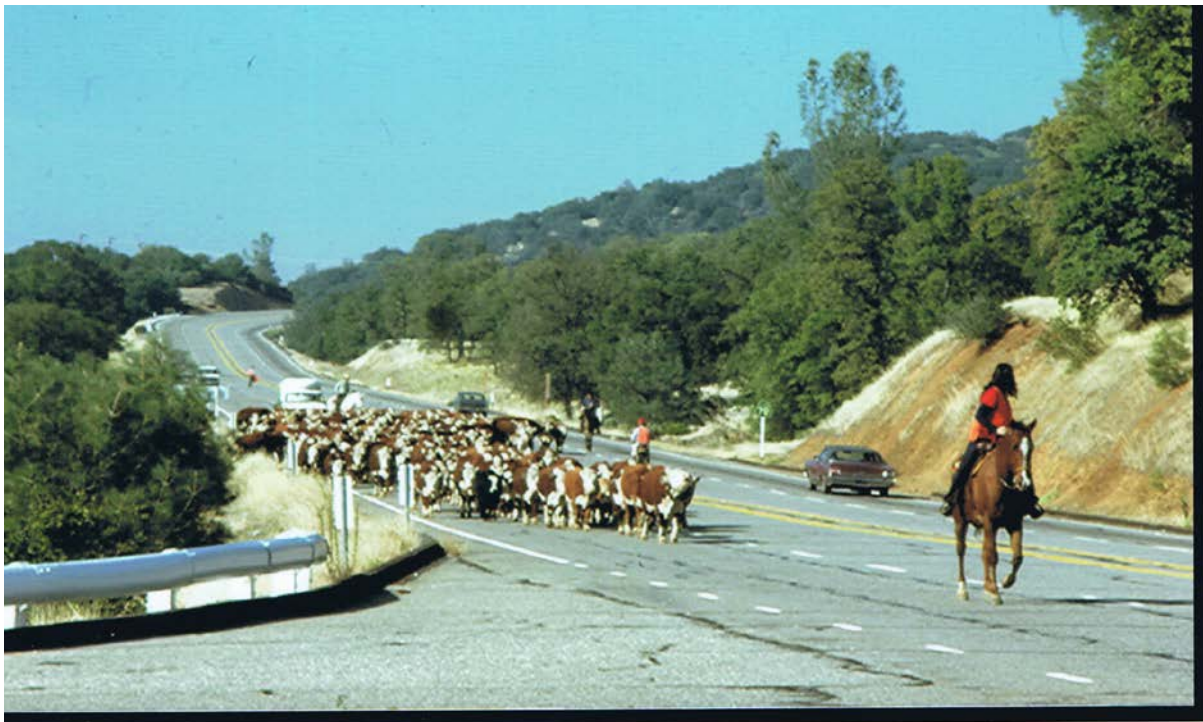


The descendants of the Charles Campbell family still owned the Flea Valley Ranch property in 1974 and the timber rights belong to the Sierra Pacific Lumber Company which purchased them from Diamond Match when the company folded in the late 1960's. The two Campbell families mentioned above are not related: Charles Campbell purchased the Flea Valley Ranch property in 1895, his father John Campbell was from Ireland and settled in Cherokee. The descendants of Katherine (Duensing) and Carrol Campbell, whose family came from Tehama County, inherited the Duensing property.

### **Cattle Drives to Flea Valley Come to an End**

Concow Road was paved from the lake site to its current stopping point in the early 70's to accommodate the development of Camelot and the surrounding areas. Prior to that, that section of road was gravel. Local residents here before 1970 talk of walking from the lake to the old Pines Store located at the intersection of Pinkston Canyon Road and Concow Road and not seeing a single car.

By 1970 the practice of running cattle up to Flea Valley for the summer was becoming less feasible because the construction of highway 70, replacing the old Nelson Bar Road access, resulted in more automobile traffic to contend with. The Flea Valley area itself was also becoming more popular with motorcycle and off road enthusiasts which disturbed the cattle. By the mid 1970's the cattle drives were over. The land at Flea Valley was of little use to the ranchers for summer grazing. Cabins built by the Lynch family, Johnson/Pinkston family, Duensing/Campbell family and other ranching families were abandoned and with time would disappear as had the old hotel. The men and women who lived beyond the end of the pavement on Concow Road for over 50 years are gone now, as are the cabins of the ranchers. Evidence of their presence almost completely erased, just like the Indians that lived there before them. Flea Valley has a single resident now, Howard Goodman living at Rag Dump, the old Flea Valley - Defiance Mill site.



**The last cattle drive - 1975 photo on Highway 70 courtesy of Bob Saville**

## Old Campbell Cow Camp on Flea Mountain

Just as it has for the last one hundred plus years, the wind blows across Flea mountain, rustling through the pines, shaking loose a few dried pine needles to land on the weathered, hand split shingles that cover the outside walls and roof. Most of the wavy glass panes are gone from the windows, allowing the wind to deposit some of the needles inside, on the few remaining rough cut pine floor boards. The only residents now of the aged cabin, are the mice and rats that gather the needles to make their nests in the clapboard cabinet, still barely hanging on the wall, next to where the wood stove once stood. Many of the hand forged square nails still protrude from the walls where they may have held other shelves or provided a place to hang coats and hats. From the claw marks, it looks as though a bear may have taken shelter from the elements numerous times, and ripped things apart.... probably years ago, when the faint smells of spilled food and bacon grease still lingered. Now the aging structure relies on the pine tree to remain standing, but the heavy winter snows will undoubtedly take their toll, and soon only the mountain winds will evidence those thing that were...

Bob Saville



Duensing/Campbell Cabin built sometime after 1919

Photo and Accompanying Text Courtesy of Bob Saville

## **Below is brief information about the practices of finance and real-estate before 1900**

In the 1800's deals were usually made between friends or local businessmen with money rather than with banks. Local banks were basically small lenders. A handshake could seal a deal but if the deal went sour you found a local judge and filed a complaint. If the judge found in your favor, the other defendant's assets would be put up for sale to cover the damages owed. The sale would happen on the court house steps, six months later if the debt had not been settled, the sale was made final and money changed hands and new deeds were recorded. This practice was in effect for many years. There were no bankruptcy laws to protect you if you borrowed money.

Prior to 1862 you filed a land patent to claim land you had occupied and wanted put in your name, the fee was \$15. When the patent was approved by the state government, you were then the rightful owner. Early claims talk of four points on their land as the boundaries, a large rock, a river, a post in the ground, etc. In 1862 the Homestead Act was created which led to counties being divided up into townships each with 36 one square mile numbered sections divided into four 160 acre parcels that you could homestead if you lived on the property and farmed the land. Many people in outlying areas did not file for the land patents or homesteads until they wanted to sell their land in order to save the \$15 and a trip to the county clerk or to avoid taxes. Many early land patents were not filed until the 1870's or even 1880's; even though the claimant had lived on the land for years, some since the 1860's.

In 1862 the railroads could buy up diagonal quarter sections, 160 acres for \$2.50 an acre to finance the building of the railroads (to keep access to the lands open to traffic and allow the public to own land. They could not buy adjoining sections). The lands not needed were later sold by the railroads in the 1870's, 80's and 90's. Many of the railroads held land with valuable timber that was later acquired by people or businesses speculating in lumber. A lot of the land from Concow to Ramsey Bar, including Flea Valley was held by the Central Pacific Railroad (nearly 34,000 acres) and later purchased by Diamond Match from whom it was later acquired by Sierra Pacific Lumber Company.

**Further Reading: In 1996, the Feather River District of the Plumas National Forest Service wrote a report on the Flea Valley Lumber Mill at Rag Dump, researched by Deborah Tibbetts. Copies of the report are available at the Oroville Office. In 1998, Robert Colby wrote an article in the "Tales of The Paradise Ridge" volume 39 #2 about a tour of Rag Dump hosted by Deborah Tibbetts. Copies are available from the Gold Nugget Museum.**

**For further information see the following guide to some of the key characters mentioned in this article with additional information about their lives.**

## **Flea Valley, Rag Dump, Ramsey Bar List of Characters**

**Arbuckle, James Monroe** – Born in 1820 in Vermont. He lived in Butte County from 1867 to 1897; he was living in Cherokee in 1867. In 1868 he shared a mortgage on the Flea Valley Ranch with Augustus Fairbanks. His neighbors in Cherokee were A.J. Foster, Hiram Clemons, Henry Fairbanks and Manoah Pence. He died in 1897 at Pentz. He is buried in the Clear Creek Cemetery.

**Boynton, Albert Eugene** – Born in Oct 1875 in Oroville, A.E. Boynton acquired the old saw mill site in Flea Valley sometime after 1882 and sold it to Henry C White, a miner and stock raiser in Oregon City in 1904 for \$10. Boynton, a lawyer by trade, died in 1945 in San Francisco.

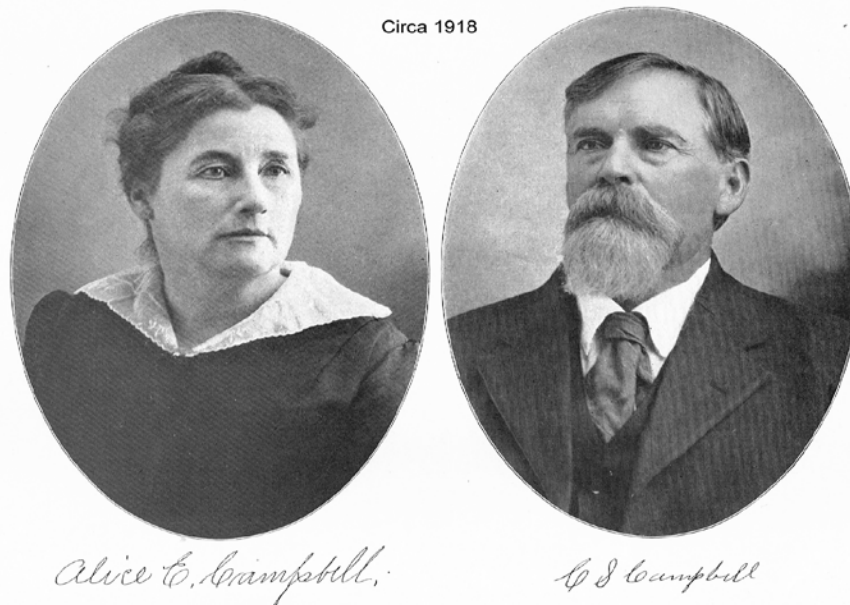
**Brock, Joseph** – Born in 1830 in New Hampshire, he came to Oroville in the early 1850's where he opened a successful hardware and mining supply business. He invested in several businesses in the area including the Bidwell Bridge and Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company. He acquired the assets of the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in 1878 at a sheriff's sale for \$94,716 as a settlement for debt owed him by the corporation. Brock held onto the assets and leased out the mill. He became ill in 1882 and made his clerk a partner in the Oroville business allowing him to move to Oakland, where he died in Nov 1889. It appears Brock turned the assets over to the Oroville Lumber Company of which he was a partner along with several others. The actual money transfer from the 1878 sale may have been far less than the \$94,716 mentioned above.



**Callow, Thomas** – Born in 1824 on the Isle of Man, he owned the Ohio Livery Stable in Oroville with George Stevens. He and his partner's estate sold the lot in Oroville located at Bird and Huntoon to the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in 1877 for \$2,000 for a lumber yard. It appears he died around 1890.

**Campbell, Carrol** – Born in 1893 in Butte County, his father was Andrew Jackson Campbell from Tehama, Ca, Carrol married Katherine Duensing about 1925. Carrol's grandparents were from Missouri, his father from Tehama County. Katherine inherited some of the Duensing property at Flea Valley, a 38 acre section purchased in 1919. Dugald Ringle, Katherine's Grandson, now owns the property with an Uncle; the area is called Campbell Meadows. (Note: Carrol Campbell and Charles Campbell are not related)

**Campbell, Charles S** – Born in 1853 in Michigan, his father John Campbell was from Ireland and lived in Cherokee. Charles purchased 160 acres in Flea Valley in 1895 located below the Flea Valley Ranch for \$140. He purchased the 160 acre Flea Valley Ranch property in 1898 for \$500. In 1944 his widow sold the timber rights to the Diamond Match Lumber Company and gave them the right to tear down all the structures on the property as well as the option to put a railroad on the site if they desired to do so. In 1974 the property was still with Charles Campbell's descendants and the timber rights held by Sierra Pacific Lumber. (Note: Carrol Campbell and Charles Campbell are not related)



**Clemons, Hiram** – Born in 1820 in Vermont. Lived in Butte County from 1867 to 1897, was living in Cherokee in 1867, neighbors with A.J. Foster, James Arbuckle, Henry Fairbanks and Manoah Pence. He was partners with Lucius Snow in mining ventures on the Little Kimshe River above Flea Valley. Owned Flea Valley Ranch and hotel from 1861 to 1865 when he went broke. He married Lucy B Buxton in Aug 1862 at the ranch, they later divorced.

**Cohen, N** - Not much is known about Cohen. He was an investor in the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in 1878, probably from out of this area and related to S Cohen, probably brought in by another investor.

**Cohen, S** - Not much is known about Cohen. He invested in the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in 1878, probably from out of this area and related to N Cohen, probably brought in by another investor.

**Duensing, Betty** – Wife of George Duensing was born in 1857 in Sweden and immigrated to the US in 1872. She married George Frederick Duensing in 1874, they had 7 children. Betty Duensing managed the Flea Valley hotel from 1886 to 1907. In Feb 1894 Betty filed a land patent for 40 acres behind the hotel on the left side of Flea Mountain. Betty Duensing divorced George F Duensing in Feb 1894,

retaining custody of the four living children; three had died within the last two years and were buried at the Thompson Flat Cemetery. Betty married Jacob Miller Hottman in Nov 1895. They lived at Flea Valley until Jacob died in 1907. Later, Betty left Flea Valley and moved to Oroville where some time much later she married Harry Summers. Betty died in 1928 and is buried in the Thompson Flat Cemetery.

**Fairbanks, Augustus Lorenzo** – Born in 1829 in Vermont. He was the brother of Henry Augustus Fairbanks. In 1863 he lived in Cherokee with his brother. In 1867 he purchased the Flea Valley Ranch with James Arbuckle, which was first founded by his brother, Henry Fairbanks. They purchased the ranch from Garratt Tebbe for \$500. In 1868 Arbuckle sells his half to Fairbanks who now owns the entire ranch. In 1875 tax rolls indicate he had 1 wagon, 2 horses, 4 cows, 6 head of cattle, 6 hogs, some chickens and furniture valued at \$100. He died around 1900, possibly buried in Sacramento where his daughter Mabel (Fairbanks) Heim lived. Mabel, born in 1876, along with her two brothers, Willard, born in 1878 and Monroe, born in 1879 were all born at Flea Valley.



**Fairbanks, Henry Augustus** – Born in 1830 in Vermont. He was the younger brother to Augustus Lorenzo Fairbanks. Henry lived in Frenchtown in 1857 when he said he would open a hotel in Flea Valley with a man name Sanford. In 1858 the tax records indicate he had 160 acres and had made \$1500 in improvements. (A house usually was valued at \$150 - \$200 dollars at that time.) Henry would sell ½ his interest in the Flea valley property in 1860 and the other ½ in 1861. He later bought property in Cherokee next to Manoah Pence's place. He was secretary for the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company in 1876 and later Secretary for the Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining Company. He moved to Anderson, Ca about 1881 and died there in June 1902.

**Fairbanks, Margaret (Mary)** – Born in 1849 in New York she marries Augustus Lorenzo Fairbanks in 1875, together they have three children at Flea Valley Ranch. She leaves Fairbanks; in 1882 he sells the ranch for \$1200 to David Perkins. Margaret, his estranged wife, buys the ranch back 2 months later for \$1075 from Perkins. She later marries a man named Cowen about 1886-87. They apparently left the area and defaulted on payments and the Flea Valley Ranch is taken back by Perkins in 1888. He

holds onto it until his estate starts selling it off in 1895. In 1895 and 1898 Charles Campbell buys the Flea Valley land. Mary (Fairbanks) Cowen, along with her two sons lived in San Francisco in 1918.

**Farnham, Ellison Putnam** - Oroville Lumber Company assets sold to Sylvanns Cobb Farnham, a banker in Solano County. The following described property: All of Section No. 22; NW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 24; N1/2 of NE 1/4 Section 28; all in Township 23, Range 4 East. Also SE 1/4 of NE 1/4; and East 1/2 of SE 1/4 of Section 24, Township 21 North, Range 4 East (Pentz lumber dump site). Also the North half of Block 71 in the Town of Oroville, Butte County according to the Official map of the Town site of Oroville. Also the Defiance Mill equipment on Section No. 13, Township 23, North Range 4 East. Also a certain canal, ditch and flume conveying water from Rock Creek to said Defiance Mill with all water rights and privileges belonging to or in anywise connected therewith. Also the Williams and Vinton Ditch: also a certain "V" flume and ditch conveying water from said Defiance Mill to the Dump at or near Pence's Ranch with all water rights and privileges ascertaining thereto or connected therewith..." Daniel Hilton President, F.D. Mead Secretary of Oroville Lumber Company.

**Note:** S.C. Farnham was a banker in Vallejo and the brother of Ellison P. Farnham of Oroville who purchased a 1/2 interest in a saw mill at Mountain House in 1864 with Joshua Turner and later opened a lumber yard in Oroville. He then purchased the Lumpkin Sawmill which had been built in 1870 and later sold by Farnham in Nov 1882 to William Kitrick. Farnham was also involved with the Merrimac Mill in 1883, (Merrimac had a post office from 1883 to 1902). He sold those assets in Apr 1889 to the Merrimac Mill Company, a corporation, for \$30,000. Ellison P. Farnham died in Feb 1905 and is buried in the Old Oroville Cemetery. His brother Sylvanns C Farnham died in 1883 in Solano County.



Ellison Putnam Farnham

Courtesy of the Butte County Historical Society

**Foster, A.J.** – Born in 1833 in Illinois. Lived in Butte County from about 1858 to about 1870, a machinist by trade his net worth is listed as \$7,000 in 1870. He loaned Henry Fairbanks \$760 on the Flea Valley Ranch in 1858, accepting 80 acres as payment in 1860. One month later he sold his half interest in the ranch along with his ranch near Cherokee for \$770 to Manoah Pence. He lived in Cherokee in 1867; his neighbors were James Arbuckle, Hiram Clemons, Henry Fairbanks and Manoah Pence. He moved to Santa Clara, Ca in 1880.

**Heckart, John Adam** – Born in 1813 in Pennsylvania, Heckart was a millwright and mechanic by trade. He was living in the Oregon Township/Pentz area in 1870, prior to that he was in Iowa. In 1876 he and Columbus Leaman filed a patent at Pence's Ranch for a flume cart to be used on water flumes as a means of transportation. The unique design allowed the cart to travel both up and down the flume under its own power. He died in Sept 1897. He, his wife Elizabeth and his family are buried in the Clear Creek Cemetery.

**Hilton, Daniel** – Born in 1832 in Maine, Hilton arrived in the Oroville area around 1852 where he took up mining. Hilton filed a land patent in Apr 1882 claiming 80 acres on both sides of Messilla Valley Road in Pentz where the lumber dump was located in 1874. He must have turned 75 acres over to the Oroville Lumber Company because the company authorized Hilton, who was President of the firm at the time to sell off the land in May 1882, see S.C. Farnham. He also donated 5 acres for the Messilla Valley School that same month; the school had been on the land since June 1879. Hilton died in July 1918 and is buried in the old Oroville Cemetery.

**Hobbs, Hans Patten** – Born in 1830 in Maine, he lived in Cherokee. H.P. Hobbs was an original investor in the Flea Valley Lumber project; he sold his 1/6th interest in 1874 to McGrath for \$300. In 1880 he lived in Gilroy, Ca. where he was secretary for a lumber company.

**Holbrook, Charles H.** – Born in 1847 in Maine, in 1878 he leased the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining facilities in Flea Valley under the name The Oroville Lumber Company which was owned by Joseph Brock and several others, Daniel Hilton was the President. After the Oroville Lumber Company sold off its holdings in 1882, Holbrook ran the finishing mill and lumber yard at the Pentz lumber dump with a man named Phelps for several years. The business shut down in 1884. Holbrook in 1900 was foreman at a mill in Siskiyou County. Holbrook and his wife moved to Oakland and later San Francisco where he died in 1909, she died in 1924; they are buried in the Chico Cemetery.

**Hutchinson, James Alexander** – Born in 1843 in Nova Scotia, he immigrated to the United States in 1860 and was naturalized in 1876 in Monterey. Hutchinson operated a lumber mill at Flea Valley from 1895 until about 1896. In 1887 he patented 160 acres near Lumpkin Saw Mill which he sold to the Lumpkin Mill partners for \$500. In 1898 he operated a saw mill at Brush Creek near Mountain House. In 1902 he built his own saw mill just above Berry Creek which he operated until about 1916. He died in 1922 in Oroville where he is buried.

**Leaman, Columbus Augustus** – Born 7 Mar 1803 in Maryland, he was a farmer in 1870 at Rough and Ready, Ca before coming to Chico. In 1876 he and John Heckart filed a patent at Pence's Ranch for a flume cart to be used on water flumes as a means of transportation. The unique design allowed the cart to travel both up and down the flume under its own power. Leamon died in Oct 1899 and is buried in the Chico Cemetery along with his wife Mary and brother Washington Jefferson Leamon

**Logan, James C** – Born in Illinois, he was in Oroville in 1870. He was listed as a grocer in 1880. He was an investor in the Sugar Pine Lumber Company in 1878. He apparently left Butte County by 1890



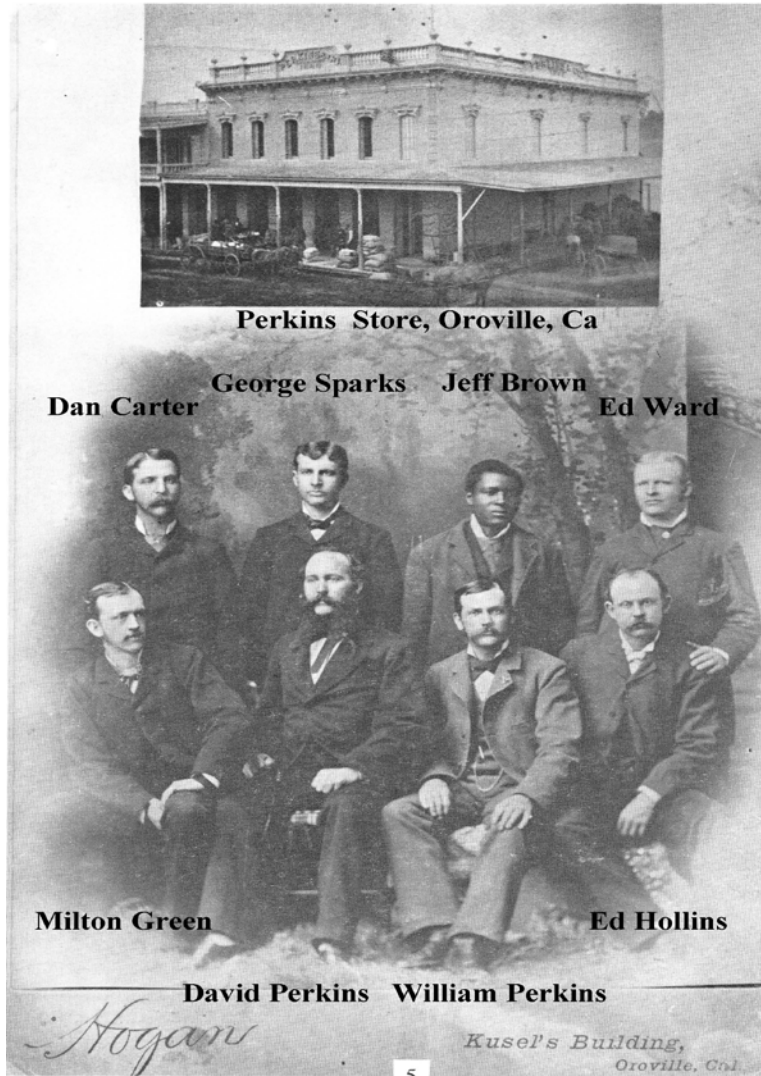
**McGrath, Eugene** – Born in 1848 in Vermont he lived in Cherokee. He was one of the founders of the Flea Valley Mill project in 1873. He had previously worked for the Sierra Lumber Company. He apparently sold out his interests in the Flea Valley mill around 1876. He later was a principle owner in the Rock Creek Lumber, Flume and Mining Company located on Little Rock Creek above Flea Valley. He continued gold mining in the area until about 1891. He moved to San Jose where he supervised a mining company (New Almaden Mines?). He died in San Jose, Ca in 1929.

**Orr, John Gray** – Born in 1841 in Illinois he lived in Cherokee where is listed as a laborer. Orr would be owed money by Hiram Clemons which forced Clemons to sell the Flea Valley Ranch in 1865 to Gerhardt Tebbe. Orr was an original investor in the Flea Valley Mill project; he sold his 1/6 for \$400 in 1873. In 1880 he was in Kern, Ca. where he was a carpenter.

**Pence, Manoah** – Born in 1819 in Ohio. He lived in Butte County from about 1850 to June 1882. In 1867 his neighbors in Cherokee were A.J. Foster, James Arbuckle, Hiram Clemons and Henry Fairbanks. He purchased half interest in the Flea Valley Ranch from A.J. Foster in 1860 along with Foster's Cherokee ranch for \$770. He sold the Flea Valley property one month later for \$1,000 to Hiram Clemons. He sold Foster's Ranch in Cherokee to Henry Fairbanks in Sept 1862 for \$1,000 as well, realizing a total profit of \$1,230. In May 1875 he was granted a land patent on 400 acres in Mesilla Valley. He died at his ranch from a sudden chill in June 1882. He is buried in the Cherokee Cemetery. His wife, Sophia and child, Watt Manoah Pence Jr. moved to Paradise in late 1892 after the ranch was sold at a Sheriff's sale in June 1891 for \$6180 and the assets transferred in Feb 1892 to repay an outstanding mortgage. Sophia and Watt Pence are both buried in the cemetery in Paradise.

**Perkins, David R** – Born in 1843 in Maine, brother to George Perkins started as a clerk around 1870 and later took over the grocery and provisions store in Oroville started by his brother until his death in Nov 1893. He lost control and was run over by a wagon carrying mining supplies, dying three days later. He invested in several businesses in the area including the Abetine Medicine Company at Balsam Hill and Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Company. He purchased the Flea Valley Ranch and hotel from Augustus Fairbanks in 1882 for \$1200. He also ended up with the lumber yard in Oroville on Bird and Huntoon St which he continued to operate until his death. The firm Perkins and Wise in 1898 sold some of the assets, including property in Flea Valley, to L.L. Green for \$1.00 to act as their sale agent. The property was later sold to Charles S. Campbell. L.L. Green worked for a bank in Oroville and was the brother of Milton Green, Perkin's bookkeeper in 1880 who married Joseph Brock's daughter, May Brock. David Perkins died in Oroville. He is buried in the old Oroville Cemetery. **See photo next page**

**Perkins, George C** – Born in 1839 in Maine, Settled in Oroville around 1850 opened a grocery and provisions store which was very successful. Governor of California from 1880 to 1883, Oroville business run by his brother and partner, David Perkins. George died in Oakland in Feb 1923.



David R Perkins and staff of the Oroville store

(Photo courtesy of the Butte County Historical Society)

**Ramsey, William** – Born in 1832 in Germany, Ramsey lived in Yankee Hill in 1860. In 1865 he was hurt by a dynamite blast while mining on the Little KimsheW, above Flea Valley which nearly blinded him. In 1872 he filed a claim with William Ryan on Little KimsheW Creek. In 1880 his residence was listed as Concow, Ca. He died around 1885. Ramsey Bar is named after his mining claim.

**Ritchie, John** – Little is known about him other than he lived in Cherokee and was one of the founders of the Flea Valley Mill project in 1873 with Eugene McGrath. He sold out his 1/6th share for \$500 before the mill was built. It appears he left the area soon after.

**Sanford, Unknown** – Little is known about him other than he had a cabin at Flea Valley and was going to open a hotel with Henry Augustus Fairbanks in Flea Valley in 1857. By 1860 he was no longer in the area and his name does not appear on any tax records in 1858.

**Snow, Lucius A** – Born in 1827 in Massachusetts in 1860 he was partners with Hiram Clemons in a mining venture on the Little Kimshew River above Flea Valley. Later, after 1865, went on alone to run a successful mining operation as sole owner for years above Flea Valley. He also made shingles in Little Kimshew and sold them in Concow. The tax roles for 1867 indicated he had 2 mining claims, a wagon valued at \$50, 2 American horses valued at \$150, 2 Spanish horses valued at \$40, 2 cows and a calf valued at \$35, 4 jackass valued at \$40 and 8 hogs valued at \$25. His furniture was valued at \$50, merchandise (shingles?) valued at \$150 and lumber valued at \$60. He died in 1923 and is buried in Lovelock.

**Stevens, George** - Born in 1833 in Michigan, owned the Ohio Livery Stable in Oroville with Thomas Callow. He and his partner sold the lot in Oroville located at Bird and Huntoon to the Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and mining Company for \$2,000 upon his death in Mar 1877 for a lumber yard. He was also an investor in the corporation. He is buried in the Old Oroville Cemetery.

**Tebbe, Gerhardt** – Born in 1832 in Prussia, Tebbe immigrated to the United States in May 1862. He was a miner by trade. He married Mary Sauer in 1864 and buys the Flea Valley Ranch in March 1865, just after their first child, Ida Rosetta Tebbe is born. Sold at a sheriff's sale for \$1098, Hiram Clemons sold the ranch to settle a debt owed to John C. Orr of Cherokee. The Tebbe family had six children; in Oct 1866 George Tebbe is born at the Flea Valley Ranch. In 1867 Gerhardt sold the Flea Valley Ranch. Tebbe later moved to Deadwood where he built a hotel and sanitarium at the intersection of Deadwood Road and Concow Road. In 1871 Ida, his daughter, died at Deadwood. In 1884 Mrs. Tebbe would also die at Deadwood. Tebbe sold the Deadwood Hotel/Sanitarium to Dr Ah Sang around 1888. Gerhardt died in Jan 1897 while mining in Trinity County when a reservoir above him broke and he drowned. Members of the Tebbe family are buried near the old sanitarium site in Concow.



Gerhard and Ellen Mary(Sauer)Tebbe



Ida Rossetta Tebbe

**Thunen, William** – Born in Prussia and a Blacksmith by occupation he and his wife Johanna Tebbe, the sister of Gerhardt Tebbe, lived in Flea Valley for a little over a year. In 1867 they moved to Cherokee where he worked for the mines. They had 11 children, Charles Thunen; their third child was born at Flea Valley in May 1865. William Thunen died in 1895 at Cherokee and Johanna Tebbe Thunen died in 1923 in Oakland. Wm Thunen Jr., born in 1871 was a photographer in Oroville. Many members of the Thunen family are buried at the Cherokee Cemetery.



**Johanna Tebbe Thunen (Seated) and family 1901 Oroville, Ca**  
(Gerhard Tebbe's sister) Photo by Wm Thunen

**Willit, Joseph** – Little is known of him other than he sold a cabin and mining claim on Fall Creek, known as the Rowbore & Stanley claim to Sugar Pine Lumber, Flume and Mining Co. in 1874 for \$75

**Wolf, Abram** – Cherokee merchant who owned 25% of the Rock Creek saw mill above Flea Valley in 1877 and was its President. He died in Feb 1878. After his death there was a lawsuit over a loan made to Wolf by John Davis, a miner in Cherokee. Wolf used the mill's assets for collateral on his personal loan without the stockholders consent. Davis sued for the mill's assets. The case was thrown out of court.

**Origin of the Name Rag Dump** - First considered part of Flea Valley it was later called Rag Dump Circle on the 1939 county map. Several stories are circulating as to how the name came about but the common thread is that the people there in the 20's and 30's lived in tents. The term "dump" may be because the location was in bad shape with minimal facilities or that it was the lumber dump and truck turnaround for Diamond Match trucks which first started making trips there in 1939.

## **Yankee Hill Historical Society Officers and Contact Information**

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**Vice President:** *Marji Corey*

**Treasurer:** *Debbie Ingvaldsen*

**Secretary:** *Don Saul*

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**We are always looking for photographs and further information about the area from Pulga to Pence. If you have information on this or any of our stories in the Yankee Hill Dispatch please contact us. All comments or corrections are welcome and appreciated.**

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