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Rough and Ready

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Part Two of Two Parts



Community and family picnics were popular and afforded neighbors great opportunities to get acquainted and for the younger set to romance. These were dress occasions in their Sunday best and Easter bonnet. Scene is (top) Pleasant Valley, near Lake Wildwood, at the Born Ranch about 1892; (below) at Ennors Grove just below Rough & Ready in 1889. These picnics were annual affairs and continued until the late twenties all over the county. One still is most enjoyable, the Sanford Picnic on Garden Bar Road.

Ranching

As mining disappeared from the area more and more Ranching developed. In 1858 County statistics show there were 271 ranches in Nevada County. Ninety-nine of these were in Rough and Ready Township. It was the most productive farming portion of the county. This seems to justify the Chamber of Commerce claim to being the Banana Belt of the Sierras. Many a disappointed miner had discarded his pick and shovel for the spade and plow. The fertile valleys were settled and the business of raising food for the hordes of hungry miners became a very profitable one.

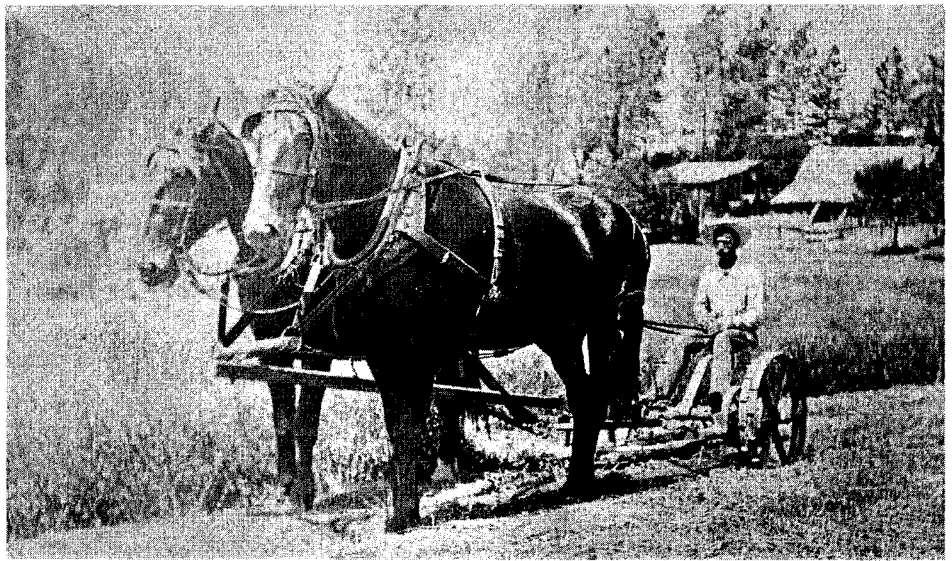
Improvements on ranches in Rough and Ready reached \$114,700. A statement made in 1858 by Thompson and West about ranching here was "Plenty of water and a good clear atmosphere unite to give the mountain fruit a flavor that the sun parched valleys cannot produce". Another equally true comment was that "most of the ranchers keep cattle and make a great deal of butter, mountain butter having a firmness and flavor wanting in the valley product".

The development of the Montgomery Ranch at Penn Valley in Rough and Ready Township is one of the proofs of these comments. Under the ownership of John and Ferdinand Montgomery, who settled there in 1850, the Ranch had become a showplace. When the Dikemans, Simon and Maria, took over part of it in 1878 they added a Creamery. The Creamery was leased to Debbia Dobbins who knew about milk, cream, even the famous Cornish Scalded Cream, butter and cheese. In 1912 that Creamery won recognition in The Great West Magazine as one of the best in California. There were three in Nevada County at that time.

Other ranches of note at that time were the George Beck and Charles Colling Ranches on Deer Creek which were noted for their peaches, the Ed Walters Ranch which supplied the entire area with fresh vegetables well into the 1900's, and a great many Cattle ranches. The cattle ranches began in the lower elevations and Nevada County ranchers, Swan and Gus Segerstrand, J.H. Nile, Fred Horton, W.B. Church, Dart, Wm. Eddy, Alderman, Robinson, Ennor, Martel, Morrison, and numerous others.

Contributions of Pioneer Families

The Frank Ranch provides an excellent picture of the change from mining to ranching. It also provides the story of Maria Felicia. Among the early day families that left their mark on Rough and Ready and even Nevada County was the Frank family. The family has passed the Century mark in living and working the land that their grandfather John Francisco purchased, as a partner in the Portuguese Mining Company, in 1867. John arrived in Rough and Ready early in the 1860's. His native land was Fayal in the Azores. How he got from the Azores to San Francisco and how he came from San Francisco to Rough and Ready



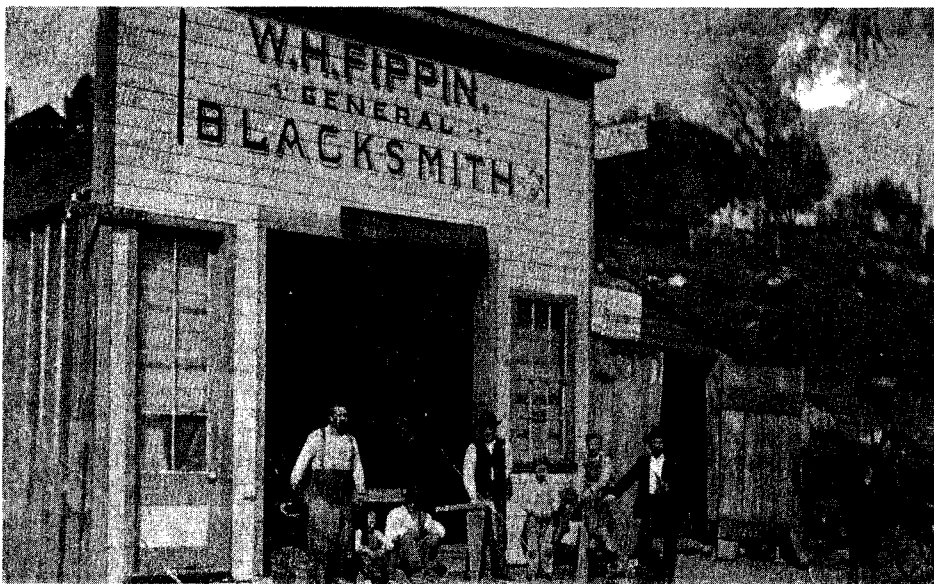
Agriculture in Rough & Ready turned out to be the main source of income instead of gold and gave its citizens a constant and reliable income to survive generation to generation. Here we have members of the Frank family with King Frank on the mower and Manuel Frank and his son Bill hauling hay in for winter feed.

history does not record. It was the custom in those days for entire crews of seamen to jump ship in San Francisco when they heard of the golden treasure so free in California. John and the men who joined him in forming the Portuguese Mining Company were probably men of this temperament. Many of these men moved on with the gold quest when mining became unprofitable. John turned to ranching and a home and family. He began purchasing neighboring Claims. He became a citizen of the United States on October 1, 1868 and adopted the name John Frank.

On July 14, 1870 he married the lovely Maria Felicia brought to him from the Azores by her brother. Their marriage is the 34th recorded in the Book of Marriages in Nevada County. Way back in 1864 when the lovely Maria was to arrive, John built a sawmill. The Portuguese Mining

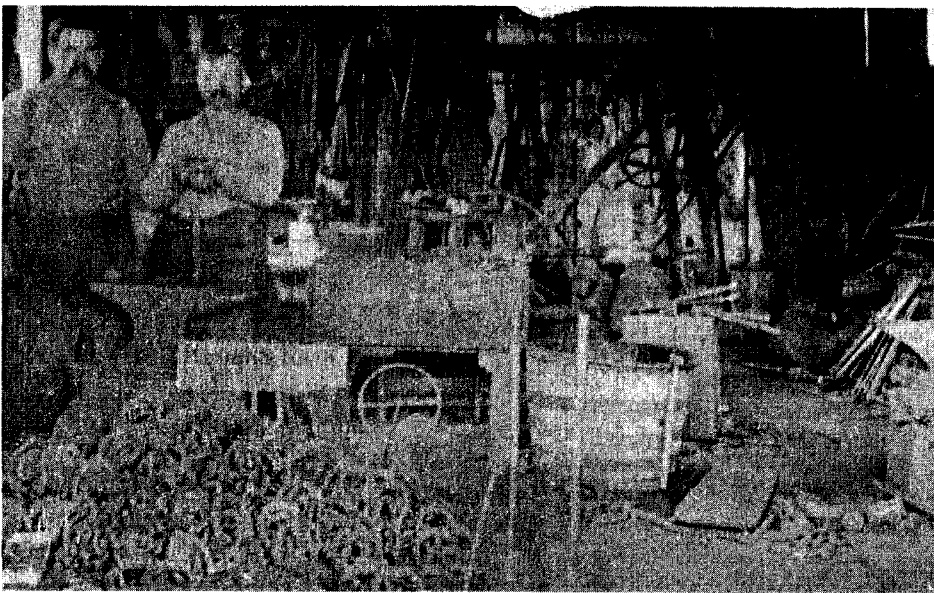
Company had cleared a road along the banks of the stream where they were working. John harvested the biggest and best Oaks from along that road with his team of oxen and his two hands. He cut, hauled, and milled those selected trees into lumbers and boards to build Maria a home. Ten Frank children were born and raised in that home. John Frank died there in 1919 at the age of 83 years. Maria Frank preceded him by three years, 1916, at the age of 76 years. Manuel Frank who inherited his fathers love of ranching lived there until his death in 1969. His children still live on and manage the ranch. Joseph Frank became a Supervisor for Nevada County in 1918 and served five terms. He served until 1938. **The Fippins:**

Among the many other early day families that influenced the development of Rough and Ready was the Fippin family. John Fippin, came to



Every community had a blacksmith shop and Fippin's Blacksmith Shop in Rough & Ready was a busy place and was next to Single's Carpentry Shop. Shown in front is Charlie, George, Marion and Jim Single with W.H. "Bill" Fippin and some young Fippins.

Below—
Bill Fippin and Stewart Warner in 1905 at the blacksmith shop in Rough & Ready. (Toll House Antiques Photo)



Rough and Ready across the plains in a covered wagon. He was a blacksmith and brought with him the tools of his trade. The family originally came from England but John was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1834. They arrived in Rough and Ready in 1850. John Fippin's bride Julia Single arrived in 1856 at the age of 10 years.

The Singles:

The Single family came around the Horn in a Sailing Ship from Boston. John Single was a carpenter. John Fippin and Julia Single were married in 1867. They had 10 children. They were raised in the Fippin home just down the street (Highway 20) from where the Blacksmith Shop still stands. The old Single home is back of where the Blacksmith Shop stands. This shop,

as it is today, is a combination of the Fippin Blacksmith Shop and the Single Carpenter Shop of early Rough and Ready.

Five members of the Fippin Family have served as School Trustees for the Rough and Ready School. This record began with great grandfather (1) John Fippin Sr., then (2) Edward Wilson husband of Nellie Bennett who was the daughter of Alice Fippin Bennett who was the daughter of John Fippin Sr., then (3) John Fippin Jr., and (4) Edna Gilfillan and (5) Helen Steele both daughters, of Nellie Wilson.

Both Gertrude Fippin Archibald and Alice Fippin Bennett took turns serving as Rough and Ready Postmasters and provided Post Offices when the Desk of the Rough and Ready Hotel was not available for that purpose.

Wm. C. (Bill) Fippin followed in the footsteps of his father and did most of the work as Smithy. The others of the family were avid miners. Asa Fippin was perhaps the strongest booster of the Osceola Ledge. Shortly before his death in 1968 he stated that he still believed there was lots of gold there.

An interesting story is told of Asa Fippin (some historians attribute the find to Rancher Perley Ladd). The lucky finder, whichever one he may have been, was hunting the family cow one day and stumbled on a most unusual looking rock. He picked it up and found it to be extremely heavy for its size. It was a beautiful kidney shaped nugget. It assayed at over \$1200 dollars. That's the way gold was in Rough and Ready in the early days.

Asa was a great story-teller. One of his favorites was the story of the broken nugget with one-half missing. Seems this nugget showed up one night in the "clean-up" bearing a pick mark through it. This meant a good sized nugget was still in a pocket somewhere along the stream bank where they had worked the day before. The next day the men reworked the bank and found the matching part. The two pieces made a considerable prize.

Another of his favorites was of the Reverend Dunleavy. The Reverend had just completed prayers over a fresh grave and when he lifted his eyes all the mourners were out staking claims. They had found nuggets in the newly dug earth. The Reverend's only request was that he too share in the booty and be allowed one of the claims.

Another favorite was about a miner who had been fatally injured. He was too near death so the miners moved him into the Saloon and made him as comfortable as possible on a Pool Table. When this was quietly taken care of they stood about and placed bets on the exact moment he would die. (Fortunately there were pleasanter moments in their lives).

Trees in Rough and Ready History

Trees don't usually seem to be associated with history but Rough and Ready had two trees that were. One is left and the other fell in 1962. The tree still standing is a Cork Elm. It is not native to this area. Its history is quite vague but it is at present a ward of the State Highway Department and stands across from the old Blacksmith Shop. There are two hugh timbers in its shade, that have been used by generations of Rough and Ready groups to exchange 'tall tales' in their spare time. It has been named the Liars Bench. The tree itself was planted in 1894 by John Fippin Jr., W.H. Fippin, and 'Slim' Lopes.

The other tree, a giant cottonwood, which crashed early in its death in 1962 was planted early in 1851 by the Slave Girl Caroline Allen. Some of my informants actually knew Caroline. The late Maud Calverts father, Jack Taylor, saw Caroline stick her switch into the ground. He followed its growth as it became a tree. Caroline came around the Horn in a Sailing Ship in the late 1850's. She and her father Frank

Allen, with approximately 50 others, were brought to Rough and Ready by Col. William English to provide workers for a mine in the Randolph Flat area owned by the Colonel and two associates Abel and Porter.

Caroline liked her spirits and frequently rode into Rough and Ready for a little nip. She preferred the Saloon in the Hotel across the road from the blacksmith shop because she got her drinks free. The bartender, J.M. Walling, was part Indian and Caroline contended she would only be drinking his share since he was not legally supposed to have liquor. Right or wrong it worked out well for Caroline because she usually got her free drink.

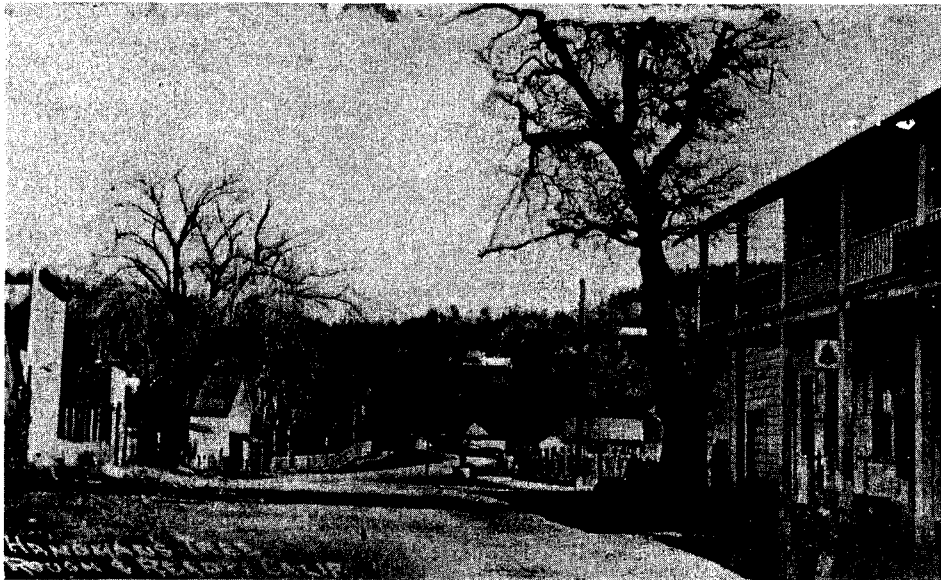
It was on one of these little trips that Caroline stuck her cottonwood switch into the ground when she tied her pony at the blacksmith shop hitching rail. It was a wet day early in 1851. The switch rooted and grew into a giant. It reached a height of more than 75 feet and became known as the "Slave Girl Tree". It was a Rough and Ready landmark for more than 100 years. Caroline's tree crashed to the ground one July night in 1962. Highway crews worked well into the daylight hours cutting and moving the portions that were blocking the Highway. Some of the skeleton of the old giant can be seen today on the hillside north of the Highway.

When Colonel English was later killed in a robbery, his former slaves, left without any guidance or means of support, gradually drifted away from Rough and Ready. Caroline did housework for many years for some of the local families. She later moved to a cabin near the old Nevada County Hospital where she died in the early 1900's at over 100 years of age. She died alone and nearly blind.

Mail

Our Pioneers needed mail, or some news from home, almost as much as they needed provisions. One of the first things our freight routes arranged to bring was mail. The great avalanche of mail that arrived in Sacramento and San Francisco for the Christmas of 1849 was delivered into the mountains by mule back. The mail was accompanied by a man named James Birch who came from Sacramento through Johnsons Crossing, Roses Bar, Rough and Ready and as far on into the mountains as he was able to locate recipients. Word went ahead of him and people rushed in from the hills with hopes high. Letters at first were \$2.50 and newspapers \$1.00 but rates were soon reduced to \$1.00 per.

By early 1850 Mr. Birch was driving an express wagon, or sometimes a Stage, for Bowers Brothers Express Line more or less regularly over his route. A man named Hamlet Davis collected a list of some 1500 names for which he also collected and delivered mail in the 1850's. Hoffman and Little and Langton's ran small express lines into the area. Langton's was headquartered in Downieville. By 1851 the route was changed to come thru Round Tent and Birch drove 5



A view of Rough & Ready looking East towards Grass Valley leading to what is still known as the Rough & Ready Grade on State Highway 20.

Stages that far and then changed to Express Wagons. By 1851 Wells Fargo began running freight, mail, and passengers. Though there were many, many Express Companies they were eventually almost all part of the Wells Fargo System.

Rough and Ready's Post Office was established in 1850. Alexander M. Blanton was appointed Postmaster late that year, probably by the Governor, as a temporary measure. Marcus Nutting was the first official Federal appointee and his appointment was July 28, 1851. Mail which made its first stop here was often addressed to Grass Valley, Boston Ravine, or Centerville near Rough and Ready.

After mule back deliveries were discontinued mail in Rough and Ready was distributed from the Desk of the Downey House (until 1843) except for two brief periods. Postmasters changed almost as the owners of the Hotel changed. Mary Downey did the job in 1853. J. M. Walling took over in 1859. Mr. Schroeder had the Hotel for a time and sold to E.H. Fowler in 1890 but was soon back again until 1906. Numerous other Postmasters served for short periods including Colonel E.F. Brundage. Mrs. Letitia Vroman was the last Postmaster before the war years. When the Vromans moved to a Defense Plant area the Post Office was discontinued. Rough and Ready was without local mail distribution for five years.

June 16, 1948 was a red letter day for Rough and Ready. A new Post Office was opened in the Rough and Ready Country Store building. It was built specifically by Andrew Rogers for that purpose. Mrs. Geneva Rogers had been appointed Postmaster and Postal Service was restored. A fine ceremony was arranged with Postal dignitaries from Sacramento, Auburn, and Nevada City. A horse drawn stage arrived from Nevada City driven by Ned Granholm with Frank Fippin riding Shotgun. Such well known historians as Doris Foley and Elza Kilroy were passengers. The Twin Cities bus also delivered

a load of dignitary, many in Pioneer dress, to celebrate the occasion. A big Spaghetti Feed was held that night with dancing until all hours. Thus began a new era for our Post Office. Only twice before had it had a home of its own. For a short period Gertrude Fippin delivered mail from a small building built especially for the purpose and once for a short period Alice Fippin Bennett delivered it from her Shop.

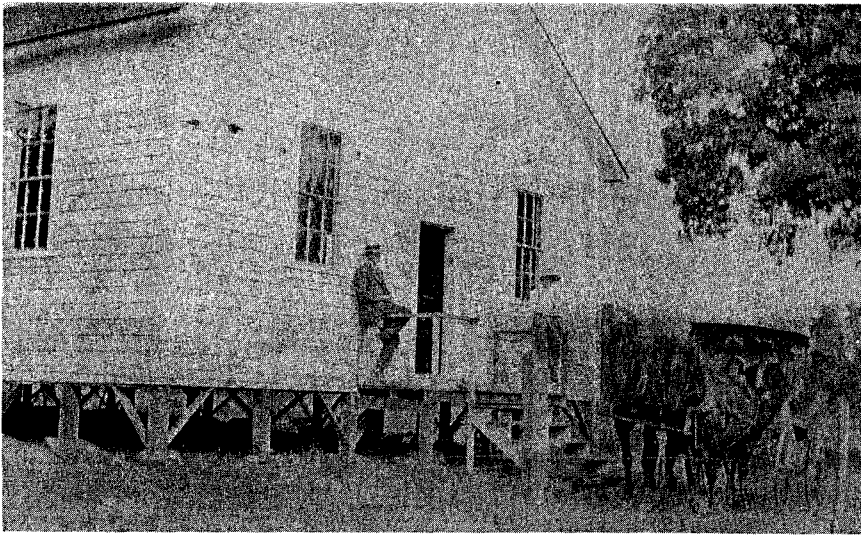
Electricity

Now-a-days we think of electricity as essential. Rural Electrification did not reach Rough and Ready until 1924. A small beginning was made in 1894 when Francis Torpie deeded to John Glasson "the right to erect, maintain and forever use upon, over and across all lands owned by them--in Section Twenty-four Township---such poles and wire as may from time to time be necessary in transmitting the electricity generated at a generating plant the Grantee contemplates erecting on the South Bank of Deer Creek in Section Thirteen---". (Book 82 of Book of Deeds at page 63) There was one follow-up when in 1896 John Glasson transferred his rights to Nevada County Electric Power Company and from then on Rough and Ready's electrification was in the hands of money who preferred to wait until the venture would be more profitable.

Telephone

The telephone came to Rough and Ready in 1912. It was the IXL Farmer Line service wholly built and maintained by the subscribers who wanted service. Our area maintained this service to a point on Ridge Road and from there P.T. and T. took over. They provided connecting and switching between Farmer Lines and people in and outside of the area. To provide this Service it cost each of the Subscribers on the line \$3.60 per year.

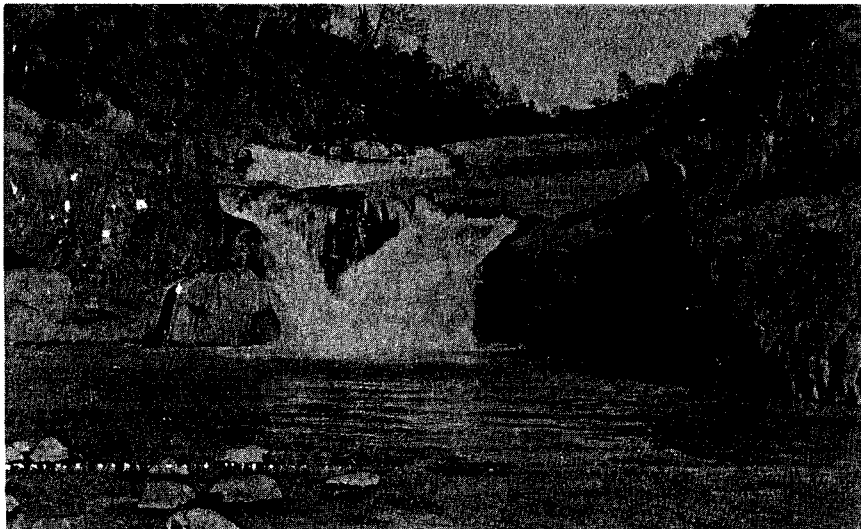
Farmer lines left a lot to be desired in the way of good service.



Good times many still remember at the Penn Valley Dance Hall with its spring floor. It was located on the Spenceville Road a short ride from Rough & Ready. Tom and Will Casey on the porch with the Herbert Black family and friends in the two horse surrey.



A scene about 1918 on the road in front of the Morrison Ranch property, (shows left to right) Sheriff of Nevada County John Martin and his deputy Henry Witter holding the buggy horse. Martina Morrison, mounted and William Toland of the Toland Ranch also mounted. The occasion no one remembers.



Deer Creek Falls a part of beautiful Yuba River country offers a scene of great beauty a mile north of Rough & Ready and a popular recreation spot for a long time.

There were two lines within the community. Often when neighbors wanted to talk to one another they would go out on the hillside and call to their friends to pick up their receiver rather than try to go through the telephone company switching and connecting service to reach them.

The original subscribers on Line 5 reads like a history of the community. They were Guy Robinson, H.B. Skewes, John Casey, Jesse Ennor, Lee Mason, J.H. Nile, J.C. Grant, Frank Ennor, A.N. Martell, Hy Walters, Gus Segestr-and, William Fippin, Gassoway Bros., W.B. Church and Swan Segestr-and. The Church's sold their privilege to the Bixlers in 1943. There were numerous lines established. Within Rough and Ready there was also Line 2 for which there is only a partial list. It served the Bursills, the Morrisons and the Franks among others. The Farmer Line subscribers over the years reads like a register of Pioneer families. They include J.H. Gleason, Ralph Winslow, Frank Fippin, R.L. Capps, Harold Ennor, Joe Grande, George Briggs, Wade Brown, Thomas Casey, R. Tisher, Ed Walters, Fred Fippin, Clifford Crandell, Dan Morrison, and Manuel Frank.

It was not difficult to get the lines established but maintenance for busy farmers was more difficult. Assessment for those who did not do their proper share of the work was \$3.00 per day for someone else to do the job.

Secession

The event that precipitated that climatic Mass Meeting called by Colonel E.F. Brundage in April of 1850 was said to have been the episode of miner Joe Swiegart and the Boston Ravine Slicker. Joe was popular with the other miners. He had a claim that the whole camp knew to be a good one. One day the Slicker came into the Saloon where Joe and the others were relaxing. He offered to buy Joe's claim at an exorbitant price. First he would need to check to see that it was as good as Joe said. He bet Joe that you couldn't take out \$200 worth of gold in a day. Joe knew his claim was good and accepted the challenge. Papers were drawn and judges appointed.

These miners were simple honest law-abiding men and had never even heard of the gentle art of malingering. The Slicker went to work. As he drew near the \$200 mark he slowed more and more. Just before he reached it he quit entirely. The papers had not specified how long he was to work. It was legal but wrong. Justice was simple in those days but the closest justice was in Marysville, the Territorial headquarters. So Rough and Ready seceded and established its own law and order. The next morning it rescued what was left of Joe's money and took the Slicker to the edge of town with instructions never to return.

Rough and Ready succeeds again each year on April 7. The Flag of the Great Republic is raised on the Community Flagpole in a brief ceremony. On the last Sunday in June an all day celebration is held beginning with



Rough & Ready celebrates annually the towns secession from the Union and became the Great Republic. Fay Dunbar takes an active part with four other Rough and Ready "Fire Balls" for high community spirit. (Left to right) Helene Hurlbut, Marguerite Spaite, Fay Dunbar, Lisetta Scheave, and Lillian Oliver.

a chuckwagon breakfast and followed by a day of games and fun. This is to celebrate the return to the Union.

The Flag flown over the Great Republic on Secession Days is said to be the Generals Flag with Company modifications. It was presented to Rough and Ready on November 1, 1965 by Joe Santley Producer for TV Channel 13. He produced the Rough and Ready episode for their Death Valley Days Series.

The Flag of the Great Republic was originally raised in 1850 on April 7 when the miners, under the leadership of Colonel E.F. Brundage, declared themselves independent, elected Officers and drafted a Constitution remarkably similar to that of the United States. This was Rough and Ready's most rebellious moment.

The Secession lasted only about three months. The miners found the trials of government not to their liking. When U.S. Independence Day rolled around the neighboring Camps were planning celebrations, they decided to scuttle the whole bit so that they might celebrate too. They did not advise the Territorial Government of their intentions and so the Secession is said to have remained unknowingly in effect until 1948 when the Post Office was to be reestablished here. The Territory had been busy with its own problems at the time. It was in September of that year, 1850, that California became the 31st State of the United States.

