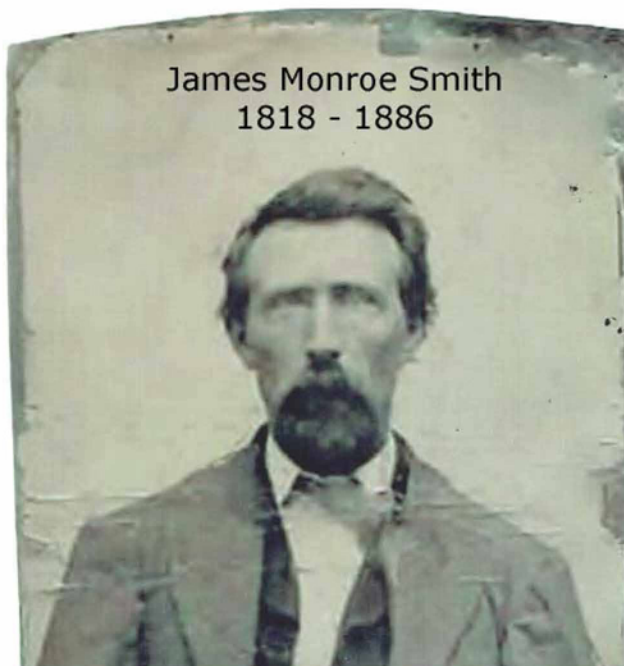


Yankee Hill Historical Society

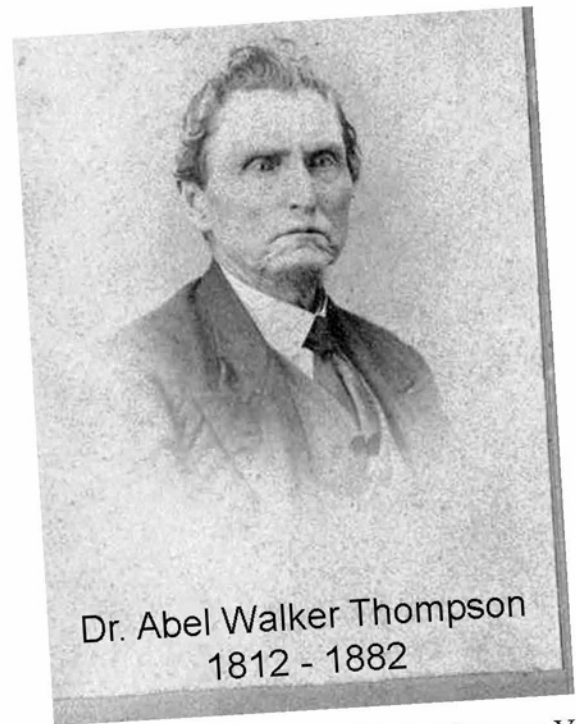
yankeehillhistory.com

A PRESENTATION ON

RICH GULCH, FRENCHTOWN AND SPANISHTOWN, THE PREDECESSORS TO YANKEE HILL.

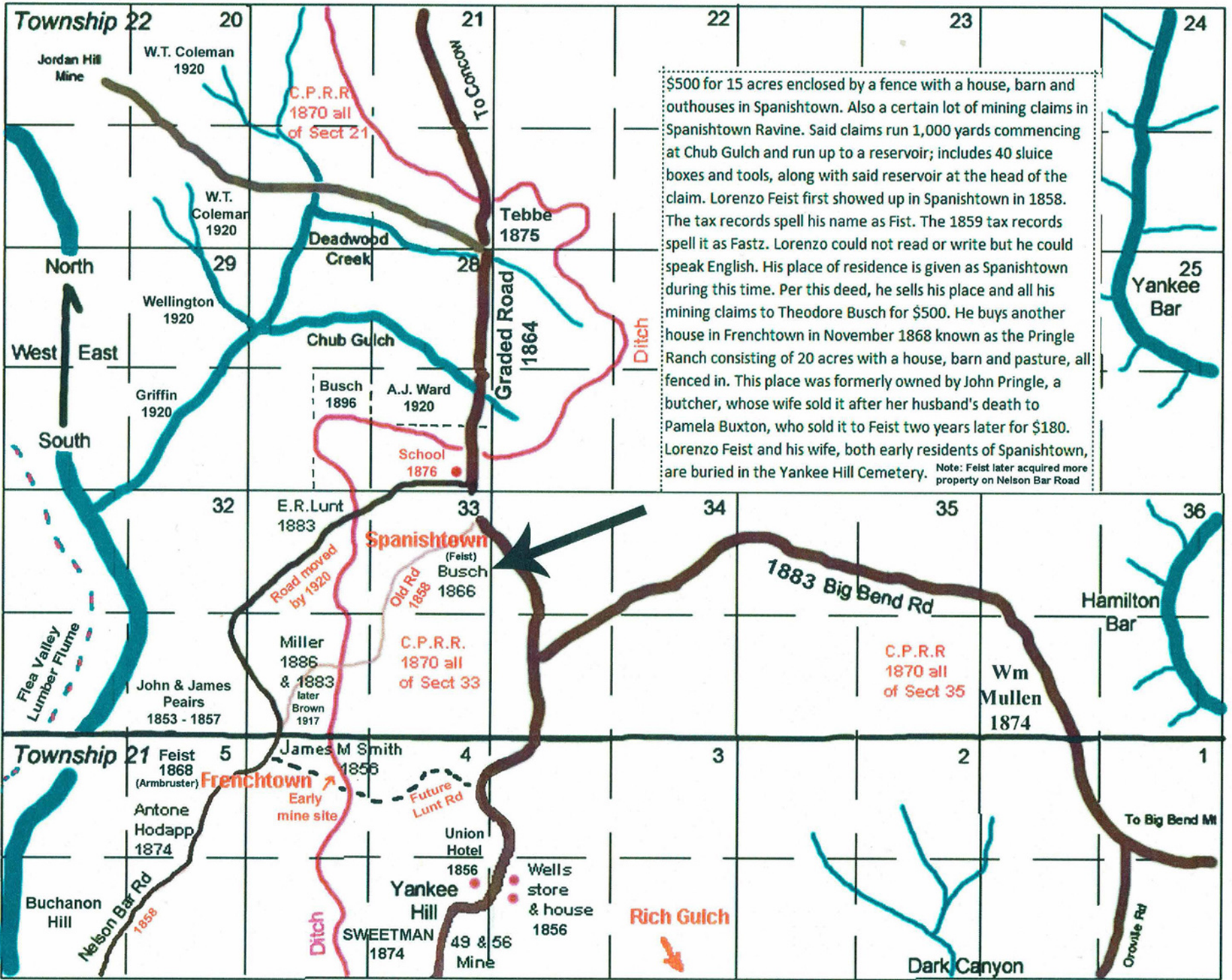


James Monroe Smith settled in Frenchtown in 1852. He operated a bowling alley and a bar. His home was near Nelson Bar Rd and Lunt Rd. He is buried in the Lunt Family Cemetery.



Dr Abel Thompson settled in the Concow Valley in 1852. He farmed on property that later became part of the Concow Campground. He is buried in the Cherokee Cemetery

January 1853, Frenchtown - New and rich diggings have just been discovered between the West Branch and the North Fork of Feather River. Coyote Diggings at Frenchtown and Flat Diggings at **Rich Gulch**, one mile from Frenchtown, which have been opened less than a week, yield from one to four ounces per day, to the hand. One lump of pure gold, taken from Coyote Diggings at Frenchtown weighed \$129. Some very rich quartz veins are in the neighborhood, which have never been worked.



\$500 for 15 acres enclosed by a fence with a house, barn and outhouses in Spanishtown. Also a certain lot of mining claims in Spanishtown Ravine. Said claims run 1,000 yards commencing at Chub Gulch and run up to a reservoir; includes 40 sluice boxes and tools, along with said reservoir at the head of the claim. Lorenzo Feist first showed up in Spanishtown in 1858. The tax records spell his name as Fist. The 1859 tax records spell it as Fastz. Lorenzo could not read or write but he could speak English. His place of residence is given as Spanishtown during this time. Per this deed, he sells his place and all his mining claims to Theodore Busch for \$500. He buys another house in Frenchtown in November 1868 known as the Pringle Ranch consisting of 20 acres with a house, barn and pasture, all fenced in. This place was formerly owned by John Pringle, a butcher, whose wife sold it after her husband's death to Pamela Buxton, who sold it to Feist two years later for \$180. Lorenzo Feist and his wife, both early residents of Spanishtown, are buried in the Yankee Hill Cemetery.

Note: Feist later acquired more property on Nelson Bar Road

Township 22

Jordan Hill Mine
W.T. Coleman 1920

W.T. Coleman 1920

North

West East

South

Wellington 1920

Griffin 1920

Flea Valley Lumber Flume

John & James Peairs 1853 - 1857

Township 21

Feist 1868 (Armbuster)

Antone Hodapp 1874

Buchanan Hill

Nelson Bar Rd 1858

5

Frenchtown

James M Smith 1856

Early mine site

Union Hotel 1856

Yankee Hill

SWEETMAN 1874

49 & 56 Mine

Wells store & house 1856

Rich Gulch

Dark Canyon

3

2

1

To Big Bend M

Route Rd

36

Hamilton Bar

Wm Mullen 1874

1883 Big Bend Rd

C.P.R.R. 1870 all of Sect 35

35

34

33

Spanishhtown (Feist) Busch 1866

Old Rd 1858

C.P.R.R. 1870 all of Sect 33

Miller 1886 & 1883 later Brown 1917

Road moved by 1920

E.R. Lunt 1883

32

28

Deadwood Creek

Chub Gulch

Busch 1896

A.J. Ward 1920

School 1876

Graded Road 1864

Tebbe 1875

Ditch

23

22

21

To Concord

20

24

Yankee Bar

The Original Frenchtown Site



James Monroe Smith Family



James Monroe Smith and Mary Caroline Tucker were married in September 1851 in Virginia. Soon after they left Virginia and headed to California. Soon after they resided in Rich Gulch, California. It is said Mary cooked Christmas dinner for the miners at Rich Gulch. They also established a store there. The family then decided to move to Dogtown (Magalia), leaving behind their store in Rich Gulch. It was probably before the gold strike in January 1853 in Frenchtown and Rich Gulch. In Dogtown they operated the Smith store. In May 1854 their first child, Nancy Frances Smith, was born in Dogtown. But the family soon afterwards decided to return to the area in Rich Gulch they had lived in earlier, which by then was known as Frenchtown. James Monroe Smith opened a bar/bowling alley in Frenchtown. The store the family previously started was still in operation with a new owner. Their second child, Steven Thomas Smith, was born in April 1856. The family would grow with five more children, three girls (Mary, Ella and Martha) and two more boys (George and James) while living in Frenchtown. In 1859 the tax records show the family home located at the intersection of Nelson Bar Road and Lunt Road, consisted of 20 acres. Mary was listed as the legal owner. James Monroe's wife Mary had declared in Nov 1856 she would carry on her own affairs and be legally responsible for all her own debt. This was likely due to James Monroe's nickname "Red Eye", presumably because of the time he spent in the bar/bowling alley.

Peairs Ranch



James Peairs was born in 1828 in Pennsylvania and Joseph Peairs, his cousin, was born in 1829 in Ohio. They both settled in Frenchtown about 1852. They each took out adjoining 160-acre parcels of land. In the early 1850's ditches were being dug throughout Butte County at a fast pace to support mining in the higher elevations. In 1854 the Peairs cousins started digging a ditch from Concow Creek to bring water to the Frenchtown area to support their own ranching operations as well as the local mining operations. The ditch was reported as complete in Dec 1854. Life in Frenchtown would be forever changed with the arrival of year-round water. In 1857 the cousins sold the ditch to the Frenchtown Canal and Mining Company for \$200. Tax records indicate at the time they had 71 sheep, 25 Hogs and 2 cows. The next year the cousins sold their ranch. Both men were successful ranchers, James lived in Monterey and died in 1913. Joseph lived in Vallejo where he had a ranch. He died when he was 46 years old in 1875. More than likely it was the Peairs cousins that named the area Frenchtown in 1853.

J.I. Steward



Joseph Ireland Steward
1828 - 1911



Lydia Ann (Garcelon) Steward
1829 - 1931

Joseph Ireland Steward and his wife Lydia came to Frenchtown in late 1853 or early 1854. In 1854 the store was a meeting place for several citizens of the area concerned about the treatment of the local Indians. They wrote an article to the local paper expressing their concerns and said if authorities did not take action against those mistreating the Indians, the attendees of the meeting would be forced to take the law into their own hands. It appears the difficulties subsided for awhile. Unfortunately, Steward's financial backers in Marysville would foreclose on him and the store's contents were auctioned off in July 1856. For a brief time he operated the Pioneer Hotel in Frenchtown where a post office was installed in Feb 1857. But Frenchtown was becoming a quiet ranching community. Yankee Hill, a short distance away, was still an active mining area drawing more people. Steward's hotel venture failed. Steward would later manage a hotel in Cherokee before moving to Chico and managing the Union Hotel. Steward eventually moved his family to Redlands, Ca in 1898 where he retired. He passed away in 1911. His wife Lydia lived to be 102, passing away in 1931.

The Miller Family



Photo Courtesy of Genevieve (Smith) Brown Photo Circa late 1930's

Home built by Joseph Miller on Nelson Bar Road in 1883.
Purchased by Lyman Brown in 1917. The Brown family sold the property in 1948 to Stanley Worcester. The home burned in 2000



Josie Miller 1869-1885

Photo Courtesy of Jane (Lunt) Homen

The Miller family emigrated to the United States from Germany in the early 1850's. The family name was pronounced Mueller in Germany. Four of the brothers came to Butte County: Ignatz, Thomas, Joseph and Wendelin. A fifth brother, Antone, would later settle in Woodland, Ca. Ignatz and Thomas settled here first. Ignatz (1860 census states Enoch) was in Frenchtown on Nelson Bar Road in 1855 and Thomas in Cherokee in 1860. Together they operated a successful cattle ranch in Frenchtown and a butcher shop in Cherokee supplying meat to the miners. Ignatz moved to Cincinnati in 1862, selling the business to two of his brothers. Thomas also left the area for parts unknown. Ignatz's brother, Joseph Miller, moved to Frenchtown and raised cattle. His other brother, Wendelin, lived with Joseph for many years while operating the butcher shop in Cherokee. Joseph Miller married Julie Benjamin in 1868. He and his wife had a daughter, Josie Miller, in 1869. They also had a son born in 1873 named Wendel Joseph Miller. In July 1883, Joseph built a two story house in Frenchtown just down the road from the 1882 Smith/Lunt home that still stands on Nelson Bar Road. The Miller's daughter, Josie, died unexpectedly at the age of 16 in 1885 while studying outside before school started in Yankee Hill. The teacher arrived just as she passed away.

Joseph's brother, Wendelin Miller, eventually moved to Cherokee. Wendelin Miller never married. He died in Chico in 1901. In 1907, Joseph Miller sold 40 acres located across Nelson Bar Road from his home to Butte Williams. Butte had worked as a butcher, presumably for the family. After a long illness, Joseph Miller died in 1908. His wife, Julie, continued to live in the Frenchtown home until her death in 1913. Joseph's son, Wendel Joseph Miller, born in 1873 in the Frenchtown home, had operated the family business since his father's illness and continued to operate the cattle business until 1914 when Wendel died. By the time of Wendel's death, the family had acquired over 4,000 acres, including the old Pence Ranch. Wendel Miller and his wife Susie (Sturmer) Miller lived on 1,300 acres located approximately 5 miles south of Chico. In 1917, Susie Miller sold the Pence Ranch in Messilla Valley and the Miller home located on 200 acres on Nelson Bar Road. Susie Miller passed away in 1952. The old Miller two story house burned down in 2000.

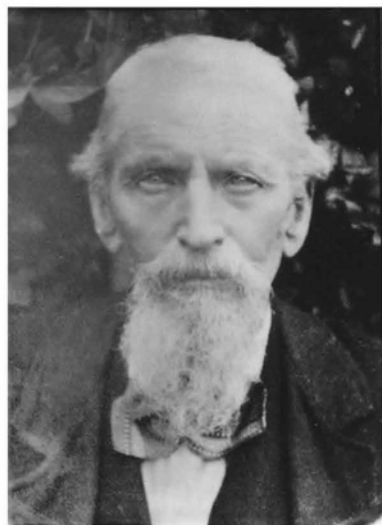
Lorenzo and Theresa Feist, Andrew Armbruster



Lorenzo Feist was born in 1821 in Germany. In 1858 he lived in Spanishtown, above Frenchtown and mined in Chub Gulch. His home was on 15 fenced acres. It contained a nice home and a barn. In 1861 he married Theresa Armbruster who was also born in Germany in 1820. In 1866 he sold their home in Spanishtown to Albert Busch for \$500. In 1868 he purchased 20 acres in Frenchtown from Pamela Buxton for \$180. Her husband, Edmond Buxton, was a miner in Frenchtown. The Buxton's moved to Placer County and later to San Francisco. In 1869 Lorenzo Feist filed claim on 160 acres adjacent his property in Frenchtown. Theresa's nephew, Andrew Armbruster, born in 1861 in Marysville, Ca came to live with them in 1885. Theresa died in 1894 and Lorenzo in 1902. Both are buried in the Yankee Hill Cemetery. The farm was left to Andrew Armbruster. Just before his died, Andrew in 1935 sold 80 acres to Oliver Lunt for \$1600.



The Clark Family



Alfred Burr Clark
3 Mar 1822 - 16 Aug 1906



Yohema (Kate) Clark
Winter 1845 - 19 April 1909

Alfred Burr Clark was born in 1822 in Vermont. He came to Mariposa, California in 1850. And then he came to Rich Gulch to mine in 1851. He later would mine the Feather River at Shields Gulch, which is now under Lake Oroville. Shields Gulch was below Big Bend which was the last large group of Concow Indians in the area until 1863 when they were taken away to the reservation. He met Yohema, a Concow Indian Chief's daughter, while mining at Shields Gulch in 1859. As far as we know they never were married but lived in a cabin below Yankee Hill in Rich Gulch. They had seven children, all of whom were successful in their own right. John Adams Clark was a very successful miner, among other things discovering the gold deposits on Big Bend that would become the Surcease Mine which operated until the mid-1940's when it finally flooded. John lived on Pinkston Canyon Road until his death in 1947. The rock pillars he made are still standing at the entrance to his driveway and the house he built which recently burned. Alfred and Yohema Clark's youngest daughter, Hat Teet Na (Katrina Clark) married Oliver Josephson, a miner in 1895. The Clark Family Cemetery houses many family members with Native American Heritage. Alfred Burr Clark was buried there in 1906 and Yohema (Katie Clark) was buried there in 1909. There are many descendants from the Clark, Josephson and several other Clark family names living in various parts of California.

Dr Abel Thompson and John B Silva

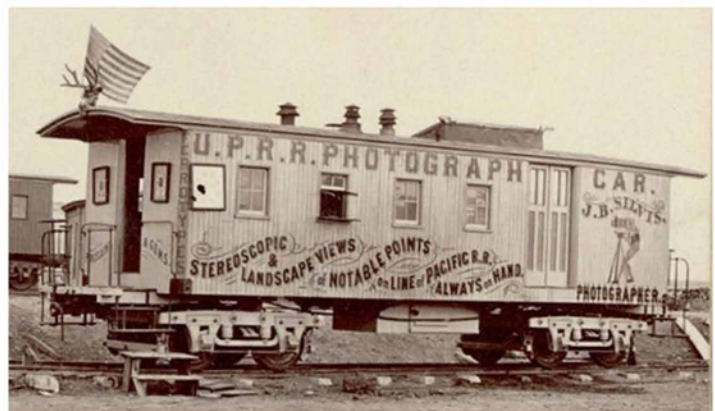


The Concow valley was named by the first settlers after the gold rush. The Indians in the area had no written language. The name is a rough interpretation of how the Indians living here pronounced their name for their people. Originally the name was spelled Con-Cow with an accent on the two Cs, similar to how it was pronounced. By 1870 the hyphenation was dropped from the spelling. There were approximately 700 Con-Cow Indians in the valley in 1852. Later interpretations in the 1870s of the pronunciation of the Indian name were spelled Konkau and Konkaw by anthropologists. But the name for this valley has always been Concow. The last large group of Con-Cow Indians in the area was removed to Round Valley Reservation in 1863; those that were not rounded up for removal, dispersed into the surrounding hills and beyond.

The first gold rush era settlers in the valley was in 1852. Dr. Abel Walker Thompson and his partner John B Silvis, each filed Preemptive claims (leases with the United States Government) on adjoining 160 acre plots. In a letter home to his family published in the local Clinton, Pa. paper, Silvis described their adjoining farms as having 320 acres about five miles from Frenchtown, "right in the neighborhood of Indians. He said the Indians can be hired for little and be paid in old clothes. It is their intention to plant, this season, two hundred bushels of potatoes, ten of barley, two acres of onions, five of corn, together with quantities of cabbage, turnips and watermelon. He has no notion of returning home poor. He regards California with its accidents and bad luck, as a good place.... If he is disposed, he can always hire out for \$5.00 per day. But he has always worked for himself. He has had fever and ague for the last sixteen months, but he has got it reduced down to an attack every third day."

Silvis left his 160 acres soon after and would eventually find work as a traveling photographer for the Union Pacific Railroad. Charles Mullen filed a claim on the land in 1857. It appears he had been in the area with his son William since 1855. Dr Thompson later bought his interest in his 160 acre farm from the government and resold it to William Mullen in 1864. The Mullen family remained in the Concow Valley until 1886. William Mullen moved to a 40-acre farm at Big Bend, living there until 1905, and the rest of the family moved to Tempe, Arizona where they were in the cattle business. Dr Thompson remained in the area and is buried in the Cherokee Cemetery. In 1870, when the Concow dam was built to supply water to Cherokee, the Mullen family operated a hotel on the lake. The site is now known as the Concow Campground. Silvis must have returned to the valley, or perhaps met the Wells family in Sacramento on a visit, because he took a picture about 1875 of Dora Wells whose husband, Michael Henry Wells, founded the community of Yankee Hill in 1856.

Dora Wells photo courtesy of Jane Lunt Homen.



Yankee Hill



Michael Wells 1883 addition

*Photo circa 1920
Located opposite the Wells store*

*1856 Union Hotel,
later in 1864 Michael Wells
Yankee Hill Hotel.*



Yankee Hill School operated from 1868 to 1943, torn down in 1966 Photo circa 1915



Yankee Hill Store 1856 to about 1925 Photo circa 1920

Yankee Hill was first the name of the quartz ledge where the 49 & 56 mine was started in 1856. Michael Wells was one of twelve early investors. In late 1856, he started a store and built a small home next door. Mr. Wells' store was supplying him with a steady income that would last for the next 60 years. In 1856, the Union Hotel was built across the road from the store by several investors from Oroville. In 1858, Wells would operate a post office out of the store which cemented the name Yankee Hill with the area. By the early 1860's, the population in Yankee Hill was dropping as mining operations were slowing down throughout the area. Wells purchased the old Union Hotel in 1864 for \$1,000 and renamed it the Yankee Hill Hotel. In 1866, Wells sold his shares in the 49 & 56 mine. In 1868, a school was erected next to the Wells store. When the Concow dam was built in 1870 to supply water to Cherokee, the area was rejuvenated as a summer resort destination. By 1882, both Frenchtown on Nelson Bar Road and Deadwood on Concow Road were also operating hotels. Wells built a standalone addition to his hotel in 1883. By 1910, the activity in the area started to slow down again. Only the Yankee Hill Hotel was still operating. Both hotel buildings burned down in 1949.

Nancy Frances Smith, Theodore D Busch and their son Albert Franklin Busch



Nancy Frances Smith
Mrs Theodore Busch,
Mrs Edwin Ruthven Lunt



Theodore David Busch
1843 - 1932
Photo courtesy of Jane (Lunt) Homen



Albert Franklin Busch
1872 - 1934

James Monroe and Mary Caroline Smith's eldest daughter Nancy would marry a dashing young man named Theodore David Busch in 1871 at Cherokee. Busch was born in 1843 in Prussia. In 1866 Theodore Busch purchased from Lorenzo Fiest for \$500 a 15 acre homestead fenced in with a house and barn located above Frenchtown in Spanishtown. He included 1,000 yards of mining claims located in Chub Gulch that included a reservoir and 40 sluice boxes. That area had been a flurry of activity in 1856 but most of the gold had played out by 1866. It is not clear how much of a living he would make from mining, but he obviously made an impression on James Monroe Smith's daughter Nancy. They had a child Albert Franklin Smith in July 1872. Nancy and Theodore apparently had their differences because in 1875 he sold 160 acres he owned in the Concow Valley to Rufus North for \$225 and walked away from his wife and son leaving the state without saying goodbye.

Nancy Frances Smith and Edwin Ruthven Lunt



Nancy Frances Smith
Mrs Theodore Busch,
Mrs Edwin Ruthven Lunt



Edwin Ruthven Lunt
1st Concow School Teacher
1824 - 1903

M. E. Shaver OROVILLE CAL.
© 2014
Jane (Lunt) Haines

Nancy Frances Busch would marry Edwin Ruthven Lunt in 1877. Born in 1824 in Maine he arrived in California around 1850. He was in San Francisco for a time teaching when he made his way to Butte County looking for a teaching job in 1875. He landed at Concow school. Nancy and Edwin Lunt would have three children, Edwina born in 1878, Mary born in 1884 (she died 10 years later) and Oliver born in 1887. Nancy Frances Lunt died in 1936. Edwin Ruthven Lunt died in 1903. Edwina Lunt, their daughter, would become a school teacher and Post Master when the post office was moved back to the Lunt home in Frenchtown, it closed in 1951.



Edwina Lunt 1878 - 1962
Photo Circa 1895

7-10-18
Jane (Lunt) Haines



Oliver Wendell Holmes Lunt
14 or 16 years old
born 10/4/1887

Jane (Lunt) Haines

The Smith/Lunt Family Home

Weekly Mercury
8-18-1882

SMITH'S HOTEL,
FRENCHTOWN,
Eighteen miles above Oroville, 2 miles below
Deadwood, and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles west
of Yankee Hill.

RESORT FOR HEALTH AND PLEASURE
During the heated summer term.

Mrs. Smith and daughters will spare no pains
to make their boarders and guests com-
fortable, and the table will at all
times be supplied with

THE BEST VIANDS
THE MARKETS AFFORD.

A SHARE OF PUBLIC PATRONAGE
Is respectfully solicited.

GOOD HUNTING AND FISHING
In the vicinity, and the climate is superb.

THE OLD CHINESE PHYSICIAN,
DR. OU SONG,
Has resumed practice at Frenchtown.

Stages leave Oroville daily for Frenchtown,
and will leave passengers at Smith's Hotel.
46-3m



Lunt Family Home

Built in 1882, the Lunt Home on Nelson Bar Road was built as a hospital to compete with the Deadwood Sanitarium. It soon failed and became the family home. The home is still owned by the Lunt Family.

House burned in 2018 Campfire

The Lunt Family Home Floor Plan

Lunt Home

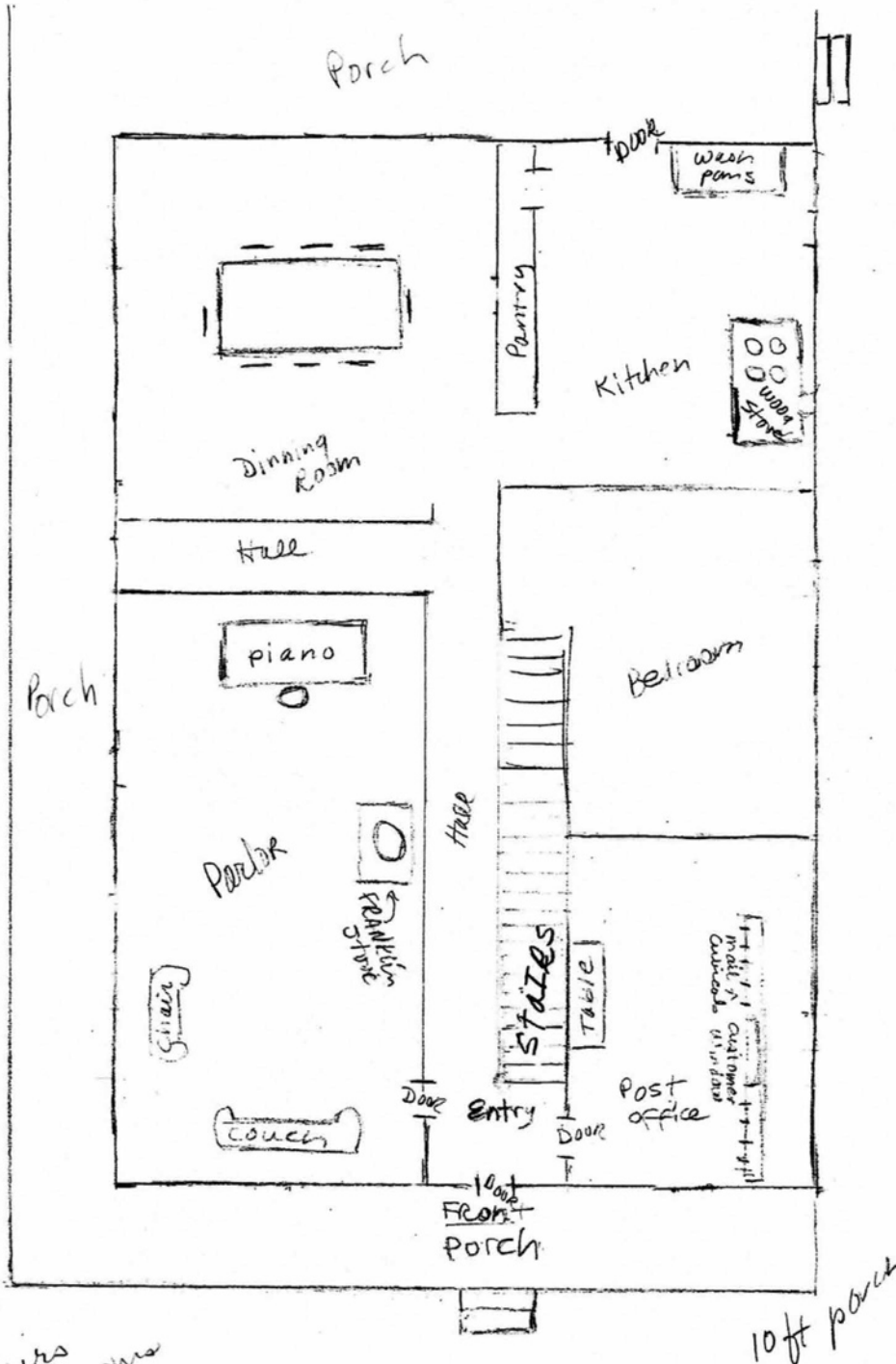
House
30ft x 40ft
2 story

Drawn by
Jane (Lunt) Homen
3-12-18

*The house
doesn't
look like
this now!*

*NOT to
SCALE
and
Not like
it is
now*

*upstairs
are bedrooms*
6 bedrooms
& storage room
upstairs



Oliver Lunt Modifications

Parlor room walls were removed in the 1960's
and added a fireplace on south wall.
Earlier added a bathroom upstairs

Whether you call it Yankee Hill, Concow, Big Bend, Frenchtown, Spanishtown or Rich Gulch, the area has always been made up of strong individuals, both men and women who survived hardships and made this area a unique place to live.

Thank You