

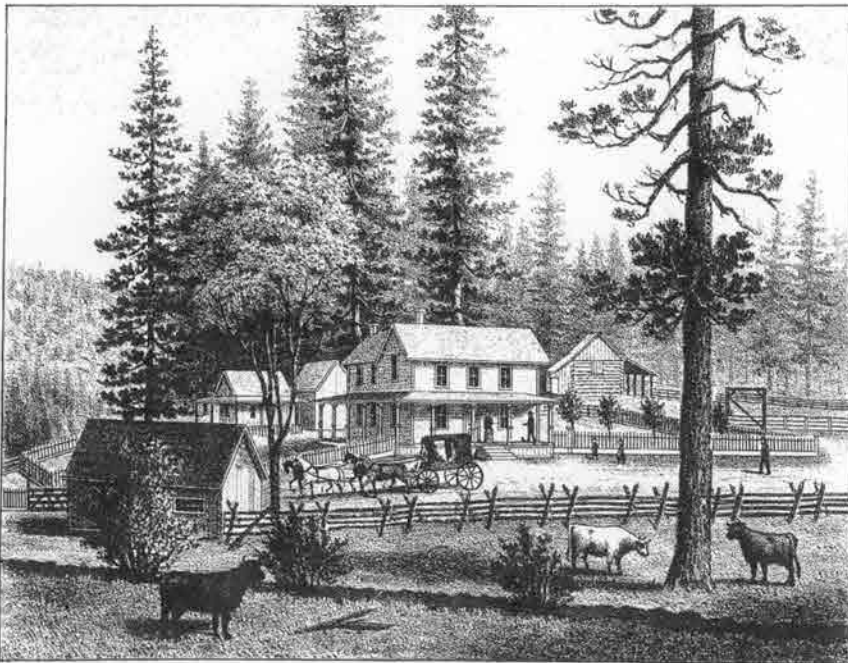
Concow Valley – (Concow Indians, early settlers, the Cherokee connection)

The Concow Valley history goes back thousands of years. In 1852, early settlers named the valley after nearly 700 Concow Indians who were still in the area at the time. They had lived in the valley hundreds if not thousands of years. By 1856 most of the Concow Indians had left the valley and went further into the foothills as more miners poured into the valley. Concow Indians were not limited to the Concow Valley; a group of about 300 were living at Big Bend until as late as 1865. They were referred to as Yankee Hill Indians of the Concow Tribe by the settlers. The Concow Indians considered what is now Cherokee as their ancestral home. From there they dispersed to many areas in the foothills including Concow.

The first non-Indian settlers in Concow were Dr Abel Thompson, Charles Mullen and his son William Mullen. They were early farmers in Concow. The Concow river flowed from the hillsides above into the valley year-round, which facilitated the development of farming. The river also facilitated mining on a small scale as well, although Yankee Hill, located several miles away, was the predominant mining area.

In 1870, Cherokee's thirst for water resulted in the Concow River being dammed up creating Lake Concow and ditches being dug to direct water to Cherokee. The drop in altitude from 2000 feet in Concow to 1300 feet in Cherokee created enough force to use water for hydraulic mining to wash away Sugarloaf Mountain at Cherokee to find the gold. Concow Lake was a major source of water for Cherokee until about 1888 when the Cherokee hydraulic mines shut down.

The creation of the Concow Lake also brought tourism to the Concow Valley. The Mullen family ended up with lakefront property. They operated a hotel and supported fishing on the lake. Later PG&E would buy the lake to supply water for power generators at Coal Canyon and Lime Saddle. In 1924 Thermalito purchased the lake from PG&E and built a cement dam to replace the earthen dam. They continued to supply water for the power generators operated by PG&E and also water for farming in Thermalito.



Joseph Mullen, Charles Mullen's other son came to Concow in 1870. He built a hotel on the property after the lake was created.

See Diggins Vol 8 #4 for more on Concow. For more on Cherokee see Diggins volume 21 #3, 36 #2, 37 #1&2, 41 #1,3,4, & 44 #3 copies can be ordered from BCHS
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