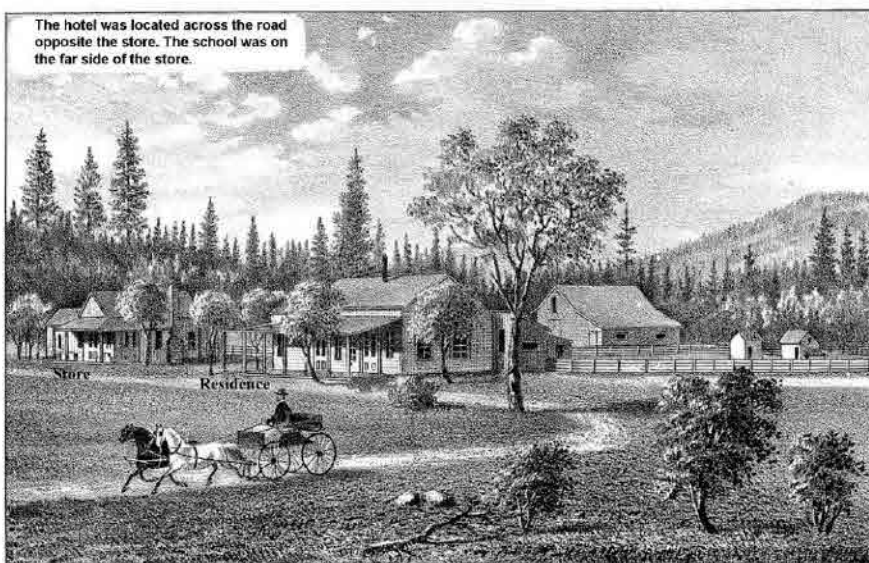


Yankee Hill - (Rich Gulch, Frenchtown, Spanishtown and Big Bend)

In 1850 when a miner who was lost showed up in Marysville with a pocket of gold, he stated it was from the shores of a lake somewhere north of Marysville. The excitement created over what became known as Gold Lake would soon send 2,000 miners headed in the direction of today's Plumas County. Along the journey, miners would have some gold mining success and settled and mined in many locations along the way. In 1850 the mining camp of Rich Gulch was founded only a few miles after crossing the West Branch of the Feather River. In 1852 a community nearby was started known as Frenchtown, located on today's Nelson Bar Road. Frenchtown had a hotel, saloon and several other buildings, including a bowling alley, all made with logs cut from the surrounding trees. In 1856 gold was discovered in several other nearby gulches which brought several hundred miners to the area and a community known as Spanishtown was started on the hill above Frenchtown. That same year several miles away, a hard rock mining venture was started by twelve miners in what was known as Yankee Hill. Hard rock mining was becoming popular as groups of miners gathered together to finance the expensive tunneling operations known as hard rock mining. While expensive to start, hard rock mining in many cases was more productive, sometimes yielding hundred of thousands of dollars in gold in just a few short years. As the smaller pan and sluice mining operations started to shut down when the shallow gold deposits played out, Frenchtown turned to cattle and hog ranching while Spanishtown and Rich Gulch simply faded away.

In 1857 a post office was started in Frenchtown, but six months later it was moved to the store of Michael Wells in the larger community of Yankee Hill. Wells was one of the twelve investors in the Yankee Hill Mine who later turned to providing supplies and accommodations to the miners in the area. Yankee Hill had a two-story hotel with an annex added in 1883 as well as a store, school, blacksmith shop and several nearby hard rock mining operations. In 1886 Big Bend, located a mile up the road and named after the bend in the Feather River below, was founded with several mining operations. The largest was the Surcease Mine founded in the 1920's. It operated until 1945 producing several million dollars in gold when it reached a depth of 500 ft and flooded with water and collapsed. Today the entire area is considered part of Yankee Hill. The name Yankee Hill was cemented for the entire area in history when the post office moved there in 1858. **Note: Concow is also today associated with Yankee Hill but it is covered separately.** (For more online information visit Yankeehillhistory.com)



STORE AND RESIDENCE OF M.H.WELLS, in 1882
YANKEE HILL, BUTTE CO. CAL.

See Diggins Vol 28 #2 for more information on Yankee Hill copies can be ordered from BCHS email buttehistory@sbcglobal.net

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