



Miners in Waukesha Mine at Relief Hill, 1895.

CHAPTER 3: Nevada County — Nevada City, Grass Valley, Rough & Ready and vicinity

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY. The first settlement in Nevada county was made by John Rose, whose name was given to the celebrated Rose Bar, near Smartsville, Yuba county. Rose and Reynolds were engaged in trading with the miners and Indians, their store being at Rose Bar. They also supplied the mines with meat, being the owners of a large Mexican grant, on the south bank of the Yuba river, just above Marysville. Their cattle roamed the grassy plains from Bear river to the Honcut. Rose, who attended to this branch of the business, built a cattle corral at Pleasant Valley, between Bridgeport and the Anthony House, early in 1849. Later he established a trading post there, and built a small adobe house. Rose and Reynolds had been engaged in ship carpentering at Yerba Buena since 1842, and came to this region after the discovery of gold at Coloma.

Nevada was situated in a valley, surrounded by hills and creeks. Deer Creek was the most important stream, and even this beautiful transparent river was turned from its natural course; in truth the very heart of the city was dug up, and there was no telling where the digging would end.



Luther Melanchthon Schaeffer, 1849

“Brigadier General A. M. Winn has received a letter from Major General Thomas J. Green, First Division California Militia, and enclosing one to his Excellency, Peter H. Burnett, Governor of California.

Indian troubles are announced on that frontier. A volunteer company had prepared to march against the savages. The Indians are reported to number several hundred and to be headed by white men and some Chilians. An engagement is said to have taken place on Deer creek in which four whites and fifteen Indians were killed. General Green has very wisely determined to take the field, both for the protection of the citizens and to prevent excesses on their part. He recommends that the Adjutant General should be ordered to his head quarters with instructions and authority to make a further call upon the militia, and U. S. troops, should the emergencies require it.

We are further advised that some two hundred Indians were seen near Johnson’s ranch, on Friday. A party of thirty went out from Nicolaus, and killed four of them, one of the party being slightly wounded in the forehead. A teamster from Nicolaus was found dead in the neighborhood, with fourteen arrows in him. His wagon and merchandise had been burnt up, and four pair of oxen killed. The repeated outrages in every direction will induce a more general militia organization throughout this part of the State. We learn that

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Seattle Historical Library

This huge slip-tongue wagon made moving large logs easier. Logging began as soon as the early miners and settlers started to arrive in 1848. Along with the muscle of these hardy loggers, they harnessed power from mules, oxen, and steam engines.

Following the establishment of Rose’s trading post at Pleasant Valley, a man named Findlay, from Oregon, opened a trading post on Bear river near the mouth of Greenhorn creek. David Bovyer also opened a store at White Oak Springs, in Rough and Ready township, in September. The Rough and Ready company settled at the town of that name. Boston Ravine, and Badger Hill in Grass Valley were settled the same fall. Work was commenced on Gold Run and Dr. Caldwell built a store on the site of Nevada City. A party of Oregonians settled at Jefferson, and an Indiana company at Washington. The Holt Brothers and Judge Walsh erected saw mills about four miles below Grass Valley. A mule corral was built by a Frenchman at French Corral. During the fall of 1849, miners spread themselves all along the Middle and South Yuba, Deer creek, Bear river and along some of the principal tributaries of those streams.

In this spring of 1850 considerable trouble was experienced with the Indians, who committed a number of depredations, and were severely punished. Among other acts was the attack upon the Holt brothers at their saw mill about four miles below Grass Valley. During the preceding winter Samuel and George Holt and James Walsh and Zenas Wheeler had erected two saw mills and were busy sawing lumber on May 3, 1850, when the Holts were attacked in their mill by a party of Indians. Samuel Holt, the elder brother, fell at once, his body filled

with arrows. George Holt, with a small pocket-knife fought his way through eight or ten Indians up the hill to where the mill of Walsh Wheeler stood, where he fell bleeding and faint from thirteen wounds, into the arms of the proprietor. During the night the mill and property of the Holts were burned, and Walsh's camp was threatened. A few friendly Indians, Captain Day and another man came in during the night and gave their assistance. The body of Samuel Holt was brought in by old Chief Wemeh. The next morning Captain Day and his friend went to Camp Far West, near Johnson's Crossing, on Bear river, and the next day returned with twenty-four United States troops, supplied by Major Day, in charge of the station. Mr. George Holt was removed to Stocking's store, on Deer creek, and soon recovered. A hundred miners from Deer creek came to the scene, and in a few days they and the soldiers punished the Indians severely and drove them from the neighborhood. This was but one of a number of depredations and outrages committed at this time.

NEVADA CITY. Nevada City was at first the most important settlement in the region, and when the county was organized in the spring of 1851, became the seat of justice. The reason for the more rapid growth of Nevada City was the discovery of hill diggings and the "Coyote claims." It became for the time the commercial center of the county. In 1851 Grass Valley began to acquire considerable prominence; the discovery



Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

The following was attached to this image and looks like a clipping from an 1850s newspaper. It is a good example of how newspapers would create or sensationalize stories or half-truths in that era. "The Digger Indians of the Pacific slope have an unpleasant custom of burying young infants alive with the bodies of their dead mother. Recently, a young squaw of one of their bands died, leaving a papoose about four months old, and it is authentically asserted that the child, 'alive and kicking,' was placed on the body of its dead parent, and they were buried together."

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a volunteer company of young men is being now formed in Sacramento City. They will be the first to tender their aid should future developments require the further call upon the militia."

I sent the following note, with a flag of truce, to the chiefs, by an old woman who had been taken prisoner:—

Wolf creek camp, May 20, 1850.

To the Indian Chiefs Weima, Buckler, Poollel, and others:— Your people have been murdering ours, robbing their wagons and burning their houses. We have made war upon you, killed your men and taken prisoners your women and children. We send you this plain talk by one of your grandmothers. When you cease to rob and murder our people we will cease to make war upon you, and then you can come in and get your women and children, who will be taken care of in the meantime. If you wish peace come down to Johnson's old ranch, on Bear river, and report yourselves to Captain Charles Hoyt, who will protect you until your Great Father shall speak.

Thos. J. Green, Major General, First Division, California Militia.

Placer Times, of Sacramento, May 20, 1850.