

# **The California Indian Reservation System and the Concow Indians**

By Larry Mauch

The focus of this article is the history of the California Reservation System and the Indians in the Concow Valley, Yankee Hill and Cherokee area. It is difficult to separate their history from the history of all the Indians in Butte County. This is because their history, like most Indians in the state, was dramatically influenced by intruding cultures, first by the European fur traders, later by the gold seekers and finally by the ranchers who permanently settled on large tracts of land. Each of these groups had unique effects on local Indian history. Tehama County also played a major role in the lives of Butte County Indians in the late 1850's by instigating actions to remove the Indians from both counties. The failure of the management of the California Indian Reservation system caused conflicts within the white community as well further aggravating the conflicts between whites and Indians after 1852.

## **Is it Concow, Konkau or Konkow?**

One of the challenges in writing this article has been the changing definition of who the Concow Indians were, especially after 1900, as anthropologists redefined the boundaries of the tribe based on studies of the tribe's language which was a basis for grouping individual tribes into larger cultures. As an example, the term Maidu was not used in the early histories or newspaper articles. It was defined in "The Tribes of California" published in 1877 by Stephen Powers. Powers also used the spelling Konkau when describing the Indians of the Concow Valley but all the newspaper reports from the time, and the people of Butte and Tehama Counties always spelled it Concow, when discussing the valley and/or the Indians from this immediate area. I believe Powers changed the spelling because he defined the Konkau Indians as a larger group other than just those associated with the Concow Valley. It is worth noting that the Indians did not have a written language of their own, so all spellings of Indian words associated with their culture are attributed to researchers, historians and map makers.

The 1882 History of Butte County says the Concow Valley was named by the first settlers. "The Valley took its name from a tribe of Concow Indians, numbering seven hundred, who were camped there when it was first settled". The first written occurrence I found of the name Concow was in a May 1857 article in the Oroville newspaper the "Butte Record" about a trip through the Concow Valley. It also appears in the 1858 Butte County tax rolls when describing taxpayer's property assessments from the valley. Those land claims were first filed in 1856, but the 1856 records are lost. The official 1862 map of Butte County is the earliest map I found that shows the Concow Valley. In 1863, the Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs included a letter dated Sept 25, 1862 by California Indian Agent, G.M. Hanson referring to the Concow Indians. It is the first year I could find the mention of Concow Indians in the agency's yearly report. The spelling as Concow continued in the commission's reports at least through 1880.

In 1870 the county census defined the area between the West Branch of the Feather River and the North Branch of the Feather River as the Concow Township. Previously, in the 1860 census, this same area was included as part of the Oregon Township census whose population was primarily centered around Oregon City, Cherokee and Messilla Valley. (This has caused some researchers, including myself, to assume that people had relocated from Oregon Township to Concow Township between 1860 and 1870 when in fact they had not. The township had been split in two). There never was a town of Concow, but the Concow Township census district lasted until just before the 1920 census.

As mentioned earlier, the spelling as KonKau is attributed to Stephen Powers and his 1877 book “Tribes of California”. In 1871, during a trip to the Concow Valley and later the Round Valley Indian Reservation in Mendocino County, Stephen Powers identified the ancestral home of the Konkau Indians, We-le-u-deh, as located near Cherokee Flat. Powers attributed the word KonKau as coming from the word Ko-yoang-kauIn. Ko-yo, meaning a plain, and kau meaning the earth or a place.

In 1925, Alfred Kroeber in his book, “Handbook of American Indians of California”, partially based on Powers’ work, listed a number of California place names and defined Concow as meaning “Valley Place”. He also used the spelling Konkau when referring to the Indian tribe.

The spelling became KonKow in the Smithsonian Institution’s book “Handbook of Northern American Indians Vol. 8” published in 1978. The area occupied by the KonKow Indians was also at that time greatly expanded by Francis Riddell, the author of the Maidu/Konkow section, to include most of Butte, Yuba and Sutter counties as well as a small portion of Plumas and Sierra Counties; many of these Indians never saw the Concow Valley. Again, I believe the spelling was changed to differentiate the refined definition of the Indian tribe based on new linguistic studies since Powers’ earlier definition. As mentioned earlier in reviewing the local newspapers from 1857 thru 1866, the only spelling I found was Concow when talking about the Indian tribe or the valley. The tribe was closely associated with the mountain Indians in the vicinity of the Concow Valley. Other tribes were referred to by their individual tribal names or a specific area “the Indians of .....,” usually a river, valley or place. As an example, prior to 1857 the Indians of this area were referred to as “Indians of the West Bank”, meaning the West Branch of the Feather River. Based on this practice, the references to the Concow Indians in local papers of the time I have assumed refer to the Indians in the Concow/Yankee Hill/Cherokee areas and the area between the West Branch and the North Fork of the Feather River.

Note: Research indicates that with the influx of nearly 500 miners to this area in 1856 and the establishment of Spanishtown nearby, the Indians in this area abandoned their village sites in the Concow Valley. Many moved farther north past Flea Valley, which was settled in 1857, and along the North Fork of the Feather River. It was several of these new arrivals, A. W. Thompson (1852), G.G. Marquis and Charles Mullen (1855) who permanently settled on former Concow Indian village sites (north of Spanishtown) who most likely named the valley Concow Valley.

### **Early Sources for Butte County’s History**

The first newspaper in Butte County was established at Bidwell Bar in November 1853. With the exception of a few articles in the Marysville papers, founded in 1851, the pre 1853 history of Butte County has been primarily gathered from the book the “History of Butte County” published in 1882. At that time, the pre 1853 historical information was taken in a large part from interviews held with various citizens of the county. After 1853 the information was also gathered from various newspaper articles in both Butte and Tehama Counties. (Note: In 1918 another History of Butte County was published which expanded on the 1882 version). Starting in 1854 there are articles in the local papers about the Indian/white relationship. For the next 30 years the only time an Indian’s side of the story is represented in the newspapers is when it is told by a white man or woman, sympathetic to the Indian’s plight. In July 1884 an interview with the Concow Chief, Tome-ya-nem (also known by the English name George Burchard and was at Round Valley) was published in “The Overland Monthly” magazine in San Francisco.

## **Before The Gold Rush**

Archeological evidence from the area suggests the larger family of Maidu Indians, of which the Concow are a part, have been in Butte County over 3,500 years. I could find no published archeological digs from the Concow/Yankee Hill area. These digs, following proper archeological protocol, are primary sources for dating when an area was first inhabited. I do not believe any actual organized digs following that protocol have ever been made in the Flea Valley, Concow, Yankee Hill, Cherokee areas. However, it is estimated that the Concow Indians have been in the Concow/Yankee Hill/Cherokee areas prior to the gold rush for many hundreds, if not thousands of years.

The estimated total population of Maidu Indians, of which the Concow are a part, has varied from 4,000 to as many as 9,000. It is important to remember that areas were populated with a number of small villages usually containing anywhere from 25 to 200 inhabitants. Each village had its own name used by the inhabitants and each village established their own Chief. There is no evidence of a hierarchy outside the village, meaning there was no individual with power over all the villages. It is reasonable to assume that a larger village would exert more influence over its neighbors than a smaller village. Evidence suggests that tribes in the foothills exerted influence over tribes in the valley.

Per individuals very familiar with this area, there are at least three known village sites in the Concow Valley, as well as at least one at Big Bend and one at Flea Valley (undoubtedly more are undiscovered). All of these sites appear to be larger sites so the total population for all would probably be anywhere from 500 to 1,000 Indians. Whether all these sites were occupied at the same time is open to debate without any archeological data. However, it is reasonable to assume that there were five different Chiefs in charge of these five sites.

It was common for a village to migrate from a lower elevation in the spring to a higher elevation for the summer. This migration would minimize the stress on the local food source and offer a milder climate in the summer months. It has been said that a large group of Concow Indians migrated yearly to Grassy Lake, 16 miles northeast of Concow Valley. Grassy Lake is a very small lake located at an elevation of 5,900 feet; it would have been much cooler and greener during the summer months.

Some researchers have indicated that the Chief was primarily a social director for the village. In some cases, there was a second Chief who took charge in times of conflict between villages, a war Chief. The choice for Chief was heavily influenced by the village Shaman, or doctor. If a village later decided they did not like their Chief, he could be unelected. (I think it is safe to assume that another option would be to leave the village with his loyal followers and start another village.)

## **Relationships between Villages**

Conflicts between villages usually centered on protection of hunting grounds and the taking of women from other villages as wives by force. If two villages were hostile to one another, the retaliation was usually measured, following the principle of an eye for an eye. In some cases where the whole village was involved, the conflicts were resolved in a surprisingly organized manner. Two chiefs would meet and agree to have the villages fight at a predetermined location. After an appropriate amount of time, the Chiefs would meet and agree to end the fight or meet again another time to continue. These conflicts were usually ended with a minimal amount of death.

### ***An Indian Fight - Daily Butte Record, August 22, 1856***

A fight among the red men of the forest took place on Monday last, on the open prairie six miles from Chico. The battle was fought between the tribe known as the Bidwell Indians and a tribe that belongs across the river. It seems to be a periodical affair with these savages. They fought on the appointed day and at the spot

named, and with as much system and regularity as their more civilized brethren. The struggle was carried on for several hours and with a savage fierceness equal to any contest that has been witnessed for a long time. There is a peculiarity in this mode of warfare, that we presume is not generally known. It is that when in the heat of a conflict – arrows flying as thick as hail — and the air is rent with the hideous war cry — the little children, by mutual consent, are sent into the ranks of the enemy to pick up the poisonous bearded arrows that have missed their mark and return them to the quiver of the hostile parent, to be again sent whizzing into the enemy's ranks. There were some ten or twelve seriously wounded, and two killed. One of the Bidwell tribe, a fine stout warrior was pierced in the breast by an arrow to the depth of nine inches. The point was poisonous, and the probability is that he would die from its effects.

Villages often traded with other tribes for goods, driven by availability of certain raw materials. Bidwell reported that valley tribes made their own arrows but traded with hill tribes for bows, probably because of the availability of the proper trees to make strong bows.

### **European Contact**

The establishment of Fort Ross in 1812 by 25 Russian and 80 Alaskan fur traders would eventually drive traders inland in search of new sources for beaver and otter fur. Jedediah Smith traveled through Butte County in March 1828 with a party, possibly as many as 20 men, on his way to Oregon. In the spring of 1830 Peter Ogden led a trapping expedition from Canada which passed through Oregon and ended up in the San Joaquin Valley near present day Stockton, Ca. His diaries are lost so the exact route is not known, but trapping along major rivers and passing through the Sacramento Valley was a common practice. In December 1832, John Work headed a party including Michael Laframboise, in the Feather River area trapping for the Hudson Bay Company. They would acquire anywhere from 4 to 15 skins per day. Work reported in his diary that the Indians of the area seemed to be sick with ague (fever and chills). Could this have been introduced by Peter Ogden's expedition the year before? Michael Laframboise would return to the Feather River again in August of 1837 heading a party of 27 trappers; he stated the only significant number of beaver left was on the Feather River. Laframboise returned in 1838 and 1839. John Bidwell



**Peter Ogden**



**John Work**  
Hudson Bay Company



**Michael Laframboise**

reported that before he arrived in 1841, an epidemic of cholera killed large numbers of Indians. Bidwell felt they acquired the disease from the Hudson Bay Company trappers. It is estimated that as many as 800 Indians died from these epidemics.

### **The Miners**

When gold was discovered in 1848, John Bidwell, who had worked for General Sutter, headed north to the Feather River region. Bidwell soon discovered gold in the area of what later would be called Bidwell's Bar, now under Lake Oroville. Bidwell employed approximately 20 Indians as laborers for a year realizing over \$100,000 in gold, using scarves and other clothing as payment to the Indians. Bidwell used the money to buy his Chico ranch. Later he would use Indian labor on his ranch. Bidwell's neighbor, Sam Neal, followed the same practice. He used his profits from mining to purchase his ranch south of Bidwell's.

The gold rush to Northern California was on. Soon after Bidwell's strike at Bidwell's bar, a flood of miners headed north establishing the town of Ophir in Oct 1849, now known as Oroville. In 1850 Tom Stoddard, a miner, appeared in Marysville with a pocket full of gold he found farther North. Stoddard wasn't sure of the exact location as he was lost when he found the gold, lying along the shores of a lake. Stoddard believed it was in the general vicinity of what we now call Plumas County. The story of Stoddard's Gold Lake created so much excitement that 2,000 miners left Marysville and headed north in the next 12 months. Rich Gulch and Rich Bar along the current route of Highway 70 were founded because of this migration north. Gold Lake was never found, but the rapid migration into Concow Indian country had begun. (Today there are several lakes in the area called Gold Lake because of the 1850 story).

### **Relationship between the miners and the Indians**

The early miners were an unorganized group of individuals from all over the world coming from all social classes. They were also a transient group of people. Gold panning and sluicing was dependent on water. The miners migrated to the higher elevations in the winter and retreated to lower elevations near major water supplies for finding gold in the summer. Indians were viewed with caution by individual miners and at the same time a potential source of labor. Miners did not own much personal property and relied on some of the same food sources as the Indians, hunting and fishing. This mining population was made up primarily of men so there was interest in the Indian women. The need for balance, although not equal, between the cultures was recognized by many of the early white miners. The earliest documented example I found was an article in the Butte Record published by a group in Frenchtown, located a mile south of Concow Valley.

#### ***Frenchtown, Oregon Township, Feb. 14, 1854, Butte Record, Oroville, Ca***

At a meeting called by the miners and friends of humanity in Frenchtown and vicinity held at the store of J. I. Stewart & Co. for the purpose of taking into consideration the content of those men or fiends in human nature, who are in the habit of committing outrages upon the Indian women of this vicinity, the meeting was called to order by L. C. Goodman, Esq. F. Y. Johnson, was chosen President, and Edward Pope appointed Secretary.

It was moved that a committee of three be appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting, whereupon L. C. Goodman, James McKay, and James Cannon were appointed as such committee. On motion, T. E. Cannon of Spring Valley was added to the committee.

The committee after retiring for a few moments reported the following preamble and resolutions,

which were unanimously adopted:

**Whereas**, the peace and quietude of this neighborhood has been disturbed by the frequent outrages committed on the Indian women by lawless characters – and

**Whereas**, the Indians have been driven from their ranches and have come into the cabins of the miners with their feet frozen and nearly famished. And *whereas*, even children, from ten to twelve years of age, have not been spared by these *fiends* in human shape – Therefore, we, the citizens of this community in meeting assembled, do

**Resolve**, that complaint be made before a Justice of the Peace, against all those persons when proof can be had that warrants may be issued for their arrest. Be it further

**Resolved**, that if the civil law cannot reach such offense to meet out to them the punishment their crimes so justly merit – that we, after due trial of the law, will feel ourselves in duty bound, to take the law into our own hands, however severely we may deprecate such a course. Be it further

**Resolved**, that the District Attorney be requested to use all just and legal means in his power to convict those who may be sent before the proper court for trial. And be it further

**Resolved**, that we will support the officers in enforcing the law and each other in carrying out these measures.

**Resolved**, the proceedings of this meeting be published in the “Butte Record.”

On motion the meeting adjourned.

F. Y. Johnson, President

Edward Pope, Secretary

## **The Ranchers**

By early 1850 ranchers and farmers were establishing themselves in the valleys. An individual with the establishment of a homestead could claim up to 160 acres of land as long as the land was not already claimed, and the only cost was a \$15 charge for a pre-emptive land claim with the county recorder. In some cases, two or more individuals would partner to file a claim of 360 acres or more on adjoining property. Later one person would sell out to the second person. The ranchers and farmers realized that there was good steady money to be made in supplying miners with goods and services. Unlike the miners who were a transient group and might leave when the gold played out, the ranchers were here to stay. They were taking up large tracts of land that were a source of food for the Indians and restricted their movement in their own homeland. The entire Indian lifestyle was radically changing, it was becoming harder and harder to hunt for your own food. There was still the need for both groups to be close to year-round water to support both the Indian lifestyle and the lifestyle of the rancher/farmer.

### **Relationship between the Ranchers and the Indians**

In 1850, Manoah Pence, who had mined for gold at Rich Gulch, acquired land with several partners in Messilla Valley. Here they opened a store and eating place. Pence also had some cattle. The 1882 History of Butte County relates the following story. On New Year’s Eve 1851 a party of six or seven Indians came to his ranch. The Chief of the Concow Indians was with them. At first Mr. Pence objected but later agreed to let them spend the night on his property. The next day the Indians had left early in the morning when someone noticed Pence’s cattle were gone. Pence and several friends pursued the Indians; Pence shot the Concow Chief in the hip before they all fled. Pence later recovered his cattle. The Indian Chief reportedly threatened to kill Pence if he got a chance. Sometime later the Chief was caught and brought to the Pence Ranch. Pence wanted to hang the Chief but some others present objected. A vote was taken after which the Indian Chief was hung from a tree at the site of the future post office established in 1864 in Pentz.

The lack of food made ranches a target of raids by small groups of Indians seeking food for their village. Some

ranchers would look the other way if they knew an animal was a straggler, sick and going to die anyway, but this quickly became unmanageable. Soon the ranchers started hunting down Indians suspected of stealing, killing them to set an example. Killing several Indians for killing one cow for food was commonplace.

### **The Treaty Attempt of 1851**

The United States Government had treaties with Indian tribes throughout the country prior to the Gold Rush. In 1851 a series of 18 treaties were negotiated by the Federal Government in California with tribes throughout the state. In August 1851 a treaty was negotiated at Bidwell's Ranch, ten tribal leaders and 300 Indians were present. Indian Agent O.M. Wozencraft and several senior members of the military along with their troops were present. The proposed treaty set aside all land between the current sites of Oroville, Chico and as far north as Nimshew for a reservation, nearly 227 square miles. In addition, each Indian over 15 years old would be given clothing, blankets, material and sewing supplies. The Government would furnish 1,000 lbs of steel, 25 horses, 100 milk cows, 6 bulls, 6 work mules, 12 ploughs, 75 corn hoes, 25 spades and 4 grindstones to be used by all the Indians. A school would be established, and teachers furnished; 1 wheelwright, 1 blacksmith, 1 carpenter and 1 practical farmer will also be provided with salaries paid for a minimum of 5 years and as long thereafter as the President shall deem advisable. The Government also reserved the right to establish a military fort on the land. In exchange, all Indians had to move onto the reservation. Nine chiefs signed the treaty, expecting to see the goods promised them offered immediately.

The Concow Chief, Kulmeh, refused; the Concow did not want to leave their homeland in the foothills. It should be noted that four months later, the incident at Pence's Ranch mentioned earlier transpired. The treaty of 1851 was rejected by Congress in 1852. It was felt too much valuable land for farming was being given up for the reservation. Some suspect Bidwell didn't really support the treaty because he had a large population of Indians living on his property and he could not offer his Indians what the Government was offering, so he would have lost many of his workers.



**Maidu Headmen with treaty commission July or Aug 1851, probably taken at Bidwell's Ranch. Oliver M. Wozencraft seated front center**

## The California Reservation System

In October 1852, the Federal Government instead authorized \$250,000 to establish five reservations, each to be no more than 25,000 acres. The concept was to copy the California Missions system where the Indians would be taught to farm and thereby the reservations would become self-sufficient. The assumption was the reservations would become less dependent on financial support as they became more efficient at providing for themselves.

In September 1854, **Nome Lackee Indian Reservation** was founded near the present site of Corning, California. 800 Indians from the immediate area were soon moved onto the reservation.

In the spring of 1856, the **Mendocino Indian Reservation** was established near the current site of Fort Bragg. In addition, two reservations were established in central California and one, Fort Tejon in southern California.

Almost immediately the reservations started having problems. The Indian agents assigned by the Federal Government had little experience with Indians and were not from the areas they managed. The local white populations were quickly growing around the reservations. This was a source for agitation between the two cultures.

Simon Storms worked on the Nome Lackee Reservation when in 1855 he heard of an isolated valley in Mendocino County. In June of 1856 Storms entered what we today call Round Valley. The valley consisted of about 25,000 acres of rich farmland; access was limited because of no established road and winter snows



Indian Agent Simon Storms circa 1850's  
Courtesy Mendocino County Historical Society



made it difficult to leave and enter the valley. Stephen Powers estimated in 1877 that at one time there was a population of about 5,000 Yuki Indians in the valley and surrounding hills. When Agent Storms first saw the valley, it was not inhabited by whites. The Indians had seen whites before, probably trappers and traders. They were afraid of the whites because they had taken away Indian women in the past. Mr. Storms was impressed enough that he claimed the valley for the Federal Government and told the Indians they would be protected and provided for if they moved onto the reservation. But there were already 5 reservations in California as allowed by Federal law. A petition was filed to establish an outpost of only 5,000 acres as a farm to support the other two reservations in Northern California. **Nome Cult Farms** was established in July 1856. Almost immediately whites started settling on the remaining 20,000 acres of rich farmland.

### **The Relationship between White Townspeople and the Indians**

In Sept 1857, the citizens of Oroville asked the Indian agent at Nome Lackee for assistance with the Indians as they were considered a general nuisance. Mr. Titus, the subagent, came to Oroville to investigate. Arriving Saturday, on Sunday Mr. Titus, along with several local citizens, secretly watched the Indians and determined there were a larger number of small camps in the area than anyone suspected, “the women being in quite a majority.” The next day while camped across the river, Mr. Titus was approached by a number of Indian women complaining that their boys were taken away. Now living with whites, the women begged for their boys to be returned. Their complaints fell on deaf ears and the process of removing the Indians was begun.

**Note:** On April 13, 1850, the California Assembly passed “An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians”. Section 20 of this act allowed for the indenture of vagrant Indians by whites. Children without parents were classified as vagrants and could be indentured by a Justice of the Peace to whites until boys reached 18 and girls reached 15. The only condition was that they had to be provided proper food, clothing and shelter. Unfortunately, this law was often abused and children were rounded up and presented to white families as having no parents. In some cases, the children were sold for \$25 to \$75 each by their abductors. This law came under scrutiny in the 1860’s with Lincoln’s freeing of the slaves.

*The Daily Butte Record, September 17, 1857*, reported that “On Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup>, everything being in readiness 6 wagons moved up the hill. All filled with the Indians and their stuffs - the “bucks” in high glee pushing them and stopping every now and then, at a signal from Old Walkatow, to give three democratic cheers, which were always given with vigor, stimulated by a large bottle of Mini-Gin sold to them by some hu-Maine individual.” Bidwell supplied beef and flour for the trip to Nome Lackee reservation. Spending the night on Little Butte Creek the paper reported “There being wood and water in abundance, their fires were soon kindled, when baking and roasting began in good earnest: being divided into families, the supper was soon ready and devoured, when they began their usual songs and sank singing into sleep to dream of beef and red shirts.”

The roundup in 1857 was of Indians near and around Oroville. It appears the Concow Indians along with other tribes in remote parts of Butte County were not affected. In fact the Concow Indians were establishing relationships with white miners in this area. In May 1858, when two miners were reported missing after leaving Spanishtown (in the Concow Valley) heading into the hills in search of gold, the citizens of Spanishtown were advised by the Concow Indians that it was the Kimsheew Indians that killed the miners; the people of Spanishtown believed the Concow Indians and told the reporter for the Red Bluff Beacon that the Kimsheew Indians were a troublesome tribe. However, they also stated that it might be best to remove both tribes to Nome Lackee reservation. No action was taken.

## **Miners Supplying Friendly Indians with Guns?**

### ***Digger Fight - Butte Record, June 16, 1858***

We learn from Mr. Patton that a fight took place opposite White Rock, on Monday between some of the Hollilupe Indians and a party of the Concows. The former were fishing in the river, and were surprised while so engaged by the latter who were all armed with rifles. One of the Hollilupes after having been wounded, jumped into the river and attempted to escape, but while in the water was shot again and sank. The attacking party – the Concows – were finally frightened away by the appearance of an armed white man on this side of the river. Two or three of the Hollilupes were severely wounded. The fighting was conducted with much bravery by both parties while it lasted. We believe no attempt has been made to arrest any of the Indians. (White Rock was located 4 miles north of Oroville on the Feather River).

## **The Conflict between the Miners and the Ranchers**

It was becoming clear that small raiding parties were responsible for some of the Indian troubles. It was felt that these parties hid out in the foothills and other remote locations. It was also suspected Indians from Bidwell's Ranch as well as the reservations were at least supplying information to these tribes. Some of these raiding parties had guns and it was suspected they were supplied by sympathetic miners, especially those in remote locations. Many of the miners had Indian wives and were referred to as Squaw Men by other hostile whites. Several articles at the time referred to the Squaw Men as aiding the Indians. In one newspaper article at the time, it was stated that "white Indians" were worse than "red ones" and they should be dealt with accordingly.

## **The Conflicts between Ranchers and Indians Become Worse**

The struggling reservations never accommodated more than a few thousand Indians each as food supplies were always scarce. The attempts to make the reservations self-sufficient was not successful because of poor farming skills and attempts by nearby whites to sabotage the reservations. Fences were torn down and crops destroyed. Meanwhile Indians not on the reservations were killing more cattle and horses for food. Ironically Nome Cult Farms located in Round Valley was one of the worst areas for conflict because of its remote location. Had the Government made it one of the first five reservations, encompassing all 25,000 acres of the valley when it was first discovered, it may have been a big success.

The conflict between ranchers, farmers and Indians grew more violent as the punishment for killing cattle and horses increased as the conflict went on. An article in the Red Bluff Beacon quoted an article from the Yreka Chronicle that raised concerns about what was happening. Part of the article is quoted below.

### ***Treatment of Indians - Red Bluff Beacon, Jan 12, 1859***

"It seems to us that the policy pursued by our people in the treatment of the various Indian tribes of the country, is, in many respects, but little superior to that of the natives towards us. It is true that they sometimes barbarously murder our citizens, but cannot they make the same charges against the whites? There are villains among us who care but little more for the life of an Indian than that of a chicken; and yet, it is too often the case that for murdering such a character a whole tribe of Indians are held responsible. We sell them spirituous and inflammable liquors; we drive them about at caprice or will, however unreasonable, and after ingrafting every conceivable vice in their untutored minds, if one of their number, returns upon us or any of our citizens, the product of our own planting, relations and friends indiscriminately take revenge.".....  
"Where should lessons of morality and humanity originate, if not among our own people?"

## **The Role of the Military**

In Tehama County ranchers asked the Federal Government to send troops to chase down Indians not on the reservation. The Government had dispatched troops and established forts near reservations to protect the Indians on the reservation and keep the peace. But their orders were specific, they were protecting the reservations. The 70 % or more of the Indians still outside the reservation system were not their concern, nor were they authorized to act. This angered the local population in Tehama County. In April 1859, Tehama County citizens, primarily from Red Bluff, hired trappers and former soldiers to track down and bring the Indians onto the reservation; if they resisted, they would be killed. They targeted Indians from Lassen County, northern Butte County and those in Mendocino County. In Round Valley, a separate group of citizens hired seasoned Indian fighters to round up all the Indians off the reservation in Round Valley. In April 1859, it was reported in the Petaluma Journal that 300 to 400 Indians had been killed. That same month in the Red Bluff Beacon it was reported that a new way to compensate Indian fighters for hire was being used by those across the river, payment based on the number of scalps they brought in.

In July 1859, Walter Jarboe (no known relationship to Benjamin Jarboe of Jarbo Gap in Butte County) was hired by the citizens of Round Valley to recruit rangers and again hunt down Indians. At the same time the citizens of Round Valley solicited the Governor of California for help with paying for the hunt. Jarboe was given the title of Captain, recruited 26 men and started his hunt before the Governor replied. Between July 1859 and December 1859 Jarboe killed 300 Indians and had taken 500 prisoners. The Governor eventually approved the operation and paid Jarboe \$11,143 for his services.

Meanwhile, in Red Bluff, the citizens of Tehama County, still unhappy, were also soliciting the Governor of California for troops to again round up the Indians in Lassen County, northern Butte County, Tehama County and parts of Plumas County. Concern was also expressed that Bidwell's Indians were aiding Indians stealing cattle in Tehama County. Bidwell, who had about 60 Indians living on his ranch argued to protect his Indians, claiming they were innocent of any crimes; he fell out of favor with many whites for doing so.

## **General Kibbe Campaign of 1859**

In August 1859, the Governor of California, Gov. Weller, appointed State Adjutant General Kibbe to enlist men to track the Indians in the area and bring them to the reservations. Kibbe recruited 75 men, mostly from Tehama County, and formed them into three groups to accomplish his task.

Headquartered at Butte Valley, General Kibbe along with Lt. Bailey and a group of men proceed to Hat Creek and the Pit River areas in Lassen County. There had been a lot of conflicts in the Pit River area between Indians and whites resulting in deaths to both. Kibbe's men were joined by forces from Shasta County and local volunteers when they arrived. A second group headed by Capt. Byrnes and Lt. McCarthy along with their men proceed to Eagle Lake and then Honey Lake near Susanville, Ca. A third group headed by S.D. Johns and his men, working under orders from Capt. Byrnes, proceed to the North Fork of the Feather River and the Concow Valley.

At Pit River and Hat Creek, General Kibbe had numerous clashes with the Indians there, killing a large number. At Eagle Lake and Honey Lake, Capt. Byrnes and Lt. McCarthy were also involved in several clashes resulting in Indian deaths. In September on the Feather River, S.D. Johns, with the help of Capt. Byrnes, succeeded in rounding up 218 adult Concow, Kimsheew and Tiger Indians in 13 days, along with their children without any resistance and transported them to Tehama County where they awaited transportation to a reservation.

Johns filed a report from Concow Valley, part of which is quoted below.

***From Gen. Kibbe's Command - Red Bluff Beacon, September 21, 1859***

September 14, 1859 - "... Crossing over into the Concow Valley, in one of his forced nocturnal marches, he (Capt. Byrnes) succeeded in capturing the chiefs of the different tribes which inhabit this locality. The names of who are Tippee, Moolah and YumYan, the latter being head of all the tribes, which according to his own estimate number one thousand. Tippee is represented, by all who know him, to be not only daring, but most dangerous, and, consequently, the citizens of this valley are well satisfied to dispense with his presence. Wm. Pete (YumYan) seems to be a very intelligent Indian Chief, he speaks English fluently, and, as far as I could learn, has never manifested much hostility to the whites. Yesterday, within my hearing, he observed to Capt. Byrnes; "now Captain since you've got me, you won't have much difficulty in getting all the other Indians - they will all follow me to the reservation..."

**Note:** I could find no evidence of additional Indians from this area being rounded up immediately after this date. In May 1859, an article had appeared in the Marysville Democrat regarding concerns expressed in Spanishtown that a man named Downs, living in Spanishtown was harassing the Indians located in Shield's Gulch, about 1 mile east of Dark Canyon. It appears he had taken an Indian wife who later returned to her village and married an Indian. Downs was threatening to kill all the Indians if he did not get her back. The local miners expressed concern because the Indians in this area were friendly, and they wanted something done to keep the peace. One of the miners hid the girl in his cabin for a brief period to protect her. This supports the claim that the Concow Indians were not considered a threat.

General Kibbe disbanded his men in December 1859 at Red Bluff, the papers later reported 1,000 Indians had been captured and 300 killed. The papers also went on to congratulate the General for capturing the Chief "Shave Head" near the Pit River. It was felt Shave Head and his band of 50 or 60 Indians were responsible for most of the Indian problems in the area. General Kibbe submitted a bill for \$69,000 to the State of California for his services. Included in that figure was a pay of \$50 per month per man for the men he recruited.

### **The Captured Indians are Taken to the Reservations**

The Indians captured by Jarboe and General Kibbe's campaigns were distributed amongst the reservations. Jarboe sent Indians to Nome Cult Farm. General Kibbe sent the Concow, KimsheW, Tigers, Hat Creek and other Indians to the Mendocino Reservation. He then sent 400 Pit River Indians, held near Red Bluff for several days, to Sacramento via boat then on to the Tejon Reservation down south (presumably because they were considered the most troublesome). General Kibbe felt the Indians sent to the Tejon Reservation would never return to this area again.

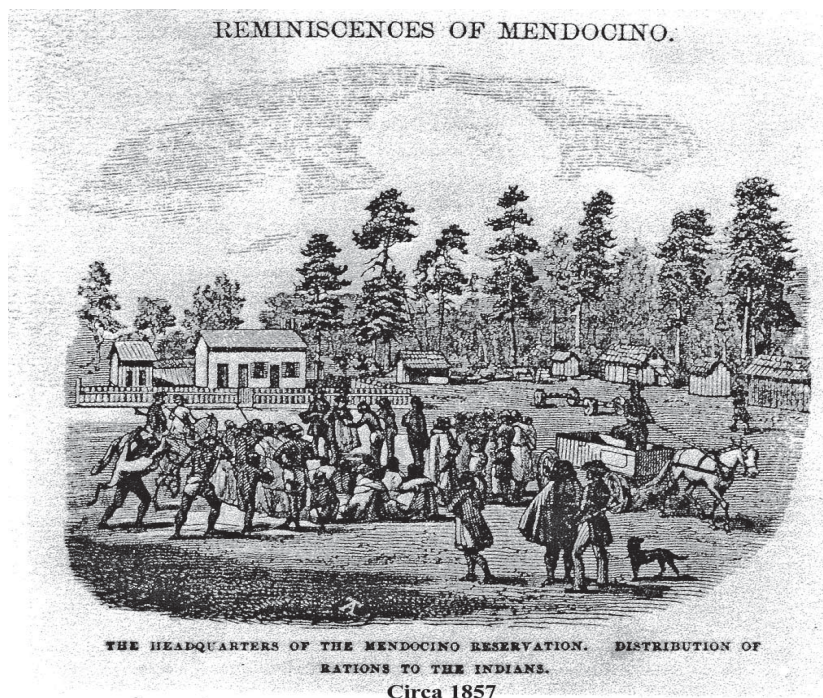
The Mendocino and Nome Lackee Indian Reservations along with Nome Cult Farms were already having problems retaining the Indians on the reservations. The shortage of food, shortages of clothing and harassment by whites were causing the Indians to run away. Some people had already suggested closing the Mendocino and Nome Lackee reservations, sending all the Indians to Nome Cult Farms at Round Valley, but 5,000 acres in Round Valley would not support such a large Indian population.

The 1859 roundup of Indians in northern Butte County was instigated by residents of Tehama County as part of a larger roundup covering four counties. For the most part, Butte County was not experiencing serious troubles between the whites and Indians. The local papers seldom reported any

problems, and they did not even mention the roundup in 1859, at the same time the Red Bluff papers were giving weekly reports on the progress. Ranchers in Tehama County were tired of cattle and horses being killed for food by starving Indians and the Indians were tired of the harsh treatment they received in return. To make things worse, the Federal Government's solution, the California Indian Reservation System was not working.

### **The Reservations Struggle to Survive**

By the end of 1859 suspicions were raised that the Indian reservations in Northern California



were not properly supervised. The conflicts between whites and Indians on the reservations continued. Accusations were made about reservation management occupying land outside the reservation and using Indian labor and even reservation equipment and possibly money, to cultivate their land. Reservation staff were taking Indian women as companions, which resulted in suggestions that only married men be employed by the reservations. Several investigations were launched in 1858 and 1859. In 1859 and 1860 changes were made to reservation management that ultimately resulted in a complete reorganization of the system. The report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1860 only contained a brief mention of California Reservations. There was no real information provided about the conditions on the reservations as was the usual practice, just a copy of two job offers extended for the recently created positions of Superintending Agents of the Northern and Southern California Indian Affairs.

**Nome Lackee Reservation**, near present day Corning, an investigation was made into the operation of the reservation; in Oct 1859 a recommendation was made to remove Vincent Geiger as Superintendent. Geiger was removed in early 1860, no immediate replacement was assigned. By July 1861 it was reported that there were no fences at the reservation, the buildings were dilapidated and only about 200 Indians were on the reservation. By 1864, the reservation land was starting to be taken over by squatters. The land was finally sold off in 1870.

**Mendocino Reservation**, near present day Fort Bragg, suffered a similar fate. Thomas Henley, the Indian agent was discharged in June 1859 for misappropriations of Government funds. In early 1861

George Hanson, appointed by President Lincoln to the newly created position of Supervisor of Northern California Indian Affairs, proposed closing the Mendocino Reservation; it would be another 5 years, the buildings all dilapidated, before it was formally closed. The land was sold off in 1869.

**Nome Cult Farms**, meanwhile, in Round Valley, whites were continuing to move into the area claiming any land not owned by the Government. Thomas Henley, the recently fired agent for Mendocino Reservation and Simon Storms, the founder of Round Valley and Nome Cult farms for the Government, were themselves joint owners in a farm in the valley. Another force in the valley was George White, a powerful and ruthless landowner in Round Valley who owned nearly 1,600 acres and was not afraid to exert his influence to get his way. White would be accused of instigating many of the hostilities towards the Indians in Round Valley, both on and off the reservation.

The Government wanted to expand Nome Cult Farms beyond its 5,000 acres to accommodate the Indians from the other two reservations in Northern California. Efforts were made in 1858 to acquire the land of the other residents in Round Valley; the name of the reservation was officially changed from Nome Cult Farms to Round Valley Indian Reservation. Legal owners with titles resisted any attempt the Government made to acquire their land. George White wanted \$50,000 for his property, a sum many considered outrageous and at least 5 times its true value.

**Note:** In 1873 in order to enlarge the Round Valley reservation, the Government extended the boundaries into the mountains to the north. Much of the new land was leased out to several ranchers in exchange for a portion of their crop to raise money to support the reservation. Still there was resistance by squatters already on the land to move. The process of acquiring the land of legal owners and removing the squatters would not be completed until well into the 1890's.

### **The Concow Indians End up at Round Valley**

The Concow, Kimshe and Tiger Indians rounded up in September 1859, numbering 218 adults and their children were first taken to Mendocino Reservation. Sometime in 1860, they were moved to Round Valley. It has been suggested that Indians from inland areas were not happy living in the coastal climate. It probably also had to do with the Indian agent having recently been discharged so there was a lack of leadership at the Mendocino Reservation.

With its 2,000 Indians, Round Valley Reservation was struggling with its own problems. In Sept 1861, Wailaki Indians living in a nearby valley raided local farms killing a large number of cattle and several valuable breeding horses. White settlers approached James Short, the Supervisor of Round Valley about recruiting Indians from the reservation to chase down the Wailaki Indians. Tome-ya-nem, the leader of the Concow Indians at the reservation, was approached by the whites for help. Tome-ya-nem's father was YumYan (also known as William Pete) who was the Chief of the Concow in 1859 and had recently passed away. Tome-ya-nem was 23 years old when he was approached to assist the whites with the Wailaki Indians. In an interview published in the 1884 Overland Monthly, Tome-ya-nem reported he at first refused to help. He knew the Wailaki Indians were trouble "but that they had done no harm to either me or mine". But the Adsals (whites) told him that "they will come one day and kill all the Con-cows as well as the whites". Tome-ya-nem went to James Short, headman of the reservation, for advice and Short asked him to help.

Tome-ya-nem gathered up a number of the Con-cow warriors as well as some Yukas and Pit River Indians. Approximately 50 Indians along with 9 whites went in pursuit of the Wailaki Indians. They

came across the Wailaki camp one morning, they numbered 300 to 400. The group attacked the camp, killing nearly 100 Wailaki, including women and children in less than 15 minutes. Tome-ya-nem reported he and one of the whites gathered the women and children to try and save them but a Yuka Indian came and reported one of the Ad-sals (whites) had been wounded or possibly killed; the white man with Tome-ya-nem turned and had the women and children killed.



### Round Valley Circa 1850's

Courtesy Mendocino County Historical Society

**Note:** In the 1884 article recounting this incident in 1861 the number killed was reported by Lt Tassin as 240 Wailaki Indians. This story points out several issues with the white/Indian relationship. (1) The Indians who worked with the whites were in a very precarious position of balancing their relationship with whites and their fellow Indians. (2) There was a huge disproportionate response by whites to Indian hostilities. (3) In the news media there was always a claim that when things ended in hostilities against the Indians, women and children were spared and sent to reservations. This was done to appease the general public and make it sound like only the troublemakers were harmed. The reality is much different; in time some people did start to see through this facade. (4) The numbers of casualties reported in various accounts of battles are highly suspect and probably only estimates at best. The common practice was to leave the dead on the battle ground and the Indians would return and bury their dead.

## **The Concow Leave Round Valley**

By 1862 the situation on the reservation was becoming desperate; food and clothing were scarce because federal money was slow in coming. The local whites in Round Valley told the Indians the reservation was finished, and they should leave, if they did not leave they soon would be killed. On September 24, 1862, over 400 Con-cow and Hat Creek Indians left the reservation with Tome-ya-nem, and headed back toward Chico hoping to see their homeland again. In his Sept 25<sup>th</sup> report, Superintending Agent of Indian Affairs, Northern District California, George Hanson reported that he was afraid for the Indians; if the Government had paid the whites what they asked for their land, this would not have happened. He indicated reservation employees were being threatened. He also stated he had been requesting troops for protection for nine months and was told none were available.

It is important to note that this was during the civil war; many of the landholders in Round Valley were originally from southern states and they were hostile. The Government's ability to support the reservation with either cash or troops was limited. In February 1863 the Butte Record reported Agent Hanson had requested \$215,000 for the Northern District. The Government allocation for both the Northern and Southern districts in California was \$70,000. The estimated Indian population on the state's reservations at the time was around 7,000 in Northern California and 1400 in Southern California. The total Indian population in the state was estimated to be around 33,000. Pre-contact estimates (before 1700) by anthropologists for California's Indian population range from 175,000 to 300,000.

Agent Hanson wrote his report from his San Francisco office. He rode out to meet Tome-ya-nem and the 400 Indians who had followed him when they entered the Sacramento Valley. He tried to get them to go to Nome Lackee Reservation near present day Corning but Tome-ya-nem refused; he wanted to go home, saying he would stay 1 year. Hanson had no choice but to agree to let the Indians go on. He offered food and support for 1 year for their encampment 5 miles from Chico (near the current site of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park). He then contacted Bidwell and made arrangements appointing Sub Agent Eddy to oversee the Indians there.

## **Indian Hostilities Rise in Butte County**

In 1859 the Indian hostilities were relatively few in Butte County. The Concow Indians had been rounded up because of actions taken by Tehama County. But in 1863 this would quickly change. In March, George Hays was herding sheep about six miles from Pence's ranch in the foothills when he discovered Indians had broken into his cabin. They stole blankets, clothes and provisions. He endeavored to recover his property when he was shot in the elbow and thigh. With 20 men, Bidwell went out in pursuit of the Indians.

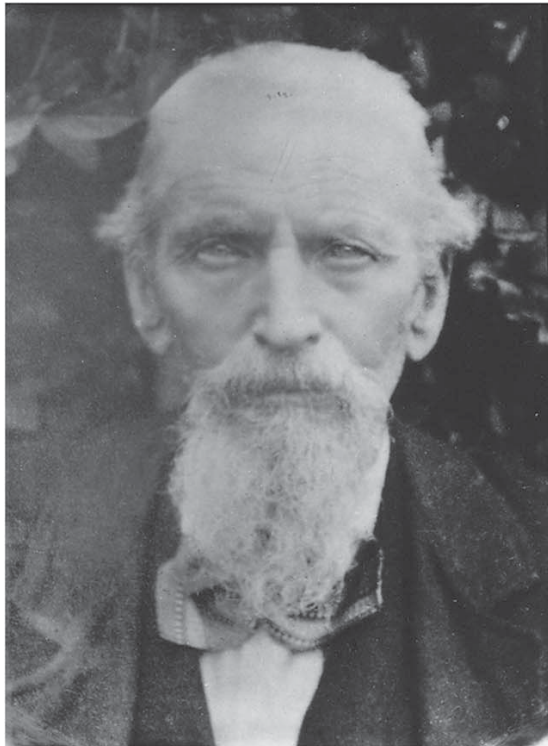
In June 1863 five Indians were hanged near Helltown. They were accused of stealing property. Later, some say in retaliation, several murders by Indians occurred in the area. The most sensational was the capture of 3 children from the Lewis family on July 5<sup>th</sup> in Messilla Valley. Thankful Lewis and her two brothers were taken while walking home from school. The two brothers were later killed but Thankful Lewis escaped. The killing of the two children was a lightning rod that sparked an outcry from the people in Pentz.

Soon after, a group of men went to Yankee Hill to take revenge on the Indians from the nearby area. When the Concow Valley Indians were rounded up in 1859, the Indians in the area of Yankee Hill and Shield's Gulch were not disturbed probably because the roundup was a surprise to most in Butte



County; and the roundup lasted less than 2 weeks and followed the West Branch of the Feather River crossing at Nelson Bar to return to Chico avoiding Yankee Hill. Some people in the Yankee Hill area were sympathetic to the Indians living near there, offering no support to the operation. M.H. Wells, owner of the Yankee Hill store and the Justice of the Peace, was one. Another was Alfred Burr Clark, a prominent resident of Yankee Hill, who had taken an Indian Chief's daughter, Yo-he-ma, as his wife in an Indian ceremony in 1859 while a miner at Island Bar (located below Shield's Gulch, 1 mile east of Dark Canyon). Both men had been in the Yankee Hill area since the mid 1850's and had associated with the Indians for several years.

When the group seeking revenge came to Yankee Hill, Wells hid a group of 40 to 50 Indians in the



**Alfred Burr Clark**  
3 Mar 1822 - 16 Aug 1906



**Yohema (Kate) Clark**  
Winter 1845 - 19 April 1909

basement of his store at first denying he was hiding any Indians; Mr. Wells later was forced to admit they were there. He argued with the men that these Indians were not to blame for the Lewis children's capture and murder and said he would charge all the men with murder if they hurt any of them. Wells was joined by Mr. Clark before long. Eventually, Wells agreed to let the men examine the Indians and stated if any were identified as guilty of crimes, he would let them have them. The Indians were lined up outside Well's store. After a two-hour examination and interrogation 4 were identified as Indians causing problems. The four were taken aside and were tied together in pairs by their hands. They were told to run as the men prepared to shoot them. Two were killed and two escaped by running back into the crowd, using the crowd to cover their escape. After the killing of the two Indians, the men left leaving the rest of the Indians alone.



Michael Wells circa 1865

ESTABLISHED 1856

Yankee Hill, Cal., July 15<sup>th</sup> 1891

Mr Jack Lynch

BOUGHT OF M. H. WELLS  
DEALER IN

Dry Goods, Groceries and General Merchandise

Payable in U. S. Gold Coin

HARDWARE, BOOTS, SHOES, DRUGS, ETC.

1891					
Oct	17	To 2 Box Cutters	@ 1 <sup>00</sup> / <sub>11</sub>	2 00	
	21	" 1 " "	" "	1 00	
Nov	13	" 1 Lusk	" "	50	
	17	" Cutters	" "	1 00	
1891	Jan 30	" "	" "	1 00	
					5 50

**Yankee Hill Store on left, Wells' home on right**

Monument on Yankee Hill Road donated by Florence Smith Wilson currently marks the site



STORE AND RESIDENCE OF M.H.WELLS, in 1882

YANKEE HILL, BUTTE CO. CAL,

Shortly after this, Mr. Wells asked the Chief of the Indians nearby to visit him. The Indians were the Che-es-sees, their Chief was Uh-le-ma. This is presumed to be the same Indians that were at Shield's Gulch in 1859. Uh-le-ma's story was also told in the 1884 article in the Overland Monthly. At the meeting with Mr. Wells, he was told the tribe's only chance was to go to Chico landing and join the rest of the Concow Indians who had been encamped there for the last year. Uh-le-ma, stated he would lead his people from Yankee Hill to Chico. Recent unrest had resulted in hostilities perpetrated against the Indians in the area. The Chief said they hid out in the area surrounding Chico until they felt it was safe to appear.

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### **Yankee Hill Indians Vacate Their Homes atop the Big Bend in the Feather River**

By 1863 the Yankee Hill Indians living above the Big Bend in the Feather River, known as the Che-Es- Sees, were the largest and last significant sized Indian population in the immediate area. The Indians at Berry Creek were also associated with this group. In what we now call Big Bend, there were four to five Indian villages whose inhabitants numbered approximately 300. These Indians were also a part of the Concow Indians. Susan Belden's mother is believed to be from the Yankee Hill tribe.

Michael Wells, along with twelve others, founded the 49 & 56 mine in 1856 before he started the Yankee Hill store. He also acquired the old Union Hotel near the mine, renaming it the Yankee Hill Hotel. He had a friendly relationship with the Indians for a number of years. Wells and his friend Alfred Clark, another miner, were trusted by the local Indians.

In Sept 1863, when the second roundup of Butte County Indians was inevitable, Michael Wells was assigned or probably volunteered for the task of removing the Indians in the Yankee Hill area, most likely to capitalize on his relationships with the Indians and to avoid unnecessary violence. Wells recommended to their Chief, Uh Lee Ma, that they should travel to Chico Landing and join the other Indians assembled there where they would be escorted to Round Valley. This left the area above the big bend in the Feather River open to new settlers.

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On July 27, 1863, three weeks after the killing of the Lewis Boys, a meeting was held at Pence's ranch. Three hundred people attended from all over Butte County. The crowd was concerned about the large group of Indians living near Chico for the last year since leaving the reservation and the rest of the Indians still roaming around in the immediate area. The following report was made:

**Whereas.** The Indians within the county of Butte have committed acts of depredations and have at different times committed murder on unoffending and innocent men, women and children of said county; therefore, the people of Butte County, in mass meeting assembled.

**Resolve: 1st** That we hold the preservation of the lives and property of ourselves and families as the first and most important consideration, and that means should be devised for removal of all Indians from our midst.

**2d.** That we shall require the removal of every Indian from this county to some distant reservation.

*3d.* That we give all Indians thirty days' time to come into the settlements, will protect and forward the same to any point designated.

*4th.* That any Indians who shall, after their removal return to this county, do so at the risk of their lives

*5th.* That what we mean by every Indian, are those that are roaming in our mountains, as well as those upon the ranches in the valleys.

*6th.* That the Indians shall be notified by persons appointed by this meeting to collect them; that all found in this county after the expiration of thirty days, shall be killed at sight.

Among those appointed to collect the Indians from this area were Mr. Wells of Yankee Hill and Thomas McDonald of Cherokee. Among those appointed to collect funds to defray the costs of the removal in this area were G.G. Marquis of Concow, Mr. Pence from Messilla Valley and B.P. Hutchinson from Cherokee Flat and John Chapman from Cherokee Ravine. It is interesting to note that a total of 12 people were appointed to collect the Indians in Butte County and 26 people were appointed to collect money from all of Butte County to cover expenses. Bidwell and the Chico Indians, the Mechoopda, are not mentioned on the report filed in the Butte County newspapers. On Aug 15 a letter was posted in the Butte papers asking for information from the agent from Chico Township on disposition of the Indians in his township and immediate area.

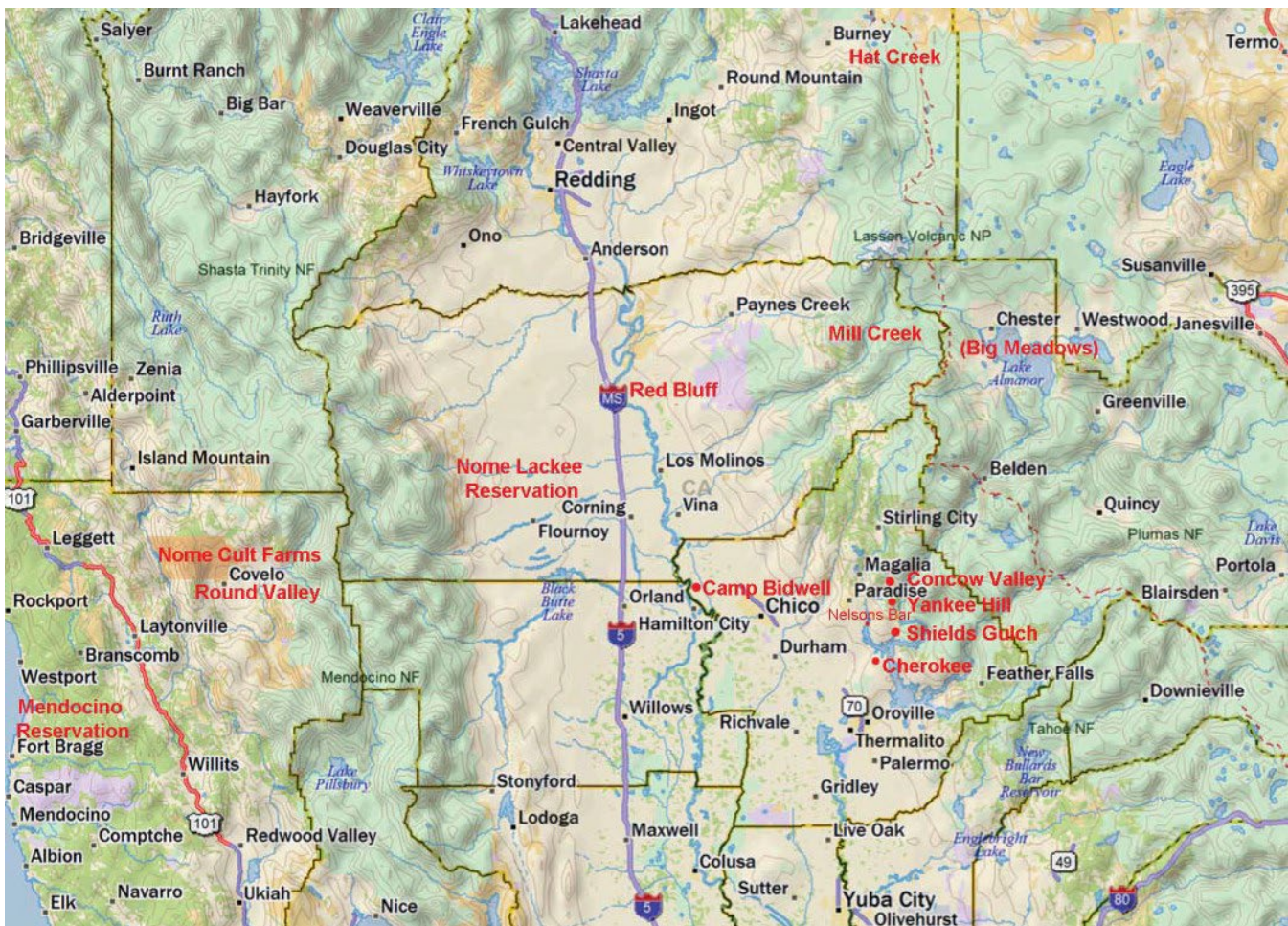
Mr. Hanson, Superintending Agent of Indian Affairs, Northern District California, attended the meeting at Pence's ranch on July 27th. He reported back to the Bureau of Indian Affairs what had transpired. On 9-5-1863 it was reported in the Oroville papers that he was authorized up to 150 men to remove the Indians from the mountains and told not to disturb the Indians in the valley. This removed the burden to finance the operation from those that met at Pence's Ranch.

In a report to Agent Hanson filed in August 1863 by Sub Agent Eddy, who was in charge of the large group of Concow and Hat Creek Indians encamped near Chico Landing for the last year, he stated that he had leased out some Indians as workers for a \$1.00 per day to help cover expenses for their upkeep. Agent Eddy reported that three boys, named Dick, Pike and Charley from the Concow tribe along with 1 squaw and 1 girl about 10 years old were killed and robbed when returning from work for Mr. Isaac Allen, a former senator. They had been working on his thresher machine near Missouri Bend, above Hamilton City. They had a passport which was given to working Indians as well as one from Mr. Allen. They were all killed on a slough nearby when they started walking back to Chico and their bodies were dumped in an old cabin. Two of the boys had been with Mr. Eddy all winter; the others came to him about a month earlier. He stated he would use all means to ascertain the parties, but their arrest would require a strong military force, as this is "the most inflammatory district we have". Agent Eddy also reported that Mr. Wells had on the day of his report delivered 60 Indians from the Concow Valley (other sources say these were elderly and the sick and it is presumed they were delivered by wagon).

In a report filed at Pence's Ranch, Mr. Wells was credited with rounding up 220 Indians in the Yankee Hill and Concow area, another 53 were rounded up near Cherokee. Some of these Indians probably were part of the Concow Indians returning to the Chico area a year before who had left the encampment near Chico to return to their local village sites. For them this was their second roundup.

The gathering point for the Indians was to be Camp Bidwell, a newly established command post for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry consisting of 23 men and an officer. I could find no record of troops rounding up Indians in Yankee Hill, Concow or Cherokee in September 1863, only the efforts by Mr. Wells. This implies that

the Indians who returned to Chico Landing did so voluntarily, as Chief Uh-le-ma stated, because of fear for their safety if they stayed in Yankee Hill.



2010 map showing sites mentioned in this article in red

### **The Tragic March to Round Valley**

On June 17<sup>th</sup> Agent Hanson reported 350 Hat Creek and Con-cow Indians remained near Chico from those arriving last year (1862) that needed to be transferred to Round Valley.

On August 10<sup>th</sup> Capt. Augustus Star, reported the number had grown to between 500 and 600. Captain Star was with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry. He and his men were assigned to assist Sub Agent Eddy in transporting the Indians to Round Valley.

On August 21, 1863, Agent Hanson, who attended the meeting at Pence’s ranch, reported from Round Valley he had been purchasing supplies for the additional Indians that would be moved from “Butte County to this place”. “You will see at once the urgent necessity of their immediate removal, and consequently the importance of providing at this time for their subsistence through the approaching winter. Should I not remove these Indians immediately, there can be no doubt but an effort to carry out the resolutions so unanimously adopted at the large meeting held at “Pierces ranch” (this should be

Pence's ranch) a copy of the notice of which I have enclosed you, will be made, and the consequence would be a bloody affair."

On September 4, 1863, Captain Star and his men led the Indians on a two-week march to Round Valley. Evidence suggests many of the Indians were sick before the march started. On their return his report stated "In compliance with post orders no. 6 & 7, left Camp Bidwell, Butte, California, September 4, 1863, having under my command twenty-three men and horses of Company F, second cavalry, California Volunteers, and four hundred and sixty-one Indians, to remove to Indian reservation at Round Valley, Mendocino County, California, arriving there September 18, 1863, with two hundred and seventy-seven Indians. Left one hundred and fifty on east side of the mountains, they being unable to travel. Thirty-two died enroute and two escaped".

Later investigation showed they had 14 wagons to transport the Indians to Laycock Ranch which marked about 1/3 of the way on the 100 mile plus journey. Most of the wagons probably were furnished by Bidwell. At that point the wagons were returned to Chico. A pack train was supposed to meet the group at Laycock Ranch, but it was late so Captain Star had the Indians walk about three miles to Mountain House. When the pack train arrived at Mountain House, some Indians were put on mules and the children in 1 wagon, the rest had to walk; 150 Indians were in poor health and unable to travel so they were left at Mountain House with agent Eddy. Meanwhile at Lot Springs, just past the 1/2 way point, the lone wagon was returned, and a few children were put on mules, but most had to walk the rest of the way to Round Valley, nearly 50 miles.

When Captain Douglas at Fort Wright in Mendocino County heard the 150 Indians left behind were dying along the trail, he ordered Round Valley's Superintendent, James Short to bring the Indians in to the reservation. For 13 days Short worked to bring in a portion of the Indians. He reported that "about 150 sick Indians were scattered across the trail for 50 miles, dying at a rate of 2 to 3 per day. They had nothing to eat....and wild hogs were eating them up either before or after they were dead."

After the September 1863 removal of the Indians from Concow and Yankee Hill, things were quiet for a time. The 2<sup>nd</sup> cavalry made a sweep with 19 men through Yankee Hill, Cherokee, Pentz, Oregon City and Oroville in November 1863 rounding up 28 more Indians, taking them to Camp Bidwell, near Chico and on to Round Valley via Tehama County on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November.

### **Indians Returning**

On March 5, 1864, the Oroville Union Record reported that numerous Indians had started returning from the reservation to the mountains outside Dogtown (Magalia) and Nimshe. It was also reported a letter was received from the reservation agent that the Indians were about to return. Lack of food, harassment by whites and no real military support made forcing the Indians to stay on the reservation difficult.

It is unclear as to what the final number was of Concow/Yankee Hill Indians who were taken to Round Valley. But the annual report filed September 1, 1864, by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, California reported 325 Concow and Yankee Hill Indians still at Round Valley Indian Reservation, 125 male and 200 female.

**Note:** It is true some Indians left the reservation. Reviewing the numbers given by various sources for the Concow Indians population offers another possibility for the increase in Indian population in the

Dogtown and NimsheW areas. The 1882 History of Butte County reported that in 1856 local residents named the Concow Valley after the tribe of Indians from the area numbering nearly 700. In 1859 when captured, Chief YumYan reported the number of Indians in the area as nearly 1,000. At the time YumYan was captured with the Chiefs of the Tiger Indians (near Magalia) and the KimsheW (above Concow Valley) so it can be assumed these tribes' populations were part of the 1,000 figure. Round Valley never reported more the 325 Concow Indians in their census. There were no Tiger or KimsheW Indians identified in the Round Valley census, they were all listed as Concow Indians. There were never any reported killings of large numbers of Indians in this immediate area. It is true there were a large number of Concow Indians who died on the march to Round Valley, possibly as many as 100. There still is a discrepancy of at least 200 to 400 Indians from this area who are not accounted for. More than likely these Indians retreated to the high country, perhaps Grassy Lake, the Concow summer home and were never rounded up. Some may have joined other tribes. Some of these Indians may have tried to return to the former homes near Dogtown and NimsheW north of Concow Valley in 1864 when things were quieting down.

### **Trouble in Concow Valley in 1865**

On August 12, 1865, the Oroville Union Record reported "Indian Massacre at Concow Valley – Terrible Excitement." Five Indians approached the home of Robert Workman, a miner on Monday August 7th, in Concow Valley while he was away from home. His wife, her sister Mary Rosanna Smith, visiting from Australia and a hired hand John Banks were at home. The Indians knocked on the door and when it was opened Mrs. Workman saw a gun pointed at her chest, upon which all three, Mrs. Workman, Miss Smith and John Banks ran out the back door. Outside they were met by more Indians who shot John banks and killed Miss Smith by the barn, cutting her throat. Both were scalped and mutilated. Mrs. Workman was badly beaten and left for dead. Sometime later Mrs. Workman regained consciousness and made her way to G. G. Marquis's house 600 feet away (located in present day Camelot). Mrs. Marquis was home and attended to Mrs. Workman. There were but four men in the valley at the time as most were at Oroville attending the Union County Convention.

A man was dispatched to the Porter Quartz Mill (located on Jordan Hill Rd) where 30 people were working and sounded the alarm. Mr. Porter and 15 men left to investigate and found a gathering of people at the home of William Mullen (near the present site of the Concow Campground). "They instantly decided upon a course of warfare, to spare neither Indian nor Mahala white man" (Mahala was a term used for Indian women. In this context this refers to a white man who had married an Indian. The term "squaw man" was more commonly used).

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865, after the burial of Mrs. Workman's sister Miss Smith and the hired hand John Banks, a party set out to find the responsible Indians. On August 20<sup>th</sup> a lengthy report was filed by Daniel Klauberg, a miner in Yankee Hill who joined the search, in the Oroville Union Record describing some of the events that followed. Some of this information that follows also comes from the book "Fighting the Mill Creeks" by R.A. Anderson, published in 1909 and "The Last of The Mill Creeks and Early Life in Northern California", by Sim Moak published in 1923. (The two books can be found online for free using Google search).

On Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup> the group reached Butte Mills about 25 miles away, where they had camped for the night. On Friday August 11<sup>th</sup> the group from Concow/Yankee Hill met up with Robert Anderson, a noted Indian fighter. Initially the group from Concow and Yankee Hill were going after Bidwell's Indians and were convinced they had committed the murders. Based on his experiences,

Anderson convinced them it was the Mill Creek Indians who were responsible. Anderson convinced the others to follow him to Hiram Good's farm on Deer Creek in Tehama County. Good was also a noted Indian fighter in the area. Anderson and "Hi Good" as he was called, had worked together against the Mill Creek Indians in the past. There, on Friday afternoon, they met up with several others from the Concow/Yankee Hill area. Sim Moak also joined the group, traveling from Durham where he was working. Hi Good took command of the group. The next day, Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup>, 16 men headed 15 miles up Deer Creek and an additional 10 miles beyond when they came upon an Indian camp with only women in camp. They discovered a cave nearby with a "splendid saddle and bridle and the remains of a horse, which these Indian bandits had no doubt taken" along with a shawl. Apparently, no harm was done to the Indian women in camp as there is no mention of it in any of the three published accounts. Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> the group headed towards Mill Creek Canyon. There they ran across the trail of Indians traveling very slowly, as if in no danger. They discovered an Indian scout later that day. Good and Anderson went out to look for the rest of the Indians while the others ate in the tall grass. Two hours later Good and Anderson returned; that night at 10:00 o'clock the group moved to a ridge above the Indian camp. Good crawled to the Indian camp to see the exact location, returning later that night. At daybreak the next day, Monday the 14<sup>th</sup>, they formed into two lines marching towards the camp, Good with one group and Anderson with the other. They stopped and laid in wait for about 10 minutes when Good fired the first shot killing a buck. The Indians were completely surprised and broke for a ford (in the creek) in great confusion. The group ran up within 25 yards and all guns started firing as the Indians were leaving the other side of the creek. Daniel Klauberg reported in the Oroville Union that "the Indians began to fall thick and fast, some rolling down into the creek and floating off: others crawling into the brush."... "there were about twenty-five Indians; we left five Indians killed on the spot, and as many as six or seven who will surely die, and they are nearly all wounded more or less." In the Indian camp Klauberg reported "we found but a few of the articles that had been taken; they had mostly been left, probably somewhere in the edge of the foothills or in caves on Deer Creek". They found a portion of Mrs. Workman's dress, some silk and other articles later identified by Mrs. Workman as hers. They also found a rifle and a colt revolver. Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1865 the group headed home, being out of provisions, stopping at Pine Creek. A gentleman gave them a ride to Mud Creek where Bidwell's team met them taking them to Chico where they were given a free meal. From there they all dispersed.

Anderson reported in his 1909 book, "Fighting the Mill Creeks", that some of the Concow people were "intensely wrought up" after seeing the atrocities committed on Mrs. Workman's sister's body and the body of the hired hand. Both Robert Anderson and Sim Moak reported the Concow men mutilated some of the dead. They also talked of English coins, worth about \$1600 belonging to Miss Smith being taken from the Workman home as well as Workman's stash of gold dust. Sim Moak talked of Miss Smith bringing fine silks and shawls with her from Australia. They found strips of the material pinned to the Indian squaw's shoulders.

### **Spanishtown Meeting to Remove all the Indians from the Concow Valley**

On Saturday Sept 12<sup>th</sup> 1865, a meeting was held at Spanishtown (located near the intersection of Pinkston Canyon and Concow Roads). This was three days after the group had left Concow Valley headed towards Mill Creek. At that meeting a proclamation was issued like the one issued at Pence's ranch in 1863.

*Resolved*, That this meeting will guarantee protection to no Indian after the first day of September next, and those living with squaws must govern themselves accordingly; provided that no peaceable Indian be disturbed until after the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.

*Resolved*, That this meeting appoint a Captain, and entrust him to raise sufficient men for



protection in the enforcement of these resolutions, using great discretion as to who shall be members of said company

**Resolved,** That we appoint a committee of five as a committee of observation, whose duty it shall be to report to the Captain all matters pertaining to the general protection and welfare of this community in regard to Indians, and to solicit funds by contribution in case expenses should be incurred by the company.

**Resolved,** That a Committee of three be appointed to consult with the Indians of this community to induce them to leave as soon as possible, and certainly by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.

### **Tensions in Butte County Continue**

After the report back on August 20<sup>th</sup> by Daniel Klauberg in the Oroville Union on the Indian hunt, there was no more mention of this group who met at Spanishtown or their proclamation. It is worth noting the location for the meeting was Spanishtown, not Yankee Hill, a popular meeting place just down the road, where Henry Wells, the Justice of The Peace and Alfred Clark lived; both as mentioned earlier, were sympathizers with the Indian's plight.

***The Oroville Union Record of Sept 2, 1865: Successful Hunt*** – “The late Indian hunt, under charge of Captain Good, was probably the most successful one ever made in this state. It is evident from numerous articles found upon the trail and also in the cave, that the Indians killed were the ones that committed the outrages at Concow Valley, and we are reliably informed that out of the whole number, sixteen, only four Indians made their escape.”

On Sept 23, 1865, the Oroville paper reported that an Indian woman at Big Meadows (now under Lake Almanor) said she was with the Indians at Mill Creek. They made the trip from Mill Creek to the Concow Valley in 5 days. After the attack at Mill Creek, several Indians made their escape and returned to a cave where they dug up the rest of the artifacts from the raid, money, watches and jewelry. She said the party contained 16 bucks of which 8 escaped. She said she had hidden in the tall grass during the fight.

That same paper reported that out of fear, a number of people intended to leave the Concow Valley; it appears that did not happen.

### **When will it End?**

An article in the 1866 Oroville Union brings the Workman tragedy to a close, but it also sums up the general frustration about the White and Indian relations going forward. The article defines the problem but sees no viable solution, a feeling felt by many. The article in its entirety is below.

***The Union Record, February 24, 1866:*** “Five Indians killed: We learn that, on Sunday morning last, four Indians were killed, one mortally and one slightly wounded, on Clear creek between Cherokee Flat and Wicks' ranch. Of course, it is not positively known by whom they were killed; but we have heard the following particulars: A party of eight or nine Indians were camped on Clear creek, engaged in fishing. It was supposed that two Indians, Dogskin and his son, concerned in the massacre of Workman's family at Concow valley, on the 7th of August last, were in this fishing party; and certain white men went to the camp and demanded that the two Indians should be given up. This was refused, the Indians showing a disposition to fight, when they were fired upon, and Dogskin and his son, Oregon City Charley, and a Berry Creek Indian, killed upon the spot, one of the Cherokee tribe

mortally wounded and since dead, and the squaw of Oregon City Charley shot in the face and thigh and severely but not fatally wounded. One or two of the Indians escaped. In a short time after the fight, we are told that a large party of Indians from this side of the river arrived on the scene and carried off the dead to this side for burial, amidst cries and lamentations. This is a lamentable state of affairs for the mountain settlements and involves the alternative of either extermination of all Indians in this county, or a very different reservation system from that at present in operation. We have good authority for the statement that Indians are continually going to and from the Nome Lackee Reservation and mixing with the Indians who remain in this county; and it is said that the Concow Indians, taken to the Reservation for the second time two or three years ago, are now nearly all back here, and mixed through the different tribes who have remained on the southside of the river. If these Indians remain here, under the present circumstances, the fiendish massacres of past years will be re-enacted year after year, followed by expeditions against the Indians, some of whom will be killed and the rest driven off, to return again when the excitement quiets down. This must be the case, unless the mountain settlements keep a force on their trail continually, and that is impracticable.”

The Workman killings and the resulting Indian deaths were the last major clashes between the two cultures in Butte County. Probably because one of the Indians killed at the time was believed to be Big Foot, so called because he had six toes on one foot. Big Foot was a known renegade Indian in 1863 leading a small group from Mill Creek that caused trouble in Butte and Plumas Counties, similar to the Indian Shave Head and his people in 1859.

**Note:** The 1882 and 1918 History of Butte County reports that Mrs. Workman died 2 years later, never fully recovering from the stress of her ordeal. She actually died 2 months later, on October 1, 1865, and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Oroville Cemetery, in the Catholic section on Feather River Blvd.



It appears Mr. Workman had no funds left for a headstone for his wife, a devout Catholic. The history books also do not report that Mrs. Workman was pregnant. The Workman's 3-week-old daughter died 4 days after her mother on October 5th. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Workman was not scalped or mutilated like the others during the attack but instead left for dead with a large rock thrown on her chest. It is unknown where Mrs. Workman's daughter and sister, Miss Smith, and John Banks are buried. It is presumed they were buried near the Workman home.

### **Conclusion**

The white/Indian relationships were complicated in Butte County. Prior to 1863 there had been a tolerable if not friendly, relationship between the miners and the Indians dating back to the early 1850's. This was probably out of necessity because there was such a large Indian population, especially in this area, and the miners were not organized so neither group could dominate the other. This may also be why some of the Indians in this area, as an example the Concow Chief, spoke English. Or it may be because Sutter in 1849 released his Hawaiian (Kanaka) workers, some had been with him for 10 years, when he sold Sutter's Fort for \$7,000. Several of the Kanaka came to this area and took Indian brides.

There were whites at the time that were sympathetic to the Indians' condition despite the cultural differences and in some cases having experienced firsthand traumatic clashes. Mr. Wells who defended the Indians at his store in Yankee Hill in 1863 was a member of a wagon train attacked in Oregon by Indians six months prior to his arrival in California in 1856; nearly half of the people on the wagon train (70 people) were killed. Robert Workman left the Concow Valley in 1870 and founded a mining claim on the Feather River later known as Workman's Bar (now Rock Creek PG&E site on highway 70). In 1875 he met an Indian woman with a claim farther upriver named Susan Belden. Her husband, Charles Belden, had died several years earlier in San Francisco while recovering from illness. The Belden's had two boys, Charles Jr. and Robert. Robert Workman and Susan also had a child together, William. Robert Workman died in April 1896 at the county hospital in Plumas County. William Workman died while mining near Oroville at Longs Bar in June 1898. As part of a homestead settlement with the Federal Government, Susan was awarded land on the Feather River; it was her tribal home. Charles Jr., her son by her first marriage, built a hotel on the land in the early 1900's; the Belden Hotel was named in honor of his mother. Susan died in 1919 and is buried high on the hill across the road on Highway 70 from the hotel in Belden Cemetery. Susan's brother Jim donated land that was part of his mining and homestead claim, for the Indian Jim School, in Plumas County. Family tradition has it that Susan's and Jim's mother was from a tribe located near Yankee Hill.

In an effort to close the Round Valley Reservation, in 1893 the adult Indians that lived on the reservation at the time (including 152 Concow Indians, 78 males and 74 females, 70 of whom were alive in 1863 during the forced march from Chico to Round Valley) were each given a land allotment; males were given 10 acres and females 5 acres.

In the Concow Valley the Clark families, the Pinkston families and in Pulga the Gramps families along with their descendants, have a long history with this area and are well respected families with Indian lineage making an important contribution to their family's heritage.

## **The Sad Truth**

The California reservation system run by the Federal Government, never lived up to the expectations of the whites or the Indians. The yearly reports to Congress by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in California repeatedly asked for more money for the reservation system and talked of the injustices done upon the Indians by whites. The whites, especially ranchers, continued to severely punish the Indians for their actions in stealing food and provisions, the punishment usually far harsher than the crime deserved. The practice of killing Indian children or kidnapping them and selling them as vagrants to white families was seldom reported in the newspapers. When Indians started to retaliate by killing whites, the reaction was swift and harsh. A few Indians, Shave Head, Big Foot and others who tried to fight back were probably secretly considered heroes by their brothers. But once the Indians started to retaliate and kill whites, especially children, the retaliation by whites was considered justifiable and openly reported in the newspapers. It was only after the population was severely reduced and the Indian spirit broken that the hostilities subsided. For years afterward many families hid their Indian heritage and did not talk about it with their children. This has caused a gap in the knowledge of their history and rich culture which their descendants are now working to rediscover.

In the end, the sudden and massive influx of a new people in a new land and the inadequacy or lack of resolve of those governing the area to cope with the diversity and clash of cultures, made the resulting genocide inevitable, a problem that still exists in parts of the world today.



**Indians living at Cherokee circa 1899**



*Susan Belden mother of Bob and Charles Belden*

**Belden was named after Susan by her sons**

**Note:** I have tried to refer to primary sources when available. Over 100 newspaper accounts from the 1850's and 1860's in the Butte and Tehama County newspapers and the 1884 article in the Overland Monthly interviewing the Concow Indian Chief were primary sources. The 1882 History of Butte County as well as the 1918 History of Butte County are good sources for early Butte County history. I also relied on "Genocide and Vendetta, the Round Valley Wars of Northern California" published in 1981 for much of the history of the Round Valley Indian reservation (first known as Nome Cult Farm) the place where many Concow Indians ended up after their round up in 1859 and 1863. "The Indians of Chico Rancheria" by Dorothy Hill published in 1978 is a good reference book on Bidwell's mining adventure and his association with the Indians, many of whom worked for him mining and on his ranch. Steve Schoonover's article on General Kibbe's campaign in rounding up the Indians in Butte and Tehama Counties and Michele Shover's series of articles on Bidwell and the Indians are excellent, well documented sources for information. Articles by both these authors were published in the "California Territorial Quarterly", back issues are still available from The Gold Nugget Museum in Paradise. The "KonKow Valley Band of Maidu" web page was also helpful in my research.