

Pulga – (Big Bar, Flea Valley, Rag Dump)

In the 1850's, miners mining along the Feather River discovered gold along the banks of the river on the opposite side of the river from the current community of Pulga. The place along the river was named Big Bar. Two brothers immigrating from Germany, Martin and John Gramps, were among those early miners. Together they mined the shores of the river for a number of years. Martin would later take an Indian bride, a member of the Pulga Indians as they later were known. Descendants of Martin and his wife are still living in the area today.

In 1866 a surveying party was sent down the North Fork and the South Fork of the Feather River looking for a route for a wagon road between Quincy and Oroville. It would be 1902 before any serious effort was made to establish the route, not for a wagon road but for the Western Pacific Railroad. The route chosen followed a large portion of the route surveyed in 1866.

In 1902 William King was filing hundreds of mining claims to secure the route along the North Fork of Feather River. He was secretly working for the Western Pacific Railroad in an attempt to keep the operation hidden from the Southern Pacific Railroad.

In 1905 the Western Pacific went public with their plans for their railroad. William King was setting up a small community to support the crews working on the riverbanks providing accommodations for crews and a small hospital for the workers. The name given the community was Big Bar after the mining bar across the river. The only way to reach Kings community of Big Bar was to travel through the Concow Valley up to Flea Valley and drop down the steep grade to Big Bar by wagon. The route was used for most of the early construction of the community. Flea Valley, first settled in 1857, was a stop for miners working the shores opposite the Big Bar mining operations on the Feather River and loggers working at the Flea Valley Mill, which sent lumber via a wooden flume to Pentz in 1870. The mill site at Flea Valley would later be called Rag Dump when it became a fire lookout station around 1900.

When the first trains ran through the Feather River valley in 1910, Big Bar became a permanent rail stop. In 1912 after the railroad was complete, King filed for a land patent at Big Bar. At that time the community consisted of the old hotel/hospital, train station, store/post office and a number of cabins. In 1916 the name was changed from Big Bar to Pulga (meaning Flea) because there was another Big Bar in Trinity County. The King family continued to own and operate Pulga until 1992. Today Pulga is a summer retreat.



Photo
Pulga 1914, station on left
store / post office on right

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