

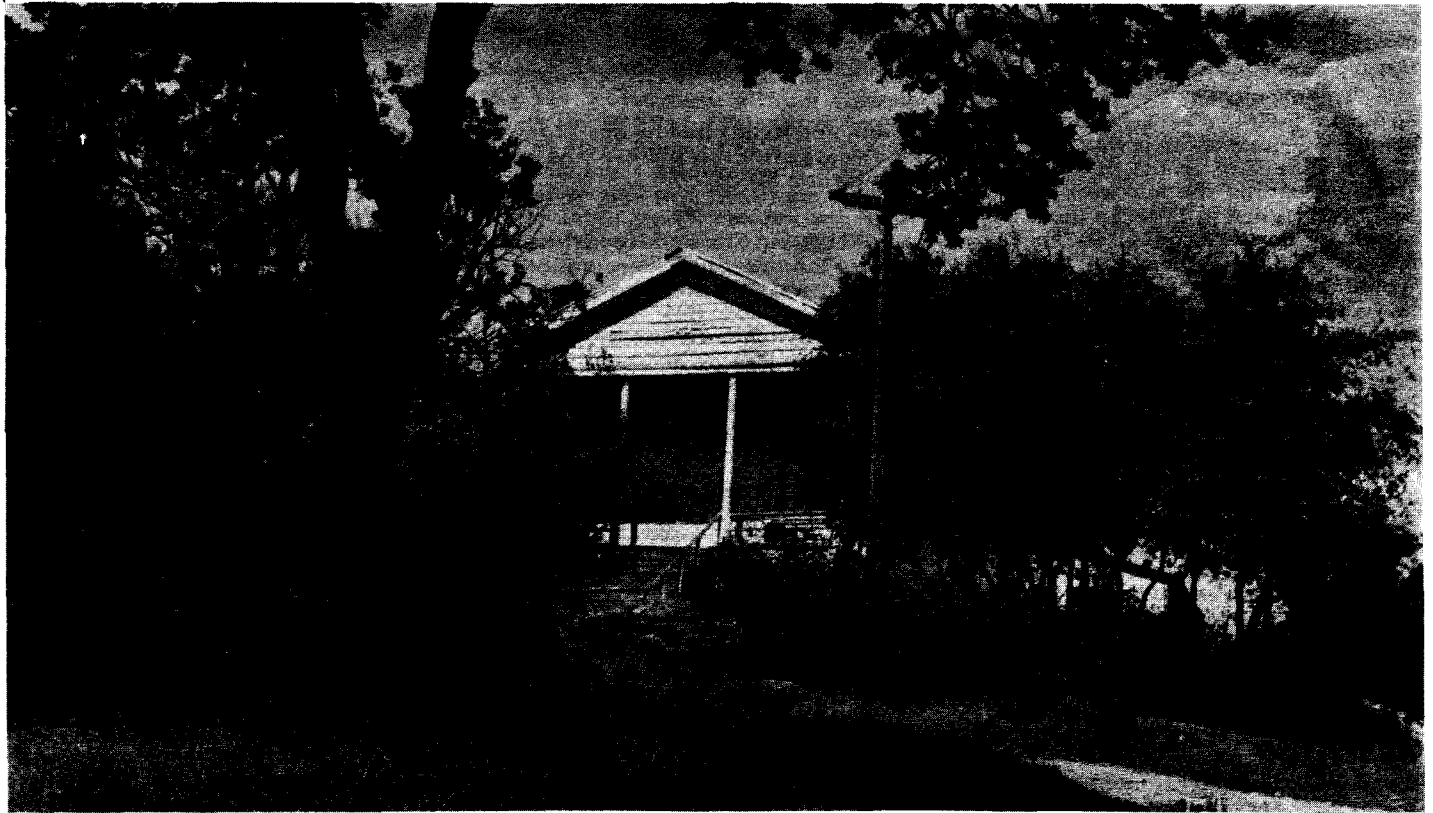
Nevada County Historical Society

VOLUME 30 NO.4

OCTOBER 1976

Rough and Ready

By Fay H. Dunbar
Part One of Two Parts



Old Independent Order of Odd Fellows Building built in 1854

Settlement

"The first Township in Nevada County in which a settlement was made, and the first Township to become known to the outside world, was Rough and Ready". Jonas Spect prospected up Deer Creek in 1848 and came thru this area but found nothing spectacular to report. He did find rich gold in the Yuba River near Timbucktoo. John Rose established a Corral near there, at a good river crossing place, early in 1849. He established a second Corral, later the same year near Penn Valley. Tho' he did some mining Rose was primarily a Trader and Cattleman. David Boyyer established a Post at White Oak Springs, near Rough and Ready, in that same year to trade with the Indians. They traded gold at equal

weight having no real idea of its value.

At an election in 1850 over 1000 votes were polled in Rough and Ready and the town boasted more than 40 buildings. In 1851 it was twice the size of Grass Valley or Nevada City and missed being selected as County Seat by six votes. At one time the population reached "6000 souls". Besides having many English and Portuguese there was a general mixture of all races and a good sized community of Chinese.

There is no written history of Rough and Ready except, in bits and pieces, as parts of histories of the gold country. There are still a few first generation descendants of the Pioneers living but even they will soon be lost to us. So first and almost second

generations of our history are gone except for those few recorded bits.

Growth

Early in the 1940's Rough and Ready's population dropped to its lowest ebb, about 200 people. At this time one of the well read columnists of the day wrote this description of the old Mining Camp "-just a few shacks resting in some aging trees". It has taken a lot of time and effort to erase the effect of this derogatory statement.

Currently, the town does not support much business. It is primarily a community of homes for the business people of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Beale Air Force Base. There are

over 450 homes and a large Mobile Home Park. The population is estimated to be at least 800 busy happy people. Many of the homes are small Ranches and most are more than adequate by today's standards. The Post Office numbers well over 600 Boxes and the Postal Route reaches out to another 100 or so homes of neighboring Ranchers. Tho' it is located directly on State Highway 20 the Tourist just driving thru does not see most of the homes that house this increased population.

However, Rough and Ready's interest lies not in this more or less ignominious present but in its rugged and rebellious past. It is one old Mining Camp that will not "ghost".

Name

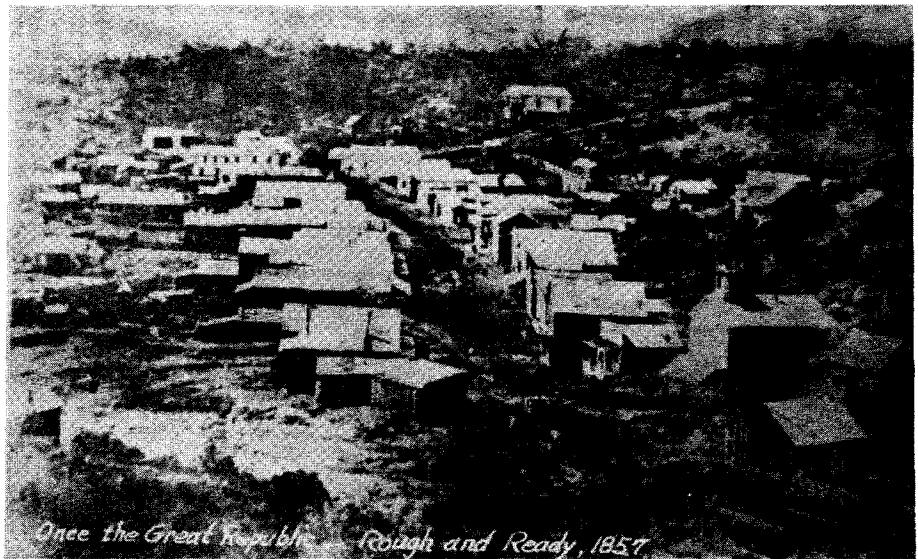
There were ten men in the Company that arrived "at that place" in 1849 under the leadership of Captain A.A. Townsend. The generally accepted date of their arrival is September but some historians claim it was February of that year. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican conflict, had been signed in 1848. In those days men were mustered out on the spot and left to find their own way home. It would be entirely possible to have reached "that place", after the Treaty was signed, by either date. Some records seem to indicate the Company crossed the mountains, on their way from Wisconsin, by the Truckee route and arrived on Deer Creek Creek.

The Company consisted of Townsend and the Reverend Pope of Iowa; Putnam and Carpenter of New York; and Peter Vanmetre, John Richards, Holt, Colgrove, Hardy, and Dunn of Wisconsin. When one of the men located rich diggings near their last stream crossing they "located at that place". They built themselves a rough log home about 12 by 24 feet in size and set to work to make the area their own.

These men had admired their Commanding Officer, Zachary Taylor, enough to name their Company for him. They had served under him in the Winnebago Indian Wars where he earned the nickname "rough and ready". It came from a report made to the War Office. It was reported that "he handled the Indians in the roughest way and the readiest manner". This remarkable man was later to serve as the 12th President of the United States. In his honor they named their Trading post Rough and Ready.

They stocked it with mining goods to divert attention from their diggings. Through a compromise with the Randolph Company, which had also located the rich diggings, they were able quietly to divide the area between them. Captain Townsend returned East to obtain men to work the claims. When he came back, in the Spring of 1850 with 40 men, he found the hillsides covered with prospectors who had staked out their own claims. His own workers soon deserted him to stake out claims.

And so, while the Rough and Ready Company was able to establish a



Once the Great Republic Rough and Ready, 1857

Rough and Ready had its ups-n-downs like most early mining camps due to fire. Two years after this picture was taken all was gone except the IOOF Hall sitting high on the hill.

fine and lasting Community with a very honorable name, they were unable to make their own fortunes a reality. The later settlers did not stop to build homes. Many of the cabins were merely wooden frames with Ships Canvas stretched over them for protection from the elements. Some 40 people added businesses to their homes to supply the needs of the Camp.

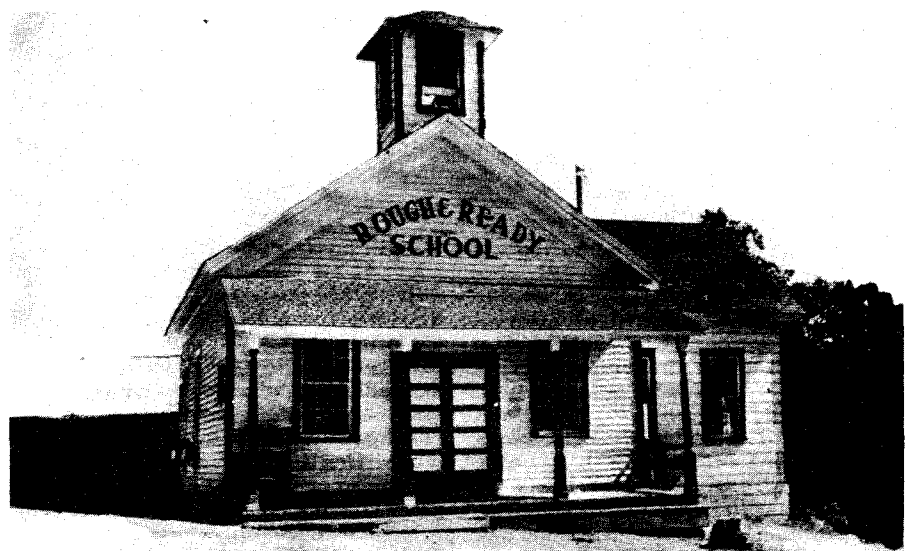
Fire

It was on June 28, 1853 that the first fire struck Rough and Ready. It is said to have been started by a candle too close to a canvas wall. There were several thousand miners spread out over the neighboring hillsides (the figure is variously reported from 1500 to 6000 by reputable historians) and so

the Camp, with the help of the neighboring Camps, was immediately rebuilt to fulfil their needs. The new Camp was laid out in two streets and was bigger and better than before. As reported in the Grass Valley National of November 4, 1853 "Phoenix like, she has arisen from her ashes and at this time presents a finer appearance than at any former period. The buildings erected are of a more substantial character, and the businessmen of the town, although they suffered severely by the fire, are preparing to do a large business this week".

Downey House

One of the businesses that was particularly improved after the fire



Five generations of Rough and Readyers have passed through the door of this neat white schoolhouse.

This school was established on March 4, 1868 and unionized with Indian Spring School on July 1, 1953.

was the Downey House. It had built a reputation and Mary Downey prepared to take advantage of that reputation. An advertisement appeared in the National on December 8, 1853: "The Downey House, Main Street, Rough and Ready. Travelers and Boarders may rest assured of getting the best accommodations at the Hotel". The paper wrote on November 4, 1853 "The Downey House when completed for taste and convenience, will be unsurpassed in the mountains". On December 25, 1853 the Golden Era of San Francisco wrote of how the hotel keepers vied with each other in setting the best holiday table. "Honest John Downey, of the 'Downey House' mine host at present, leads the list of competitors for recalling to the mind, (no, the stomachs of his friends) recollections of Christmas times at home in days gone by. Christmas soon will fully attest that he has not failed in gratiating tastes and appetites commensurate with the most refined epicurean cravings".



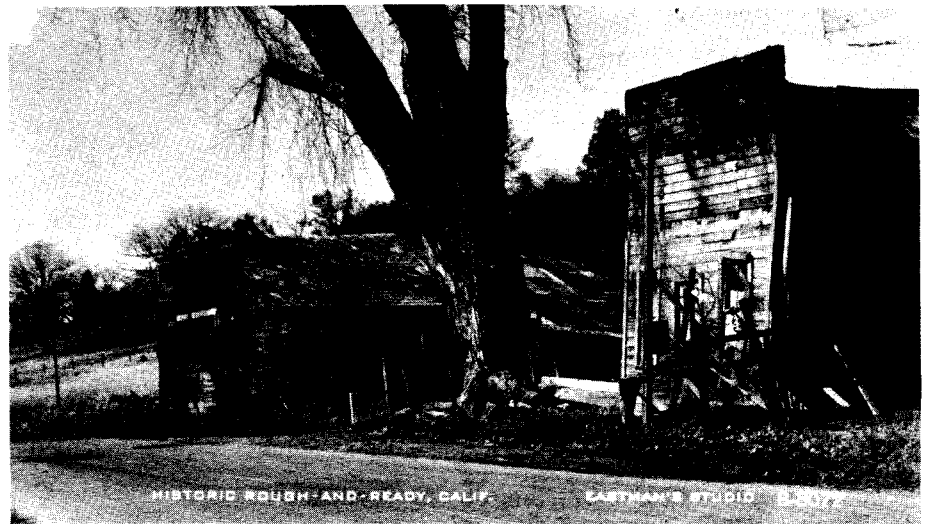
Pioneer Women of Rough and Ready

One of the very interesting facets of Rough and Ready's development was revealed at this time-its Women folk. Mary Downey who had arrived here in October of 1850 and built Downey House was a leader in this respect. She had "six stalwart sons and six beautiful daughters". She had been widowed on the harrowing crossing of the plains. Mr. Downey died at Fort Laramie. The needs of her children pressed her to build the business which continued serving visitors to the Sierras until it was torn down in 1947 in the name of progress.

First woman in the Northern Mines was Mrs. Riddle who came from Scotland around the Horn in a Sailing Vessel with her 'good husband'. They arrived in Rough and Ready in the fall of 1849. The Riddles left the Community in the 1860's for 'golder fields'. Another strong woman of those early days was the Reverend Mrs. James S. Dunleavy. Her husband, who was much respected in San Francisco in earlier days and had been elected to serve them on the State Constitution Committee in 1847, needed her to protect him from the 'bottle'. They arrived in Rough and Ready in April of 1850 and built the first frame house in the town.

There were many fine women who came in those early days; Maria Felicia who came from the Azores to become Mrs. John Francisco, Julia Single from Boston who married John Fippin, Maria Krause who came from Germany to become the bride of Simon Dikeman, Mrs. Bridget M. Torpie, the Downey girls, the Buffington sisters, and the women of the Grant family are just a few of the Pioneer women who made a contribution to Rough and Ready's future.

One of the more colorful women of our town was Jenny Moore. She was usually called Jenny on the Green because of her penchant for playing and winning on the 'Green'. Jenny was born Jenny Rowe and arrived in the



Rough and Ready had its share of saloons but the last to go was Fisher's Saloon next door to the Slave Girl Tree and Fippin's Blacksmith Shop.



Alice Abbott and Persia (Fisher) Bennett show off the styles of the times about the turn of the century. Two lambs but not one Mary. The site is near where the trailer park is now.

Northern Mines with the Circus. She was reported to be a friend of Lola Montez and it was thru this association that Lotta Crabtree came to Rough and Ready. Lotta, who later became a wealthy and world famous actress, made her first appearance at the age of seven years, before an audience of miners in the Fippin Blacksmith Shop. She was a spirited little thing and danced and sang, with verve, the numbers Lola had taught her. She was lifted onto the famous Anvil, which crossed the plains in Fippins covered wagon, to receive their acclaim and nuggets.

While this is only a very superficial list of the outstanding Pioneer women of our Community it is probably the basis for the comment in the Grass Valley Telegraph of April 6, 1854; "We believe that in proportion to size for a mountain village, Rough and Ready is ahead of all others in California, in the number of respectable ladies that can be collected together".

Organization

It also probably accounts for the fact that Rough and Ready had the first Church in the County. It was called The Christian Association and was used harmoniously by all religious faiths. Circuit Riders, particularly of the Methodist Church, arranged for Services to be held each Sunday. The Church was not rebuilt after the fire of 1859. Services have been held in our town from time to time over the years but there was no Church building for a hundred years. In 1959 the Wedding Chapel was built and has on occasions been used for Services.

In 1850 there were seven Saloons in the town and they all did a thriving business. It has been said they helped Rough and Ready earn its name. In 1851 there was a Masonic Lodge, an Odd Fellows Lodge, an Odd Fellows Encampment, two Divisions of Sons of Temperance, and the Church here. The Church and the Masonic Hall burned in the fire of 1859 as did five of the Saloons. Today Rough and Ready has one Lodge, the Rough and Ready Grange #795, a Chamber of Commerce, and a Volunteer Fire Department.

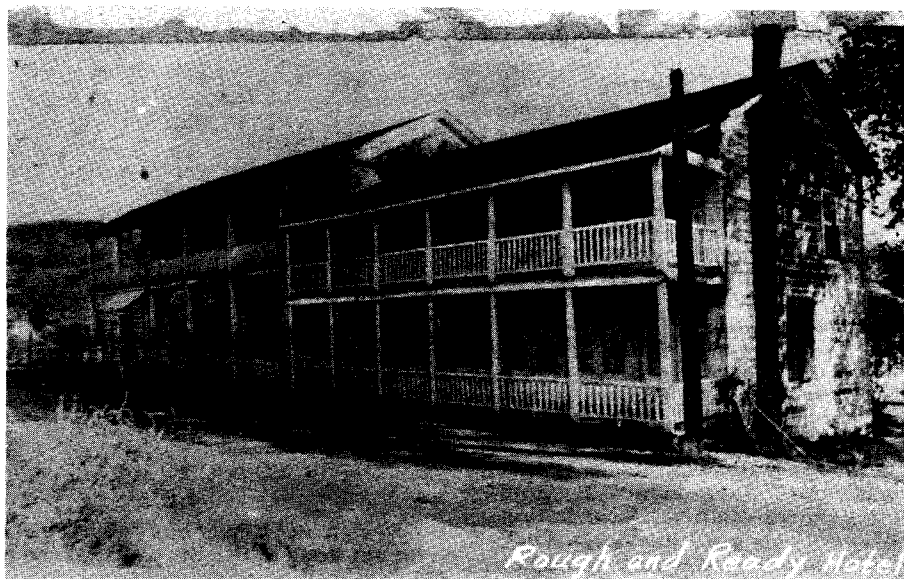
Remnants of the Past

The Odd Fellows Lodge, Mountain Rose Lodge #26 Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which was built in 1851 and rebuilt in 1854 was miraculously missed by the fire of 1859. It was restored by a Community Hall Association in 1952 and is presently owned by the Rough and Ready Grange #795 which was Chartered in 1956. Another remnant of the fires destruction was the old Fippin Blacksmith Shop which still stands where it and the Single Carpenter Shop were built over 100 years ago. The two shops were eventually combined, as the families were combined, and are now being restored by the Rough and Ready Chamber of Commerce.

The old Rough and Ready School building, built in 1856-57, is now privately owned but still stands on



Gathering at old Odd Fellows Building, Rough and Ready, California.



The Rough & Ready Hotel (now gone) was a popular stop over and social center. The upper left was a dance hall with the store and bar on the ground floor with the Rough and Ready Post Office and Hotel lobby. Proprietors, Sam and Rose Fisher on the right and Stewart Warner and Marthalene Gates to their left.

ground given for the School by the Portuguese Mining Company. Five generations of Rough and Ready children have attended the old school. A public School here was reported to State authorities in 1851. It was discontinued for lack of children. In 1853 Miss Franklin opened a private school which was conducted in the Odd Fellows Hall. The towns new public school was soon established in its new home.

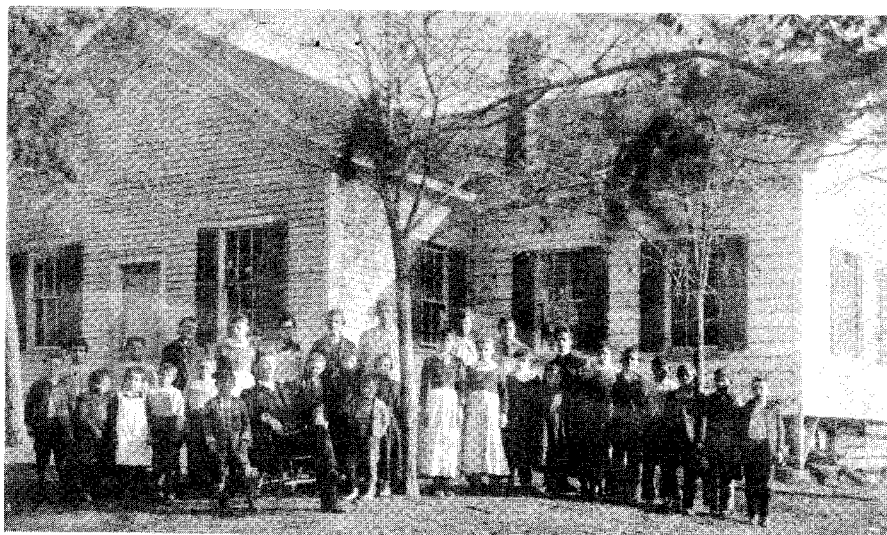
The old Toll House with much of its original structure and some old Toll signs has become "Toll House Antiques" and is probably the most interesting building in town. There are several old homes about but they are privately owned and are not visible from the Highway. There are two other Antique Shops in town both housed in new buildings.

Some examples of old Chinese dry rock walls are still intact. One very good example is near the Toll House. Remains of a monitor gouged hillside can be seen just at the bend of Squirrel Creek where it crosses Highway 20. At the foot of the grade as you enter Penn Valley can be found debris such as that, from the Ridge, that almost buried Marysville before Hydraulic Mining was outlawed by the Sawyer Decision of 1884.

The Mining Camp That Won't Ghost

You ask; how could the town, that once lost out as County Seat for Nevada County by only six votes, have died so completely? Its original riches were in gold of a beautiful color and close to the surface. This was both a blessing and a curse. No deep quartz mines were developed. The Surface mines had been almost worked out by the time of the second devastating fire in 1859. Even the Hydraulic "pipes" had not yet come into general use. Most of the towns 300 buildings burned to the ground. Many of the miners just moved on. Some went to the new Silver discovery in Nevada. In spite of these adversities Rough and Ready did not "ghost" because in addition to its original golden riches it had a strategic location. It was in the best natural opening to the gold country and it had a mild climate.

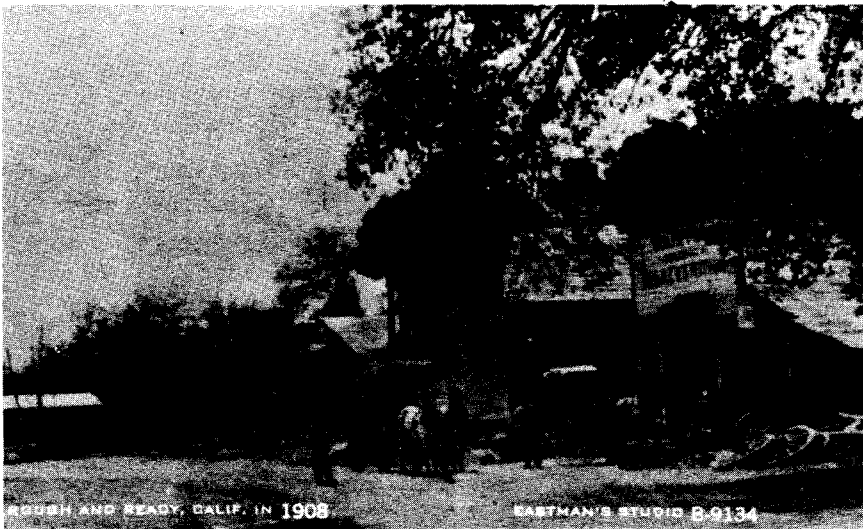
The story of the gold mines of Rough and Ready can be covered further on in its story but at this point Surface Mining should be covered since it was the chief cause of Rough and Readys decline. Surface gold is that found within the first hundred feet of the surface of the earth. Rough and Ready was apparently along the banks of one of the North-South rivers of the Tertiary period. Geologists tell us that they are at least one of the causes of our Sierra gold deposits. When the miners started work in Rough and Ready they were in one of these deposits almost on the banks of a Tertiary river. It reportedly passed south of Nevada City, just north of Grass Valley, then thru Rough and Ready and is lost near Timbucktoo. "...One company, in less than two years, took out over \$400,000 clear of expenses". They used the simple inexpensive ground sluicing method. The easy availability of such



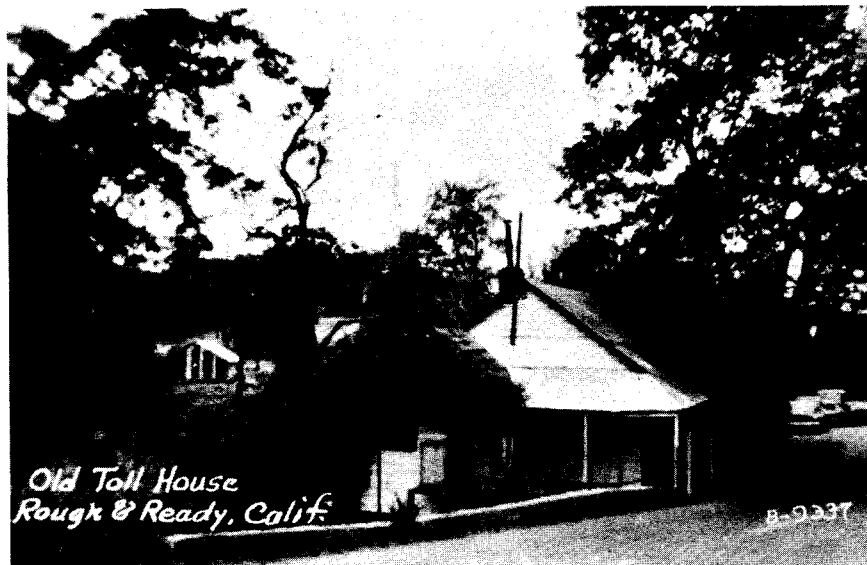
A class picture of Rough and Ready School about 1885. We cannot identify the teacher or the students, except the two tallest boys in the back row are Scott Black and Herb Black. See Picture of Calma and Vashti Black, daughters of Herbert Black.



Students at Rough and Ready School, left to right, Unknown, Josephine Beck, Norine Fippin, Florence Bennett, Albert Fippin, Unknown, Ethel Fippin, Calma Black, Vashti Black, Dolly Morrison, Andrew Beck, Ruth Dart and Lloyd Abbott. About 1914.



ROUGH AND READY, CALIF. IN 1908 EASTMAN'S STUDIO B-9134



Old Toll House
Rough & Ready, Calif.

B-9237

Transportation through Rough and Ready has kept the community alive from 1848 to the present day. Stage coaches on its original toll road to travel on State Highway 20 have been continuous.

gold and the vast numbers of miners trying to get these easy riches soon worked the diggings' out.

Thus when that second great fire hit Rough and Ready July 8, 1859 it was already doomed to decline. Many merchants just moved on along with the miners who were ever after the elusive gold. Rough and Ready was never rebuilt to its original prosperity. It did not "ghost" partly because of the caliber of its citizens but primarily because it was the hub of transportation into the Northern Mines and had a climate ideal for growing food for the hordes of miners. The Census of 1860 showed Rough and Ready with 1700 citizens. By 1870 this number had decreased to 1200.

Transportation

Its supremacy as Transportation Hub was threatened briefly during the heyday of Hydraulic Mining on the San Juan Ridge. A new road was built directly to the Ridge through Bridgeport and French Corral. The Sawyer decision in 1884 which sounded the death knell for Hydraulic Mining also sounded the death knell for that Route and as previously all transportation into the Northern Mines again came through Rough and Ready.

Transportation routes were developed early in 1849. When winter came and mud and snow made transportation of much needed goods more difficult it was brought from the end of wagon routes by mule trains. In the deep snow these goods were transferred to the backs of men with snow shoes. In the winter of 1852-53 Grass Valley was on the verge of actual hunger due to a delay at the Rough and Ready Grade. Rain and snow and the resulting mud had made the grade at the east edge of town impassable. In good weather extra teams of horses were added but even horses were unable to cope with the grade that winter. It was at this time that Marysville decided on a Plank road into the mines.

Due to the crisis of 1853 the business men of Marysville pledged \$350,000 for a Plank Road. Sacramento businessmen hearing of the plan delayed it with publicity. They were so successful that the citizens of Marysville, totally misled, defeated the measure on the 1854 ballot. It was a proven profitable undertaking and might have made Marysville a City to be reckoned with today.

The late Maud Taylor Calvert told many stories of freighting and toll activities on the Rough and Ready grade. Her home was just at the top of the grade where she had an excellent view of all its activities. There was once a very large stable on the site where our Wedding Chapel now stands. At this Relay Station horses were added to the freight wagons for the hill haul. After a storm everyone in town fell to with shovels to go along and fill chuck holes that endangered the wagons. Maud remembered seeing as many as 24 horses used to make the haul.

When the new link of Highway 20 is completed it will finally solve that

troublesome grade by completely bypassing it. Even today's diesels have trouble there. Originally the Toll House at the foot of the grade charged a fee for its use. They kept the road up and made every effort to aid the freighters.

Sawmills and Indians

Sawmills had begun to spring up in 1849. Timber was plentiful. The towns needed lumber for homes and businesses. The Mining Industry used tremendous amounts of timber for miles of sluice boxes and timbering mines. The first anywhere nearly complete list of sawmills was made in the mid 1850's. It listed 42 mills. 26 were run by steam and 16 by water. That year they sawed 30,810,000 board feet of lumber. The first two mills in the county were on Squirrel Creek between Boston Ravine and Rough and Ready. They were owned by James Walsh and Zenas Wheeler and the Holt Brothers. Walsh and Wheeler commenced operations in November of 1849. Samuel and George Holt began in March 1850.

Indians were not normally a factor in our history. Old Chief Wiemah was certainly not warlike and was quite friendly with settlers. But in the Spring of 1850 there were numerous depredations. Usually resulting in some loss of blood. On May 3, 1850 the Holt Mill just east of Rough and Ready was attacked. They were only 8 or 10 attackers but Samuel Holt was killed in the first rush. George Holt tho' badly wounded managed to escape and reach the neighboring Walsh-Wheeler Mill. They held the Indians off but the Holt Mill was burned. It was rebuilt in 1851 by a man named Ellsworth who operated it for a number of years.

On the morning after the attack Chief Wiemah helped carry George Holt to Nevada City. He soon recovered. Wiemah was said to have not participated in the depredations. It was recognized by Major General Thos. J. Green of the California Militia at Camp Far West that many miners had taken advantage of the Indians. As he said; "the Indians can be very useful to the miners if they have even a small portion of justice extended to them". He followed the Indians for several days and there were some light skirmishes but Green was able to arrange talks with the Chiefs. There was very little bloodshed and after all issues were discussed an agreement was reached. A Treaty was signed with Chief Wiemah, Chief Buckler, and Sub-Chief Poollei. The Chiefs kept their part of the bargain. There was only one other incident.

A 14 year old white boy was murdered. He was lagging way behind his fathers wagon, loaded with fresh beef, as they crossed Penn Valley. Some indications were that the attack was brought on by the white boys possession of a knife that the Indian lad wanted. As agreed in the Treaty Wiemah hunted down the Indian culprit, a lad named Chollo, and surrendered him to the White mans Court at Rough and Ready. He was tried and hanged. Wiemah and a large number of the tribe watched. There were no further incidents recorded in the area.

Gold Mining

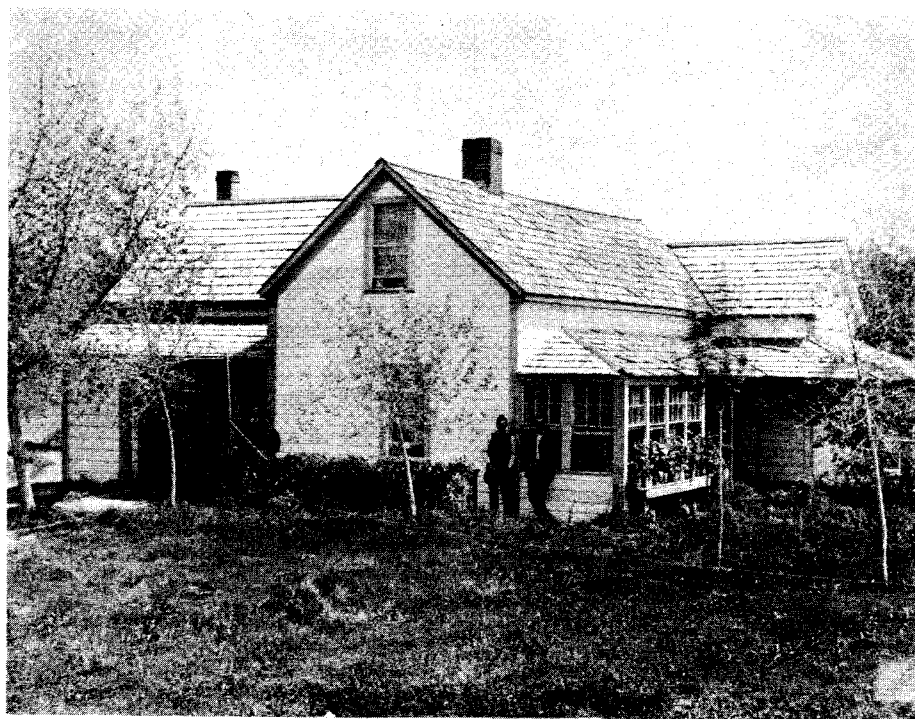
The Sawmill industry was vital to Rough and Ready. Not only because the town was built of wood, which unfortunately burned readily, but also because miles of Sluice boxes were used in Rough and Ready mining. Water was brought down the hills from every source that could be reached. Sluice boxes had very quickly followed the Gold Pan. Only through use of long sluices could enough dirt be washed to make mining profitable. Into these boxes was shoveled the aurefiroous soil and behind the riffles in the bottom settled the heavy gold. In more stingy soil mercury or the like was also used in the sluices to attract the golden metal. Later when the Hydraulic nozzle came into use entire hills were washed down into shorter sluices or Long Toms where the golden metal was captured.

There were many sluices in Rough and Ready but the three owned by the Portuguese Mining Company were the setting for this story. As we all know the Chinese in those days were looked upon as less than men. They were payed practically nothing for their labor and were not allowed to own claims of their own. Needless to say they picked up the yellow metal where they could. There were, of course, many white men who used this method also but it was principally Chinese who mere mercilessly shot at night as they walked the sluices with their bobbing lanterns, picking up

whatever gold they could spot. The men who labored all day could not be expected to allow their hard earned gold to be lost in this way. They posted Shot Gun Guards on the sluices with orders to shoot to kill. (It was a hard world).

There was one ameloriating aspect of the situation. Those same men who had stood Shot Gun took up a collection to send old Macao home to die as he had wished. He was the last of the 3,000 Chinese reportedly working in Rough and Ready in its heyday. Work on the Central Pacific Railroad had taken most of the Chinese. Macao's wish was that when he became too old to work he could be sent home to China to die. They took him to San Francisco, bought him a ticket, and put him on a boat bound for Macao. Nothing was heard from him again.

The earliest plan to bring water to Rough and Ready was in 1850. A man named Moore started a 15 mile ditch from up Deer Creek. Moore completed one mile. The winter of 1850-51 was very dry and provided the incentive to finish that ditch. It was completed in 1851. The Portuguese Ditch came much later. It was actually a part of the Hydraulicing System for Smartville. The Excelsior Company brought water from the Yuba River miles up in the mountains. It was completed in 1867. Hydraulicing was used to some extent in Rough and Ready, mostly by the Portuguese Mining Company, who were favorably located along Squirrel



Early Pioneers of Rough and Ready were the Black homesteaders. This is the Black home with Left to Right; Vashti Black, Herbert Black, Lillian Black, John and Scott Black. The home is now owned by the Bursill's.

Creek and below the Portuguese Ditch.

Deep Quartz mines were never explored to their fullest in Rough and Ready. The Quartz proved to be very hard and lots of money was involved in getting this type of mine to pay. The Osceola, possibly the best known, tried three times before backers gave up. The Black Bear, later called the Forlorn Hope, the Mistletoe, the Spanish Mine, and the Ironclad were worked until early in the 1900's with no great appearance of richness. The Ironclad closed in 1911 due to stockholders dissatisfaction with income versus cost of handling the ore.

On April 15, 1905 John T. Black made arrangements with Francis Torpie; Book 3 of Leases at page 559 to "for the purpose of running tailings from the mine, known as the Spanish Mine," into "that certain ravine running diagonally across --Section 24 Township 16--". How much longer it was in operation is not recorded. The Forlorn Hope also managed to survive but there was no great development.

The first attempt for the Osceola Ledge, in what is known as Osceola Ravine where it is traversed by the Rex Reservoir Road, was in 1855. It was prospected under contract with E.W. Roberts. "A remarkably rich pocket of 'bunch' was found in this ledge, and in addition to several thousands of dollars taken out in solid specimens, a lot of several loads, worked by mill process, returned an average of \$225 per ton". A 24 stamp mill was constructed and work began in April of 1856 but the results were very disappointing to the San Francisco backers who soon withdrew their support.



John Theodore Black from an old portrait was owner-operator of the Black Bear Mine, 2½ miles northwest of Rough and Ready on Deer Creek. Pictures show the Mine office, the mine operation and John Black's cabin.

In 1876 the Osceola was again opened up and a 10 stamp mill was erected by Messrs Tew and Morgan. Ore at this time yielded \$377 a ton but this too soon disappeared. A shaft was sunk to find a 'chimney' which was supposed to exist. It was not located.

The Osceola was again opened in 1880 when it was discovered the shaft had cut right through the chimney. "Work was being prosecuted with

vigor". There is no further recording of work on the Osceola after this chimney was cleaned out. There were numerous other Ledges located in Rough and Ready but none were ever developed to any great depth due to disappointing surface results. A five stamp public mill was opened by a man named Smith just where the Country Store is now but it soon closed since so few Quartz mines were kept working.



Black Bear Mine



Faye M. Dunbar the Author of this bulletin resides in Rough and Ready, is a columnist and is a Past President of the Nevada County Historical Society. She has gathered information on Rough and Ready for several years. This 128 year review of happenings fits Rough and Ready into "The Mining Camp that won't ghost." The Society is indebted to Faye Dunbar for her work that will be interesting reading to all of us and those that follow.

Clinton H. Lee, Editor



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bibliography:

The Rip Roaring Town of Rough and Ready by Andrew Rogers
California by John Caughey
Gold Versus Grain by Robert Kelley
Experiences of a Forty-niner by Charles Ferguson

Acknowledgments:

Jack and Esther Bixler
Retha Downey
Doris Foley
Hepsi Frank (Mrs. Wm.)
Marcolm Hammill
Loveta Hornsby
Elza Kilroy
Martina (Morrison) Paull
Doris (Frank) Trauner
Lyle White