The Ranching Period in the North Fork Eel River Basin 1865 to 1905

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This paper was written over two decades ago when I worked as the assistant forest cultural resources specialist on Six Rivers National Forest. In an effort to bring this paper to a wider audience I have made some minor editing changes and placed it on my web site. I have tried to avoid too many new comments except where previous information needed to be clarified. In addition to some minor editing I have placed in text boxes or in brackets additional comments or relevant information.

TK
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Introduction

The history of the North Fork of the Eel River basin, beginning in 1854 with the end of the prehistoric era, has been sub-divided into a number of periods. Each period is defined by the dominant socio-economic themes and land-use activities taking place at the time. The first period, the Conflict and Settlement Period (1854-1865), has been summarized in an earlier paper (Keter 1990). This portion of the study, the Ranching Period, covers that interval of time beginning in January of 1865, when it was reported in the Trinity and Humboldt County newspapers that the last Wailaki living in the Yolla Bolly country had been captured and placed on reservations to the spring of 1905. In April of that year, President Theodore Roosevelt signed a proclamation creating a number of Forest Reserves located in the forested lands of the public domain throughout the western United States. The proclamation, directed that the Forest Service administer the public lands within the North Fork basin as part of the Trinity Forest Reserve.

[A future section of this study, the Homestead Period, will cover that interval of time from April of 1905 to the year 1941; coinciding roughly with the end of the Great Depression era and the beginning of World War II; see also Keter 2011, 2015, Keter 2017: Trinity County Historical Society archives, Weaverville, CA].

The North Fork of the Eel River basin is located in the western part of what has been called the "Yolla Bolly country" of the North Coast Ranges. The term Yolla Bolly comes for the Nomlaki Wintun language and roughly translates as "high snowy mountains." This vast region of deep cut canyons and steep almost-never-level terrain includes the highest mountains in the Coastal Ranges of California, the Yolla Bolly Mountains, with several peaks over 7,000' in elevation. Most of the North Fork basin is situated within the borders of southwestern Trinity County. A small portion of the southern part of the watershed--including much of the Hull's Creek drainage--is located in Mendocino County.

During the Ranching Period, the primary human generated effects to the environment of the North Fork basin were the result of the land-use activities of a few settlers living on small widely scattered homesteads and the grazing of livestock. The many thousands of sheep and cattle that grazed on the rangelands in the North Fork of the Eel River basin were, for the most part, owned by ranchers with large-scale operations who lived outside the area. These ranchers, however, due to their economic and political power greatly influenced historic settlement patterns and the types and intensity of land-use activities taking place within the North Fork basin during the Ranching Period.

Land-use activities within the North Fork basin by both the ranchers and homesteaders also influenced their relations with and treatment of the indigenous population. Most of the Wailaki who managed to survive the "Indian Wars" of the early 1860s and also managed to avoid being sent [more accurately interred] to the Round Valley Indian Reservation worked, at least a part of each year, for one of the large ranches.

1865-1870
Early Settlement of the North Fork Basin

In January of 1865, the last of the Wailaki--those who had managed to avoid being killed or captured during the "Indian Wars" of the first half of the 1860s--were removed from their homeland to the reservation by the U.S. Army (Keter 1990). Thus, only a decade after the first Euro-American explorers entered the region, the Athabascan speaking peoples, who for centuries through their land-use activities had influenced the environment of the North Fork basin, were nearly all gone. Only a few Wailaki families managed to remain within their homeland area; most of these men and women working in some capacity on one of the newly established ranches as domestic servants (women) and laborers (men).

With the removal of what were termed, "the last wild Indians" (Bledsoe 1885:209), the North Fork of the Eel River region, was no longer considered to be too dangerous for settlement or for the grazing of livestock. Unlike the rest of Trinity County to the east and north of South Fork Mountain where the economy was based on mining, the Yolla Bolly country was immediately recognized for its "splendid grazing lands" that were "lush and plentiful for sheep and cattle" (*Trinity Yearbook* 1978:5). This "splendid" country, had for generations, provided a subsistence resource-rich environment for its aboriginal inhabitants. The environment of the North Coast Ranges produced abundant acorn and seed crops, game was plentiful, and there were huge runs of salmon and steelhead. During the prehistoric period, the land supported hunting and gathering societies at population levels equaling and in some cases surpassing the population density per square mile of some regions of North America inhabited at that time by agricultural societies.

Despite its productive environment, the North Fork basin was not an easy place to establish a ranch or homestead. The region is extremely rugged. In the winter torrential rains can swell the North Fork and its tributaries creating raging torrents--making travel difficult and dangerous. Some years, deep snows can lie on the high ridges all winter, isolating the basin for months at a time. In the summer, rain almost never falls, most creeks dry up, water is difficult to find with few perennial springs, and the land bakes under the hot summer sun. The North Fork basin is far from any commercial or population centers and the no transportation except by horse, mule, or on foot due to the rugged terrain. For all of these reasons, it is easy to understand how in the early days, this region was, for the most, part passed-by when homesteaders first entered the North Coast region.

The Yolla Bolly country still remains largely unpopulated except along its western fringes. And today, the population density within the North Fork of the Eel River basin is significantly less than it was during the prehistoric era when the Wailaki wintered in their villages along the North Fork and summered in the golden hills and the high mountain meadows of the Yolla Bolly country.

George White, the "King of Round Valley"

During much of the Ranching Period, perhaps an even greater impediment to homesteading within the North Fork basin than its remoteness and rugged landscape was the determination of George White, a rancher living in Round Valley, to create a ranching empire in the Yolla Bolly country. Ultimately, he realized much of his goal. For several decades, White was a major force influencing the settlement, or more precisely the lack of settlement, within the North Fork basin. Based on the socio-economic tenets of the time (Keter 2015), White and a few other closely allied ranchers, until almost the turn of the century, either directly controlled or substantially influenced to a significant degree the kinds and the intensity of land-use activities taking place within the North Fork basin. At the height of his power and influence, White was known as the "King of Round Valley" and he maintained control over his empire through the use of intimidation and when that failed, violence--including murder. He bought-off politicians to pass favorable legislation, bribed lawmen to look the other way, and paid-off judges to provide favorable rulings. White often boasted that he controlled the judges in three counties and according to an article in the *San Francisco Call*, he was considered the richest rancher in Northern California. His "buckaroo's" led by the infamous "Wylackie John" managed to prevent a significant number of homesteaders from moving into the North Fork basin, thereby allowing White to graze his herds of cattle and bands of sheep unrestricted over vast regions of the public domain. Because his presence and activities were such an important part of the historical development of the North Fork region during the Ranching Period, a brief overview of White is presented below (see Carranco and Beard 1981:217-308 for a more in-depth look at the amazing life of George E. White).

Only a few days after brothers Frank and Pierce Asbill and their friend Jim Neafus had passed through Round Valley on May 15th of 1854 (see Keter 1990), George White and a party of men traveling west from the Sacramento Valley in search of gold accidentally "discovered" the valley. White immediately recognized the potential for raising livestock as the rangelands of this region were some of the most productive in the state. The perennial bunchgrasses were high in nutrients and grew as tall as the men's horses and there was no underbrush since the Indians periodically burned much of their territory.

In 1856, two months before Indian Agent Simon Storms crossed over from the Nome Lackee Indian Reservation to claim Round Valley as an Indian Reservation, White preempted 1,000 acres at the southern end of the valley. White and some business partners bought about 700 head of cattle in Los Angeles and the cattle were driven north to the valley in 1857. In the meantime, White had also hired Charles Bourne, a former employee of the Nome Lackee Reservation, to purchase cattle in the Sacramento Valley area to the east of Round Valley. Bourne drove five hundred head of cattle over Mendocino Pass and into the valley shortly before the arrival of White with the cattle he had purchased in southern California. These cattle were the first to be brought into Round Valley (Carranco and Beard 1981:219).

White's holdings grew at a steady rate and his ranching business prospered. By 1860 he controlled over 5,000 acres of land. During the late 1860s and early 1870s White continued to acquire land within the North Fork basin and elsewhere in the Yolla Bolly country. In some

instances, White used his hired men to homestead in the Yolla Bolly country on parcels of land containing perennial springs. Once they acquired the land, the title was then transferred over to White.

Under the Homestead Act of 1862, any American citizen could claim 160 acres of public lands by settling on the land and making improvements. A similar law, the Preemption Law of 1841, had been extended to California in 1853. It permitted settlers to "squat" on public lands and later buy them for about $1.25 per acre after they had been surveyed. By filing a claim under both of these laws, each settler could claim as much as 320 acres.

White also loaned money to some of the homesteaders who were trying to make a go of it on small parcels of land in the back county. When their five years were up and they could claim the land, White would then purchase the land--usually having loaned the homesteaders so much money they could not pay up. Often, these men would then join White's infamous buckaroos (Carranco and Beard 1981:222).

By controlling the water (most homesteads were situated near springs or a water source), White was able to control much of the grazing land in the Yolla Bolly country. This strategy for controlling large areas of public lands was common during the late nineteenth century throughout the rangelands of California. In 1886, Hubert Visher (in Burcham 1981:195) noted that:

> There are ranges covering thousands of acres which are controlled (not owned) by sheep men, their holdings simply covering strategic points of the range, possession of water sources generally sufficing in itself to attain the desired end. Holding these points, the balance of the range is of no value to anyone else, and his herds range undisputed over public lands. These lands are effectually excluded from settlement, the county and state governments deprived of legitimate sources of revenue, and at the same time valuable public property rapidly going to waste.

By the early 1880s, White controlled much of the Yolla Bolly country to the north of Round Valley and to the west of the Sacramento divide; including most of the North Fork basin and parcels of land (containing water) as far north as the Lassics region and as far east as the west facing slopes of South Fork Mountain. Pierce Asbill's son, Frank, recorded many of his father's and uncle's exploits in a lengthy manuscript *THE LAST OF THE WEST* (much of it written while serving time at San Quentin for murdering his common-law wife in Garberville in 1936). Asbill (with his usual hyperbole) writes that George White:

> by 1881, had in that vast domain of free range, all with the exceptions of the seven or eight thousand acres the two Asbill boys owned and controlled in the Summit Valley region....Thirty or forty thousand head of the wildest cows on earth ran along the high mountains, ridges, deep canyons, hell-holes and roughs, along with many thousand head of Spanish marrino [merino] sheep, and many Indian sheep herders." (Asbill Ms. Vol. 2:130)

Between 1881 and 1883 White acquired numerous parcels of land in southern Trinity County substantially increasing his holdings and tightening his control over the Yolla Bolly country. The Weaverville paper, the *Trinity Journal* (March 12, 1881), reported that:

> Many deeds: no less than 36 transfers of real estate in the south-western portion of this county have been recorded here during the past week. Most of these deeds were for land sold to George E. White, with an occasional transfer to William Pitt White and to White & Wathen. That portion of our county is fast getting into a very few hands.

By 1890, through fraud, murder, arson, the filing of dummy homestead applications, the buying up of abandoned homesteads, and other land grabbing schemes--some of which were legal-- White owned about 150,000 acres; including approximately sixteen strategically located parcels (situated around perennial springs and varying in size from about 160 to 320 acres each) totaling more than 2,600 acres within the North Fork basin (Lowden 1894: Map). In 1890, he ran about 1,000 head of cattle and about 30,000 sheep and he marketed some 40 tons of wool (Ward Ms., Hubert et al n.d.: Appendix IV).

White maintained his control of the Yolla Bolly country through intimidation and when that didn't prove effective, violent force. Lynwood Carranco and Estle Beard who chronicled his activities in *Genocide and Vendetta* (1981: 220) noted that George White;

> ...had only two rules for the few homesteaders who had claims: that they should run no more stock on their land than their feed or water would permit and that they should keep their mouths shut no matter what they saw or heard.

His gang of thugs, known as "White's Buckaroos" was led by John Wathen known and feared far and wide as "Wylackie John." There are many stories and legends but few facts related to his youth, and of his being raised, or of his having lived for years among the last of the "wild Indians" of the Mad River country. During the 1880s, Wathen lived with his Indian wife, Ellen, and their daughter on the south end of Long Ridge where he owned, in partnership with White, a small ranch (probably 160 acres) which was headquarters for his sheep ranching operation in the North Fork region. Carranco and Beard (1981:230) wrote of Wylackie John and of his devotion to his boss George White:

> He was a remarkable man: he did not smoke or chew tobacco, he dressed well for the mountain country, he kept himself very neat, and he was suave and polite to the local people, always touching his hat and inquiring about their health.
>
> But Wathen's kind facade hid an unscrupulous man; he had no conscience for right or wrong. He was a robber, a poisoner, an arsonist, a perjurer, and a murderer. He was an absolute genius at planning evil, and he employed all his talents with tireless energy in the interests of his master, George E. White.

Throughout the North Fork region during this period, an individual or family, occasionally,

would attempt to homestead on a small parcel of land. Most often they would arrive with a few horses and a small number of livestock. In short order, the homesteader's springs were poisoned, their stock ran off or stolen--branded with White's Crop-and-Lop brand--and mixed in with White herds. In some cases, when an individual refused to be intimidated or to get out of the country, they were murdered.

The public record shows that there were fifteen and perhaps as many as nineteen murders in the Yolla Bolly country in which it was believed that Wylackie John was the planner and in some cases the perpetrator, but he was never charged despite the overwhelming evidence in many cases (Lynn 1977:30). One such case is that of Robert Grieves, a small-time rancher who homesteaded 160 acres along the main Eel River. He had been bribed to supply perjured testimony in an earlier murder case, the killing of one of the Packwood brothers, brought against some of White's men (it appears that the brothers had settled on Packwood Flat just to the north of Rock Creek in the North Fork basin). Because Grieves was talking too much and because White wanted his land, he was shot and killed by White's second cousin John P. White. One of the witnesses to this killing (a man named Lloyd) was bribed by Wylackie John to leave the county before the inquest. After Lloyd took the money, Wylackie John followed him down the trail and despite a search of the area, he was never heard from again. Despite the strong evidence of premeditated murder and the fact that the victim was probably unarmed at the time of his murder, John White was acquitted (Carranco and Beard 1981:232).

In another instance, the Van brothers came to southern Trinity County and began to raise sheep on a small homestead. It was not too long before Wylackie John leading a party of men disguised as Indians attacked the Van homestead. The Van brothers escaped in the darkness but their homestead was burned to the ground, their livestock were killed, and they left the area (Carranco and Beard 1981:234).

In the mid-1880s, Bill Nowlin and H.C. Hembree tried to stand up to White after settling on a small homestead in southern Trinity County to raise sheep. The homestead was patented on July 7, 1877. White, however, had been grazing sheep in this area and wanted their land. Nowlin and Hembree ordered some of White's buckaroos, who were driving some sheep to pasture, to remove the livestock from their homestead. When White's men refused the homesteaders drew their guns and ordered them off the land. White swore out a warrant and had Nowlin and Hembree arrested on weapons and assault charges. They were detained in Weaverville for a couple of months and eventually, "despite a fine assortment of perjury" by White's men (Carranco and Beard 1981:234)) both were acquitted. When they returned, their home had been burned to the ground, their fences destroyed, and their sheep most likely had been added to White's herd.

Next, White's henchmen tried to poison Nowlin by sending him a quarter beef laced with strychnine. When Nowlin gave a portion to his dog it died. Finally, one of White's buckaroos, Newt Irwin, approached Nowlin's cabin and tried to draw on Nowlin who was quicker on the draw and Irwin was shot and killed. Using the perjured testimony of several men including George White's brother, Pitt White, Nowlin was convicted of manslaughter for shooting an unarmed man and was sentenced to eight years in San Quentin. Later in relation to another murder case, it was learned that White's henchmen had removed Irwin's gun after he had

been shot and then they had lined up several witnesses to supply false testimony at Nowlin's trial. Nowlin was finally released after having served several years in prison. When he returned to his homestead, everything had been burned to the ground (Robb 1978:18).

Wylackie John was handsomely rewarded for his service to George White. White made him a partner in his ranch out on Long Ridge. This ranch, located at the southern end of Long Ridge, had a large number of sheep. In addition, Wathen also owned outright, a parcel of land on the east side of the North Fork, just to the south Red Mountain Creek near Wylackie Hill. It is likely that Wathen homesteaded this parcel in the late 1860s or 1870s prior to moving to Long Ridge.

Wylackie John also led a gang of men (probably some of White's buckaroos) who made raids into the region on the Sacramento side of the Yolla Bolly Mountains running off with thousands of head of sheep from the summer ranges of ranchers from the Sacramento Valley. It was estimated that the "Long Ridge Rustlers" were responsible for stealing over 400,000 sheep, cattle, and horses from northern California stockmen. The San Francisco *Examiner* (February 19, 1888) noted that the raids were so common it made sheep rustling "one of the recognized industries of that country."

Homesteading in the North Fork Basin: 1865-1870

With the end of the Civil War, the removal of most of the Wailaki from their homeland, and the playing out of the gold fields, the remote Yolla Bolly country began to draw a few settlers. In the North Fork region during the late 1860s the main impetus to settlement was the desire to secure free public domain land in order to establish a small, largely self-sufficient, homestead. The principal economic activities pursued by the new homesteaders were the raising of livestock and subsistence farming. A few settlers also hunted deer in order to sell their hides for hard currency. Many of the homesteaders also earned money by working seasonally for one of the large ranches. Some settlers even left their homesteads and traveled substantial distances to find employment (for example, working in the hop fields of southern Mendocino County) in order to earn the money needed to keep a small homestead going.

The locations discussed below are where the first documented homesteads were established in the basin. There may have been a few other settlers or "squatters' who had failed to file preemption claims living in the basin at this time. This quite likely includes a number of Wailaki Indian sheep herders and their families who lived in the area and worked, at least seasonally, at the numerous sheep camps in the Yolla Bolly Country. In addition, no one ever recorded the many attempts by homesteaders who tried making a go of it and spent a year or two in the isolated back country of the North Fork of the Eel River basin before moving on.

<u>Kettenpom Valley</u>

Kettenpom Valley is the largest expanse of level terrain within the entire North Fork basin; that fact quite likely explains why it was the first area to be homesteaded-- perhaps as early as

1860 to 1862 (See Keter 1990). No documentation could be found on the names of the families occupying the valley during the late 1860s but given its level land and earlier settlement by John Fulwider and two or three other men during the early 1860s, it is likely that by this time, several families were living here.

Long Ridge

Although the Long Ridge area would play a prominent role in the history of the Yolla Bolly country during the next decade, it is unlikely that there were any homesteaders living year-around on the ridge until about 1870.

East of the North Fork

The geographic area to the east of the North Fork of the Eel River and to the north of the river's confluence with Hull's Creek is referred in this study as the "east of the North Fork" region. It was not until the early twentieth century that a substantial number of homesteaders settled in this area. Since that time, every homestead east of the North Fork has been abandoned. Today, a few seasonal residents but not one year-around resident lives in this still remote area (as of 1994).

It appears that the original house on the ranch, that the Travis brothers acquired in this area in the mid-1890s, was built in the 1860s (probably the late 1860s) by "a Swede" (Robb 1978:21), making him one of the earliest residents in the region. Other settlers who homesteaded at this time in the vicinity of the future Travis Ranch were Tom Hayden and John Vinton. Both of these men worked in some capacity for White (*Trinity Yearbook* 1978:21). Also, at this time (or possibly in the early 1870s) John Wathen was homesteading on a quarter section of land just to the north of the present day Travis Ranch in the Wylackie Hill area.

The only other location east of the North Fork that may have been homesteaded as early as the late 1860s is the Red Mountain Fields area. It has some of the best flowing perennial springs in the basin. Hull J. Doolittle (1880 census records) and his wife [Josephine] and son [Frank] may have settled here during the late 1860s and certainly no later than the mid-1870s.

South of the North Fork and Mendocino County

At the confluence of Hull's Creek and the North Fork, the river flowing south makes an abrupt turn to the west. That geographical area of the river basin to the south of this point is referred to in this study as the south of the North Fork region. This portion of the North Fork basin, for the most part, is located within Mendocino County. It encompasses the Hull's Creek drainage and a number of minor drainages including Asbill Creek. Summit Valley, which lies on the divide with the Middle Fork drainage at the south edge of the basin about sixteen miles north of Round Valley, was the earliest place to be settled in this region during the historic era. The Asbills settled in this small picturesque valley of about 60 acres in 1864 by filing a "squatter's claim" (Carranco and Beard 1981:183).

2015: use of the term Wailaki Lassik

During my research over the last 35 or so years and in my interactions with numerous Wailaki from southern Humboldt, northern Mendocino, and southwestern Trinity Counties as well as with Wailaki consultants living in Hulls Valley and Round Valley who had links to what has been delineated by ethnographers as "Lassik Territory" (see Baumhoff 1958); Not one individual I have talked to considered themselves to be Lassik but referred to themselves as Wailaki. This included descendants of Lucy Young (who despite being called Lassik by Merriam, Essene and Kroeber insisted that she was Wailaki) and descendants of Mary Major who were two of the principal informants for ethnographers (see Essene and Merriam). For example, Kroeber in his introduction to Essene's (1942) *Culture Element Distributions: XXI Round Valley* writes: "there are indeed old people on the reservation who are listed as Wailaki in agency records and who call themselves Wailaki. Those of them who still had worth-while knowledge to dispense proved however to be Lassik."

I wrote a paper on this subject in 2009 (referenced below) and it is posted on my web site. I have chosen to use the term "Wailaki Lassik" in order to clarify that like the Pitch Wailaki (see Goddard's work on the North Fork) the Wailaki Lassik were a direct offshoot and therefore closely related through language and familial ties with the other Wailaki "triblets" (I prefer the term "communities" see Keter 1991, 1993) but also shared common cultural practices as well.

The people living in this region prior to the historic era referred to themselves collectively with some derivative of the term *ken'-es-ti* (personal communication: Fred Coyote Downey). Merriam (1923:276, field notes) claims that the Southern Athabascans used the term "nongatl" to indicate: "the name of their nation--covering all the tribes between Round Valley and Iaqua."

It is clear given the common language and shared cultural beliefs of the Native Americans residing in southern Humboldt, northern Mendocino, and southwestern Trinity Counties during the ethnographic period, that at some higher level than Kroeber's small triblets, the Southern Athapascans (ethnographers have named Sinkyone, Eel River Wailaki, Pitch Wailaki, Lassik, and Nongatl) shared a common cultural and linguistic identity.

Indians Living in the North Fork Basin

A number of Wailaki/Wailaki-Lassik men and women and their families managed to survive at a few isolated locations within the North Fork basin. Probable locations include along the North Fork of the Eel River at more inaccessible abandoned village sites, and along Hull's Creek in Hull's Valley, and the lower portion of remote Casoose Creek canyon, one of the major tributaries of Hull's Creek.

It is likely that the vast majority of the Indian men and women who resided in the North Fork basin by this time did so with the tacit approval of White and the other ranchers and homesteaders. Indian labor was needed for much of the work on the ranches. Most of these survivors were either single men or a married couple with few if any children (Fenton Ranch 1880 census records). They harvested what traditional subsistence resources they could and probably worked seasonally or full-time for one of the ranches in the area to make ends barely meet. During this period of time, Indian people were not recognized as American citizens and had no standing in the courts. In effect, they were powerless to swear out a complaint against a white man--even for murder. They also had no right to own property. They were, in fact, essentially bonded to the land in a form of serfdom whereby they provided a cheap labor force for the large-scale ranchers. Their only other alternative was to live on the Round Valley Indian Reservation.

[During my work in the late 1990s and early 2000s with Wailaki consultants, many of them referred to the reservation that existed in the late 19th century as a "concentration camp." For example personal communication with Fred Coyote Downy grandnephew of ethnographic informant Mary Majors (see Essene, Kroeber, and Merriam).]

Nearby Ranches and Communities

In addition to George White, a few other ranchers with large scale operations and some of the homesteaders living adjacent to the North Fork basin also had a significant influence on the area's economic and social development. This is due to the fact that many of the land-use activities by these settlers, including livestock grazing and hunting deer for their hides, extended into portions of the North Fork basin. One of the nearby-areas with a concentration of small homesteads that had a significant effect on the environment of the North Fork basin was Hettenshaw Valley--located just to the north of the Van Duzen/North Fork watershed divide.

Hettenshaw Valley (also called Kettenshaw or Kettenchou) was the first area to be settled in the Yolla Bolly country (see Keter 1990). During the late 1860s, it is likely that a small number of extended families (quite likely the Jim Willburn, John Duncan, James Howe, and Steve Flemming families) lived in or adjacent to the valley (Robb 1978:13). Most of the families living in Hettenshaw Valley hunted deer in order to market the hides, raised a few head of livestock, and maintained small gardens and orchards.

Another area to figure prominently in the environmental and economic history of the North Fork basin is the community of Zenia. Originally called Poison Camp, it was first settled by several miners from the Weaverville area. The men (including James Howe, Green French, Commodore Peabody, Abe Rogers, and George Burgess) first visited the region in the late 1850s camping near a spring. A manuscript containing the Burgess family history indicates that Steve Fleming and Jim Willburn were also with this group. If that was the case, it is likely that these men visited the area sometime in the year 1856 or 1857 and explains how Willburn, Flemming, and Howe ended up in Hettenshaw Valley at this early date.

The men named the area Poison Springs after several of the oxen that they had brought with them died from eating the poisonous larkspur (also known as poison weed). They were eventually forced to leave due to troubles with the local Indians. In about 1865, Burgess, French, Rogers, and Peabody returned and settled in the vicinity of Zenia. George's brother Ed took up a homestead in the Zenia area in 1882 (Robb 1978:22). When Mrs. Burgess moved into the area she did not see another white woman for three years (Burgess MS). At that time, there were only two other white women in the region stretching south all the way to Round Valley; Mrs. Charlie Fenton and Mrs. Pitt White (Robb 1978:10).

In the late 1890s, in an effort to get a post office established the residents of Zenia had to offer to deliver the mail free for six months from Blocksburg (via the old road past Pine Mountain). The Post Office would not accept the name Poison Camp. At that time the town was renamed Zenia after a little girl who was living in Blocksburg. One early resident recalled (Burgess Ms.) that in order to get the post office established there had to be a certain number of letter cancellations so "everyone wrote to everyone they knew--who says 'political maneuvering' is only a part of our modern way of life."

The post office was established April 24, 1899, and Mrs. George Croydon was the postmaster (*Trinity Yearbook* 1971:25). Neighbors took turns bringing in the mail. Zenia was not, however, a commercial center like Blocksburg. Rather, with numerous perennial springs in the area, there were a number of homesteads situated in very close proximity creating a close-knit community which was a social center for the surrounding region (Jones 1981:354). In addition to getting a post office established, residents of the Zenia area also cooperated in establishing a school (in 1897) and a small "community" building for public meetings as well as social events including dances.

The most important commercial center for many of the residents of the North Fork basin was the town of Covelo in Round Valley. It was about a day's travel (or a little less) south on horseback from most parts of the basin. Beginning in the late 1850s, an area in about the center of Round Valley began to develop commercially and it continued to grow throughout the 1860s. In 1870, the small community was named Covelo. It was a commercial and social center for much of the surrounding Yolla Bolly country. There were several stores, saloons, hotels, and other businesses as well as churches, a post office, and a school. This was the closest commercial center for most of the homesteaders and ranchers living in the southern portion of the North Fork basin.

The Round Valley Indian Reservation was situated at the north end of Round Valley and its history is closely connected with those few Wailaki who were still living in the North Fork basin during the Ranching Period. Conditions on the reservation influenced, to some extent, the number of Wailaki living there. During periods when living conditions on the reservation deteriorated, it was not unusual for Indian families to spend a portion of the year in their home territory gathering acorns or seed crops or hunting. Others would work part-time or full-time for one of the large ranches that ran livestock in the North Fork region.

The Introduction of Livestock into the North Fork Basin

During the latter part of the 1860s, the cattle herds from Round Valley that summered in the Yolla Bolly country to the north were steadily increasing in size each year. In addition, some of the local homesteaders were also bringing in cattle. Many of the cattle which formed the foundation of the Yolla Bolly herds were driven north from Los Angeles. Some cattle, however, were brought in from as far away as Texas. The following newspaper article cites one such example.

> Besides Flemming's great herd [of cattle], there is near the ford, J. Willburn with a hundred or so and Mr. _____ [sic] with three hundred. Mr. Smith was just arriving from Texas with 276 head, all of which he brought from that distant state being eighteen months in route. He crossed through Colorado and Nevada and did not lose a hoof until he crossed the Sacramento, but had lost about twenty since by straggling (*Daily Evening Bulletin* October 27, 1871).

The Environment of the North Fork Basin by the end of the 1860s

At the end of the decade, the North Fork basin still remained largely unpopulated with as few as six to eight homesteaders and their families living year-around and perhaps as many or a few more Indian families. At this time, no wagon roads even approached the North Fork basin. The principal trails were most likely those first used by the local native peoples and for the most part, during this era, they were most commonly used for traveling *through* the basin. The impacts from livestock grazing were only beginning to seriously affect the ecosystem of the North Fork basin, as were the land-use activities of the relatively few settlers living there (see Keter 1995 for an overview of the historic environment of the North Fork basin).

1870-1880
The "Decade of Wool" in the North Fork Basin

It was during the 1870s that the large ranches along the main Eel River from Alderpoint south to the North Fork's confluence with the main Eel River were first settled. The livestock from these ranches, along with those of George White, used the public domain to the east of Haman Ridge in the North Fork basin for transitional range. Ranchers would slowly move their herds from the lower altitude winter ranges along the main Eel River through the basin on "trailways" in route to the summer ranges in the high Yolla Bolly country just to the east of the North Fork basin. It was the ranchers from this region who often cooperated with White in making it difficult for individuals to homestead in the North Fork region (Carranco and Beard 1981:223). Ranchers did not like to see settlers move into the area because their small homesteads interfered with the ranchers desire to control the vast areas of rangelands needed for grazing their herds of cattle and bands of sheep.

Ranches and the Rangelands of the North Fork Basin

Presented below, is a brief overview of the ranches adjacent to the North Fork basin. For nearly three decades, the livestock from these ranches grazed at least some portion of every year on the rangelands of the North Fork basin. As documented in the environmental portion of this study (Keter 1995), the grazing (and overgrazing) of the regions grasslands by sheep and cattle was one of the principal factors producing the rapid changes occurring to the region's ecosystem subsequent to the beginning of the historic era.

Asbill Ranch

As noted earlier, White's close friends, Frank and Pierce Asbill, owned a ranch in the Summit Valley area (located on the divide between the North Fork and the Middle Eel drainages). This ranch continued to grow in size and by 1879 it is estimated that the Asbills had 15,000 sheep, 200 head of cattle, and about 150 head of horses (Carranco and Beard 1981: 183). The Asbills also controlled some lands just to the east of the North Fork and slightly to the north of its confluence with Hull's Creek in the vicinity of the future Travis Ranch. Because of the generally high price of wool during the 1870s, the Asbills prospered and were considered wealthy. They could afford to have Indian sheep herders take care of their animals and do most of the work on the ranch. Their long hair and beards were trimmed in the latest style and the brothers dressed in expensive hand-made boots and tailored clothes (Carranco and Beard 1981: 186).

Benjamin Arthur Ranch

Benjamin Arthur was one of the earliest settlers in Round Valley arriving in the fall of 1856 (history has recorded that he brought in a "drove of hogs" [Beard Ms.]). Arthur established his ranch near the main Eel River just to the east of the Humboldt County line in Trinity County in about 1871. It was the first ranch to be settled in this area. The original site of the ranch was property that Arthur acquired from John Quincy Duncan (*Trinity Yearbook* 1957: 25, Jones 1981:345). Duncan was one of the earliest settlers in this area having settled here in the late 1860s (Duncan Ms.). In 1871 after Duncan sold out to Arthur he moved his family to Long Ridge (*Trinity Yearbook* 1956: 25) and was most likely one of the earliest residents on Long Ridge.

The Arthur homestead was patented on April 6, 1874---the first in the area. In 1876 and 1877 Arthur began to buy parcels of land around the ranch and in the Ruth area. The ranch eventually grew to 3,000 acres in size (with parcels of land scattered throughout southern Trinity County). It appears that Arthur's summer range during the 1870s and much of the early 1880s was centered on the Ruth range (the upper Mad River drainage and probably the western slopes and crest of South Fork Mountain) which was sparsely settled at this time (Robb 1978: 4).

Pitt White Ranch

Known as the Kekawaka Ranch (located on beautiful Kekawaka Creek), this ranch was actually owned by George White with his brother William Pitt White a silent partner (for legal reasons related to an outstanding judgement filed against him in Placer County) [Carranco and Beard 1981: 212]).

Pitt White, his wife, Prudence, and their children moved onto the ranch in about 1875. Along with Arthur's place, it was one of the earliest ranches to be established in this part of southwestern Trinity County (Robb 1978: 16). This was a large ranch and it even had its own blacksmith shop (Carranco and Beard 1981: 212). No estimate could be found on the number of sheep Pitt White ran but it surely ran in the thousands.

Doc Merritt or Armstrong Ranch

This ranch was settled in the latter part of the 1870s by Doc Merritt who previously had lived in Round Valley. It was located to the west of Lake Mountain along the west facing slopes of the Eel River drainage. It appears that Merritt had substantial financial resources and put his ranch together by buying up a number of small homesteads. Historical records suggest that some of Merritt's property was also purchased from the Asbill brothers (Robb 1978: 20). He also bought out nearly all the homesteaders in Kettenpom Valley beginning in the late 1870s or 1880s and by about 1890 owned most of the private land there (Lowden 1894: Map).

Merritt, like other ranchers in the region during this period, ran mostly sheep. The ranch eventually became the Armstrong Ranch. Today, it is part of the Dean Witter Lone Pine Ranch, at about 45,000 acres; it is the largest ranch in Trinity County.

Fenton Ranch

The Fenton Ranch (also now part of the Lone Pine Ranch) was one of the earliest of the large ranches to be established in the southwestern Yolla Bolly country. It appears that Charlie Fenton may have acquired the parcel of land containing the ranch house from one of the Asbill brothers (Jones 1981:346). It was located on the main Eel River just to the north of the mouth of the North Fork (Carranco and Beard 1981:23). Fenton owned numerous parcels of land in the area (Lowden 1894: Map). At one time Fenton ran 30,000 sheep which were tended to by Indian herders. The Indians working for Fenton had a large encampment near his ranch (1880 census) and another group of Indians who worked for him lived in Hull's Valley (I378). In the summer, the sheep were driven through the North Fork basin and summered on South Fork Mountain (Gummer Ms.).

Homesteading the North Fork Basin: 1870-1880

By the early 1870s George White was at the zenith of his power and controlled much of the North Fork basin. Despite the threats and intimidation, a few homesteaders moved into the region. Most of the homesteaders who made a go of it during this decade managed to either keep a low profile to not antagonize White or, as noted earlier, went to work on one of White's many ranches.

The small-time homesteaders actually outnumbered the large ranchers but had little political or economic power in the region. They were, in fact, often dependent on the large ranches for work and the hard currency needed to buy the few things a homesteader could not produce. Southern Trinity county was beginning to grow enough (especially the areas around Zenia and Hettenshaw Valley) that in August of 1874, the Trinity County Board of Supervisors created a Hettenshaw School District (*Trinity Yearbook* 1961: 43);

> Laying south of a line drawn from the head of the South Fork of the Trinity River, on the eastern boundary of the county, to a point on the western boundary of the county crossed by Van Duzen's Creek...

Some of the homesteaders settling in or adjacent to the basin during this decade included Bill Nowlin, George Kunz, and Pete Haman. Two other settlers, who were living in the basin in the 1870s, were identified through an account of one of the most famous manhunts in the annals of California law enforcement (Keller 1974). After committing a number of crimes, including murder, near the town of Mendocino, lawmen chased a gang of outlaws for over three months, tracking them over hundreds of miles of northern California back country, finally apprehending them in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The gang was pursued by a posse, which, at times, included John Wathen and Jim Willburn; they passed through the North Fork basin in late October or early November of 1879. They apparently passed near the cabins of a John White living near the headwaters of Wilson Creek which is adjacent to Long Ridge (quite possibly John P. White who was a second cousin of George White) and a Joseph Lightfoot living in the vicinity of upper Lightfoot Creek about two miles to the west of Red Mountain Field. It was noted that the Lightfoot cabin was to the "north of Wylackie Ridge [Hill] where John Wathen resided at a place called the 'oat patch'."

The following areas were documented as being homesteaded within the North Fork basin during the 1870s.

<u>Long Ridge</u>

Isolated far from the county seat (and the sheriff) in Weaverville, Long Ridge from the beginning of white settlement until the turn of the century was associated with outlaws and lawlessness. During the 1870s this region grew at a steady rate. Towards the end of the decade, Wylackie John moved from his homestead on the east side of the North Fork to the southern end of Long Ridge, establishing a ranch in partnership with George White. Some of

White's buckaroos also spent time in this area working at the ranch and at the various sheep camps and cattle corrals that he maintained throughout the region. Because of Long Ridge's notoriety as the home of Wylackie John and some of White's buckaroos, all of the murders which took place during this period throughout southwestern Trinity County were referred to in the county newspapers as "the Long Ridge Killings" (Jones 1981: 357).

During the 1870s a few homesteaders began to settle in Long Ridge country. After selling out to Ben Arthur, John Quincy Duncan and his wife Polly and their family moved to Long Ridge in 1871. They settled about midway down the ridge (just to the west of the "Long Ridge School Section 36" (Trinity County Map n.d., Lowden 1894: Map). The Hoaglin family settled at the north end of the ridge. Church Willburn (it appears that he was not related to the Willburns of Hettenshaw Valley--see the 1880 census) also established a homestead near the southern end of Long Ridge on its eastern slope. Two other homesteads one labeled "White" (John P. White) and the other "Brooks" were situated to the south and east of Long Ridge in the Wilson Creek area (Trinity County Map n.d.).

By the late 1870s, so many families with children were living in the Long Ridge/Hoaglin Valley region that a school was needed. Around 1879 local homesteaders built the first school in the North Fork basin out on Long Ridge (at Schoolhouse Springs in Section 36, T.4S., R.7E., HBM). The first teacher was Billy Malone. At that time, it was the only school south and west of South Fork Mountain in Trinity County (*Trinity Yearbook* 1956: 25). Tom Duncan was one of the oldest students, he was seven in 1880 (Holtorf Ms.).

Classes were small usually under ten pupils. It was not uncommon during this era for the homesteaders to hire a teacher with children to help meet the minimum number of students required (usually about six) for the county to pay for a teaching position. In the back country of southern Trinity, the parents of the children often constructed the school. Usually it was a very simple one room log cabin.

The Long Ridge School was located:

> at the junction of five old trails on a small bench on the west side of the ridge near its crest. It is among a grove of oak trees and nearby is a natural spring that is still flowing. This is such a wild and remote country that it is almost inconceivable that there ever could have been need for a school here. But many old-timers recall hearing the school bell ring out early in the morning and walking the three to five miles of trail to school (Jones 1981: 358).

One early resident wrote that the ringing of the Long Ridge School bell (which weighted about 200 pounds and was packed-in by mule) could be heard all the way to Haman Ridge (Miller Ms.). The school even had an organ (also presumably brought in by mule [Duncan Ms.]). The nearest mail delivery for the residents of Long Ridge was Round Valley. Whoever was down that way on business would pick up everyone's mail which was simply addressed to residents on "Long Ridge." Mailing a letter to Weaverville, a distance of sixty miles, illustrates how isolated and remote Long Ridge and southern Trinity County were from the influence of the sheriff and county government. The mail was dropped off in Round Valley and sent via Ukiah

and Cloverdale to San Francisco. Here the mail was shipped by steamer to Sacramento and then carried (by train) to Redding. There, it was finally transported to Weaverville by stage or wagon (Carranco and Beard 1981: 237).

Provisions for Long Ridge and the rest of the North Fork region were brought in by stock animals from either Covelo to the south or from Red Bluff about 75 miles to the east via the Humboldt Trail (Duncan Ms.). [For historic trails see Keter 1997.]

Hoaglin Valley

Hoaglin Valley was first permanently settled in about 1870 by Louis Meyer (some sources say 1875). The valley was named after the Hoaglin family who were living on Long Ridge (it is unknown if they were related to the Hoaglins living in the Blocksburg area at about the same time). One early settler (Holtorf Ms.) of the area indicated that in the mid-1870s W. Earl joined Meyer and that his homestead was the first in Hoaglin Valley to be patented in 1878 (according to an old map in Holtorf's possession--Earl's name does not appear on the 1880 census but Meyer's does) and Meyer's homestead was patented in 1882.

Kettenpom Valley

It appears that by the end of the decade, Doc Merritt had purchased a substantial portion of the private land in Kettenpom Valley. He appears to have bought out several of the earlier homesteaders living in the valley (Lowden 1894: Map). Despite the lack of historical data, it is likely given the desirability of the flat open land in this valley, that several families were living here during the 1870s quite possibly employed by the Merritt ranch. There are two other homesteaders identified on a circa 1885 map of Trinity County just to the north of the Kettenpom Valley region. Near Bluff Creek is a homestead labeled "Stegar" (partially illegible) and to the south of this location, is a homestead owned by one of the Lampley brothers.

East of the North Fork

By the end of the 1870s, Hull Doolittle ("Dutch Bill" on Trinity County Map n.d.) had settled with his wife, Josephine, and son Frank at Red Mountain Fields (1880 Census records). In the 1890s, Frank Doolittle would become the proprietor of the Red Mountain House at this location. George White also owned a parcel of land near Red Mountain Fields just to the north of the Doolittle homestead. This parcel was the site of at the least a seasonal sheep camp, however, it is possible, due to its strategic location, that it may have been inhabited year around.

During the 1870s, as noted earlier, there were already a few homesteaders living in the vicinity of what later became the Travis Ranch; including John Wathen, Tom Hayden, and John Vinton. One other homestead was identified on a county map (Trinity county Map n.d.) in the vicinity of Raglan Flat; it was labeled "Trogdens."

South of the North Fork and Mendocino County

In March of 1873, congress modified the Round Valley Indian Reservation boundaries. The reservation was reduced from its original 25,000 acres to about 5,000 acres. In effect, the settlers using their political power had, after fighting for nearly 20 years, finally convinced Washington to abandon the government's original goal of setting aside the entire valley as an Indian reservation. All of the acreage taken from the reservation was placed on the market and could be bought in tracts of not more than 320 acres for $1.25 an acre. Unlike the Homestead Act of 1862, no value was attached to the improvements and no length of time was required to live on the land to buy it. In effect, "[a]ny shack put on the land at a cost of $20 would entitle a man to buy 320 acres" (Carranco and Beard 1981:326).

As part of the "reform" process, a commission visited the area in the summer of 1873 and recommended that the reservation be expanded northward into the still remote southern Yolla Bolly country. Approximately 98,000 acres were added to the Round Valley Indian Reservation at this time. The commissioners believed that the Indians could then use this still relatively unpopulated area for the grazing of as many as 30,000 sheep and/or a large herd of cattle (Hammond 1959:64). As so often happened in the history of the Round Valley Reservation the funds for the livestock were never appropriated.

The reservation's boundaries were extended to the west and north from Round Valley. The western boundary was the main Eel River; the northern boundary consisted of all lands south of the North Fork of the Eel River from its mouth east to Hull's Creek. From Hulls Creek, the northern boundary continued along northern divide of Hull's Creek eastward to the Middle Fork of the Eel River and then south towards Williams Creek and Round Valley.

Although some efforts were made by the reservation's agent to lease much of these lands to a local rancher and part-time reservation employee to graze sheep for benefit of the reservation, the deal could not be completed because a number of ranchers would not remove their livestock from reservation lands. In 1881, the Sacramento *Union* (September 16, 1881) reported that 90,000 of the reservation's 102,118 acres were used by ranchers for grazing purposes (Herbert et al n.d.:67). Ranchers who were illegally using reservation lands for their stock included the Asbill brothers (in Summit Valley), Jacob Updegraff, Henley, Gibson, C.H. Eberle, Peter O'Farrell, Martin Corbitt, William Hayden, Andrew Gray, Samuel Simmerly, and George White (Carranco and Beard 1981:328). In the summer of 1875, a special order was sent to White ordering him to remove his stock from reservation lands. He ignored the order and the U.S. attorney in San Francisco refused to bring suit.

Over the years, the Indian Agents administering the reservation failed to make any serious effort to clear the lands of livestock illegally grazing on reservation lands. The reservation lands in this region of the North Fork basin remained essentially free and open range for the sheep (and later cattle) ranchers. The one thing that designating the southern portion of the North Fork basin region as a reservation did accomplish was to prevent any homesteaders from filing claims in this portion of the basin. Few settlers lived in this part of the North Fork

basin until the late 1890s. Change at that time came about as a result of the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act by congress in 1887. This legislation provided for the distribution of reservation lands to individual Indians. Eventually, by about 1897, as the distribution of reservation lands under the Dawes Act was beginning to take place, the military removed the rancher's livestock from the area.

Most of the reservation lands were allotted between the years 1895 and 1916. The reservation was allotted by designating lands as either "valley" or "mountain." Valley allotments were about 10 acre parcels and mountain parcels varied between about fifty to seventy-five acres with fifty-five acres about average. The parcels were too small, rugged and remote to be successfully ranched on an individual basis and eventually, most of the lands in this region were sold to ranchers with a few of the more desirable parcels acquired by small scale subsistence homesteaders like those living to the north in Trinity County. Hammond (1959:82) notes that:

> One thousand two hundred forty allotments were made, totaling 42,163 acres. Since the reservation had contained 102,118 acres prior to allotment, 59,955 acres were lost to white settlement. Since most of the reservation was occupied and used by whites anyway, this process merely made official what had been a reality for years.

By 1940, more than half the Indian lands that had been allotted where in white ownership. For the reasons outlined above, it is unlikely that many settlers were living in this portion of the basin until about the turn of the century.

Deer Hunters and the Hide Industry

During the 1870s, hunting deer in order to sell the hides was still a relatively common activity in the Yolla Bolly country--despite increasingly stringent game laws. A few of the hide hunters continued to make almost their entire living selling deer hides (most often in the Red Bluff area at Kingsley's trading post or to Benjamin Blockenburger in Humboldt County). One of the most famous hide hunters was "Grizzly" Jim Willburn of Hettenshaw Valley (he once tangled with a grizzly bear in the Round Mountain area and as a result lost the use of one of his arms in the struggle before he managed to kill it). Other settlers in the region who are known to have hunted deer in order to sell their hides were John Duncan (of Hettenshaw Valley), Steve Flemming, and Dave Willburn. In addition, it was not uncommon for many of the small scale homesteaders to sell the hides of deer to earn some hard currency (Rahm 1943: 4-7). The following article presents what might be termed a rather romantic view of the life of the residents living in the back woods of southern Trinity County. It is, condensed from the original, and was written by a reporter working for the *Daily Evening Bulletin* (October 27, 1871) after visiting Hettenshaw Valley.

> Ketten Chow [Hettenshaw] Valley
>
> ...this valley is about four miles long north to south, by a mile in width of a good

> soil, full of rich grass, nourishing many cattle and horses, a little wheat, no fruit at all, a sufficiency of vegetables and roasting ears, and is subject to three or four feet of snow, and occasional terrible north winds...
>
> There are four families in it, all Texans, and all related, farming, together with others four miles distant on Mad River, quite a family colony. They live here in a large rude luxury of meat, milk, venison, not wheat bread, and strong coffee, thirty miles from a post office, forty from priest or doctor, greatly happy and healthy. Visited this year by the census-taker for the first time, and by the tax-gatherer for the second time....
>
> Up about Ketten Chow for a number of days I ate venison all the while. A man goes out and shoots a fine buck, hangs it up on his porch, head downward, and cuts it away, slice after slice, clear up, and it keeps good to the last. J. Willburn recently carried a thousand deer-skins over to Red Bluff--the product of his year's hunt and that of a few Indians, whom he supplies with guns and ammunition. He has been known to take twenty-two hundred, as a years harvest.

In 1943, a Ranger working on the Mad River Ranger District of the Trinity National Forest, after interviewing a number of elderly residents in the area, estimated that Jim Willburn and his Indian hunters had killed about 20,000 deer by 1895. It is likely that the North Fork basin was used extensively (and illegally) for hide hunting until about the mid-1890s (Rahm 1943:4-7).

Sheep on the Yolla Bolly Ranges

By 1870, sheep were becoming the preferred animal on the ranges of the Yolla Bolly country and the period of 1870-1880 has been characterized as the "decade of wool" in California (Burcham 1981:156). State-wide, the number of sheep reached its highest point in 1875 (Herbert et al n.d.:5, Coy 1929:256).

Initially, as noted earlier, cattle had dominated the ranges of the Yolla Bolly country. L. T. Burcham in his study of California rangelands (1981:157) noted, however, that in the North Coast Ranges, climate, topography, and plant cover tend to favor sheep production over that of cattle. After the Civil War, a high tariff was placed on wool keeping out foreign competition and driving up the price (Carranco and Beard 1981:185). Another reason sheep were preferred in this rough remote area during the early years of the Ranching Period is that it was much easier to pack out the wool than to drive cattle to market (Robb 1978: 15).

In 1871, the *Daily Evening Bulletin* (October 27, 1871) commented on the increasing numbers of sheep on the ranges of the Yolla Bolly country and adjacent region:

> Along Dobbin's Creek there are 20,000 sheep, and they are said to be more profitable just now than cattle. There is, and has been for some weeks, a

> considerable movement of sheep from Del Norte County into this region, and Mr. Hoaglin already owning some 3,500, is absent in the Sacramento Valley to fetch 1,500 more. It is believed there will be suffering this winter from over crowding. Sheep are shorn here twice a year, and many are now shearing....

The San Francisco *Alta* (October 19, 1874) also noted this trend away from cattle to sheep:

> ...The majority of mountain ranches in the region are now stocked with sheep. Many who had been raising cattle for years are selling off and going into the sheep business. Before sheep were seen as damaging to pasture but now they find that sheep are managed as easily as cattle.

One of the principal reasons that ranchers could run such large herds of sheep during this era was the unrestricted use of government lands for grazing [see Keter 2015]. As Charles Nordhoff (1874: 139), who was traveling through the region at that time, noted:

> ...in the little valleys and fertile hill slopes of the Coast Range, where there is much unsurveyed government land, to which hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle are annually driven by graziers of the plains, who thus save their own pastures, and are able to carry a much larger number of sheep than they otherwise could.

By the middle of the decade, the Yolla Bolly region was known as prime sheep country. Many of the large ranches to the west of the basin, located along the eastern slopes of the main Eel River, used the rangelands of the North Fork basin as transitional range. In late spring or early summer, the herdsmen would slowly drive their bands of sheep to the east towards their high altitude summer range which was for the most part above 4,000' in altitude. Literally tens of thousands of sheep (perhaps as many as 40,000 to 60,000) passed through the North Fork region every year on their way to and returning from the summer ranges on the high ridges of the Yolla Bolly Mountains, the upper Mad River drainage, and the South Fork Mountain area. Some of the higher altitude ridges used for summer grazing within or adjacent to the North Fork basin were Haman Ridge (to some minor extent), upper Jones Ridge, and the Lassics/Round Mountain/Grizzly Mountain region (Southern Trinity County Files Ms. #32).

The bands of sheep might spend as long as four to eight weeks moving slowing across the North Fork basin. For example, the Ben Arthur Trail was the main sheep trail from the Arthur Ranch to upper Ruth Valley where Arthur's summer range was located. The trail lead through the North Fork basin crossing the North Fork of the Eel River at Soldier Basin [Keter 1987]. It headed east crossing over Mad River Ridge and then dropped down into upper Ruth Valley. It was used by Arthur from the early 1870s until about the early 1890s (Jones 1981: 338, Southern Trinity County Files Ms.#32).

In the Zenia area and the region just to the west of the Trinity County line north towards Blocksburg, the preferred summer range for sheep was in the Grizzly Mountain/Lassics area (a small part of this area is within the North Fork basin). In the late 1870s, George Burgess of

Zenia ran about 3,000 head of sheep. One band, numbering about 1,500, summered just to the east and south of Grizzly Mountain and the herder camped at Watts Lake. Burgess would visit each herder under his employ once every two weeks to bring in supplies and check on his herds (*Trinity Yearbook* 1956: 6). Among the ranchers from the Zenia area who are known to have summered at least some of their sheep in the high Yolla Bolly country and passed through the North Fork basin on their way to the summer range were Peabody, French, and Burgess.

Not all sheep ranchers who used the summer ranges had large herds. For example, it was noted in the Humboldt County tax records for 1875 that Peter Haman and a Mr. Bartlett living near Blocksburg owned 425 sheep that were driven to Trinity County each year for summer pasture.

In the North Fork basin and much of southern Trinity County, the smaller ranches had a difficult time raising a substantial number of livestock due to the lack of adequate winter range. It was difficult (often impossible on a small homestead of 160 acres) to raise enough feed to carry very many livestock through the winter. The big ranches along the main Eel to the west of the North Fork basin controlled the prime winter range. This region was lower in elevation and much milder in temperature being closer to the Pacific Ocean with its mediating influence on winter temperatures.

Many Sacramento Valley ranchers also used the Upper Mad River/South Fork Mountain area for summer range. Some of the locations they used were Shell Mountain, Wrights Ridge, and Kelsey Ridge. Sometimes, they even traveled as far west as the Jones Ridge area (Jeans Ms.). Bands of sheep ranged in size from 2,000 to 5,000 head. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century some of the ranchers from the Sacramento Valley side who ran their sheep in the Yolla Bolly country included; Earl Moore from Corning, the Flanagan Brothers from Corning and Paskenta, Tom Flournoy from Paskenta, and Ellison Saunders from the Red Bluff area (Jeans Ms.).

In the summer, numerous bands of sheep were scattered throughout the high country of the Yolla Bolly Mountains. For example, during the late 1800s more than 10,000 sheep and 1,000 cattle summered in the country around Mike's Rock located just to the east of the North Fork basin. In Trinity County, and much of the remote back country in California where raising livestock on the open ranges took place, the numbers of animals shown in census counts were always appreciably lower than the actual count (Burcham 1981:130). It is unlikely that the number of sheep in the Yolla Bolly region for this period will ever be known, but it is probable that as many as 100,000 to 150,000 sheep were grazing the rangelands of the Yolla Bolly country during some portion of each year during much of the 1870s, 1880s, and possibly even the early 1890s.

The early 1880s to mid-1880s was, quite likely, the period in which the greatest number of sheep grazed on the rangelands of the North Fork basin. The main reasons for this conclusion are based on the fact that the ever-increasing number of sheep--after more than a decade of intensive overgrazing--was beginning to seriously affect the productivity of the region's "splendid grasslands." In addition, there was a steady increase in the coyote population

resulting in the loss of large numbers of sheep. And finally, there was a slow but steady increase number of homesteads being established in the area.

As the decade wore on, overgrazing reached such a level that the rangelands were seriously deteriorating resulting in a significant loss in their carrying capacity. First, the highly nutritional native bunch grasses were replaced by native annuals and then by non-native species of annual grasses. As noted in the environmental portion of this study (Keter 1995), these hardy exotic species --mostly from the Mediterranean region--had a long history of adapting to human and livestock disturbance. They were, however, significantly less nutritious than the native grasses. As overgrazing continued, even the introduced species of annuals were severely reduced in number and vast areas of the grasslands were replaced with less palatable grasses and weed species which were avoided by livestock (for an overview of the succession from native to introduced species of grasses and forbs during the Ranching Period see Keter 1995).

Too many sheep on the rangelands of the North Fork basin also contributed to severe erosion resulting both from overgrazing greatly reducing plant cover on the hillsides and from "trailing" (the hooves of thousands of animals digging into the easily erodible and fragile mountain soils). Sheep even browsed on small oak and conifer trees and seedlings affecting forest regeneration and they consumed various species of shrubs and brush in riparian areas, trampled-in stream banks, collapsed terraces, and polluted springs, creeks, and the North Fork of the Eel River itself. It takes little imagination to visualize the destructive effects of a band of about 3,000 sheep spending a few days grazing along the banks of the North Fork of the Eel or of 10,000 sheep passing through a fragile mountain meadow.

Sheep Predators

During the early years of the decade, ranchers experienced few problems with their bands of sheep from predators. The main predators during the early grazing years were bears (probably grizzly bears) and mountain lions. A bounty of $5.00 was paid for scalps of these animals captured on any range. Wildcats and eagles had a bounty of $1.50 and coyotes $10.00 each (Carranco and Beard 1981: 183).

Coyotes initially had not been a serious problem on the rangelands of the North Coast Range. As noted in the environmental part of this study, coyotes appear to have been uncommon in the Yolla Bolly country prior to the introduction of livestock. Some early settlers even insisted that coyotes followed the early flocks of sheep into the region from the central valley. It is more likely, however, that large herds of sheep lead to an increase in the coyote population in the region. Steps were taken to reduce the coyote population through predator control programs including bounties and government hunters. Eventually, these steps helped reduce the problem sufficiently for sheep ranching to continue (Herbert et al n.d.:82).

[Subsequent research suggests that there was not a large population of coyotes until the killing of the grizzly bears began to significantly reduce their population--unlike black bears they do not run but stand their ground so it was easy to hunt them down.]

The Wool Market

The sheep in the Yolla Bolly country were grown principally for their wool. Unlike much of the state where sheep were only clipped annually, in this region they were shorn twice a year; usually in the spring (as early as late March to about early-to-mid June) and in the fall. On many of the large ranches, including those of Charlie Fenton, the Asbills, and George White, Indians were employed in the shearing and the herding of sheep. The Indian men knew the back country well and made excellent sheepherders. Often the men's wives would serve as domestic help in the ranch house. It was also common for Indian women to travel with the herders in the summer to cook at the sheep camps located high in the Yolla Bolly Mountains.

Sheep were often sheared by a group of Indians using hand clippers and they could each shear about 30-150 head of sheep per day. One such team of shearers lived on the Round Valley Reservation and traveled to the various ranches during shearing season. On the Pitt White Ranch, the sheep were sheared twice a year by a crew of 15 or 16 Indians coming from Round Valley (White Ms.). One historic account indicated that they received six cents for each sheep sheared. The sheep of some ranchers (most notably George White) were even sheared at some of the herder's camps within the North Fork basin such as at Red Mountain Fields (Wathen MS).

John Wathen's diary for the year 1883 records the shearing of some of White's sheep at his Long Ridge ranch. His diary has the following entries for the month of June (Wathen Ms.).

Monday, 18.
We commence to shear with 11 shearers. We shear 525 head.

Tuesday, 19.
We shear 628 sheep

Wednesday, 20.
We get sheared 454 sheep...I hire 2 men and set them up branding the sheep with Tar and Iron.

Thursday, 21.
They shear 531 sheep today

Friday, 22.
We finish up shearing at noon and the shearers go to the Red Mountain Place...Sheep sheared: Peter Bell, 107; John Lalor, X 175; Dick, X 175; Dan, x 144; Jim Anderson x 234; Sam, X 97; Jim Jennison, 225; Geo Lew, x 200; Tom Jemison x 212, Billey Lew, x 232; 2 White Men, 469, 44. Total 2415.

Sunday, [July] 1.
2 men are shearing my remnants.

The shearing of Wathen's and White's sheep ended on about the first of July (this is somewhat later than most historical accounts indicate was usually the case). Given the condition of the summer range in the North Fork basin and Long Ridge in particular this time of year, it is likely that after the sheep were sheared it was not long before they were then moved up into the higher elevation country east of Red Mountain.

The wool from the Yolla Bolly country was shipped out to several locations depending on where the shearing was done. In Mendocino County, the wool was shipped out to the south to the railhead at Cloverdale (the railroad was extended north to Ukiah in 1888 [Jeans Ms.]). The large ranches along the main Eel River to the west of the North Fork basin in Trinity County tended to ship their wool to the north to markets in Humboldt County. For example, the wool sheared on the Pitt White Ranch was hauled north to Hookton (on the southern end of Humboldt Bay) in wagons pulled by teams of six horses.

Because of the lack of adequate wagon roads in many parts of the Yolla Bolly country, many ranchers in the steep and rugged Yolla Bolly country, used mules to transport their wool. It was packed out from the ranches by mule train in 150 pound bags (Anderson 1948:7). Ranchers were charged about one cent a pound to carry out the wool (Robb 1978:20). Bill Crabtree and Charlie Fenton both had mule trains for transporting wool to market (Burgess MS). Fenton's pack train had about 35 to 45 mules and was run by Sid Willburn and John Duncan. They transported the wool to market in the Hookton and Hydesville areas. On their return trip, they often brought back supplies to Helmke's and Blockenburger's stores and saloons in Blocksburg. Fenton packed in a mowing machine and even had a piano brought in for his wife by mule from Hydesville (Burgess Ms.).

The price of wool drove the local livestock industry and it varied greatly from year to year. For example, in 1870 it was 14 cents per pound, in 1872 it rose to 29 cents, and then in 1873 fell back to 13 cents per pound (Elliot 1881). In 1879, with wool bringing 33 cents a pound, George White shipped forty tons valued at $24,000 and the Asbills shipped twenty tons valued at $12,000; substantial sums of money in those days (Carranco and Beard 1981:185). In discussions with local agriculture officials it appears that the average weight of wool for one sheep at that time was about 4-6 pounds per year. It is likely there was one major shearing a year and a second of the wool around the belly and rectal area. (Either way, wool growth for the year is cumulative---therefore, the total for the year of two shearings is not appreciably more than one).

By the mid-1870s, wool from much of the Yolla Bolly region was being sold to Ben Blockenburger who had established a trading post at what became known as the village of Blocksburg. Blockenburger first arrived in California during the gold rush era. In 1863, he left Placerville and moved to Covelo. In 1870, the Mendocino Board of Supervisors made him the justice of the peace in Covelo. In 1872, Blockenburger moved to Humboldt County where he built a store on the stage coach route from Sonoma to Humboldt Bay. He quickly became the principal buyer of wool from the ranches of southwestern Trinity and southeastern Humboldt Counties. In Elliot's 1882 *History of Humboldt County*, he noted (1882: 185) that since the establishment of his business, Blockenburger: "has been engaged in general merchandising

and wool buying...and is the prominent citizen of that section." By the mid-1880s, the village of Blocksburg was booming with several stores, saloons, and shops. There was even a race track located just outside of town (betting on horse races was a favorite activity of the local ranchers and cowboys). The main stage from Sonoma to Eureka passed this way and in 1881, the "Ticknor House" was opened. It was a fine hotel and a favorite stopping place for travelers (Southern Trinity County Files #35).

From Blocksburg, the wool was transported either north to Hydesville where it was usually shipped out of Port Kenyon at the mouth of the Eel River (Anderson 1948: 7) or west to Shelter Cover (Carranco and Beard 1981:196). At Shelter Cove most of the wool was shipped in the months of July and August but wool was shipped every month of the year. In 1870, Humboldt County exported 51,767 pounds of wool. By 1880 the shipments had increased to 450 tons (Anderson 1948:6) (to move 900,000 pounds of wool to Shelter Cove by mule would have required 6,000 mule-loads).

During this period, Blockenburger also bought deer hides from many of the local hide hunters. Deer hides brought about .25 cents a pound and as much as $3,000 was paid out during one three month period for deer hides (Suzy Baker Fountain Papers Vol.24:12).

1880-1890
Public Domain-Private Empire

By the 1880s, the era of open range on public lands had ended in most parts of the state except in the more mountainous and remote regions like the high Sierra and the Yolla Bolly country (Burcham 1981: 196). No regulations existed in the Yolla Bolly country on the use of public lands for grazing prior to 1905 when the Trinity Reserve was established. In essence, huge tracts of public lands were used as the private preserve of a few wealthy and powerful ranchers [see Keter 2015]. The early 1880s were a time of great profit for the ranchers of the Yolla Bolly country and as the wool market held, the ranchers continued to try to maximize their profits by running as many sheep as they possibly could.

The fact that ranchers were exploiting the public domain did not go unnoticed. An article in a Mendocino County paper (*Democratic Weekly Dispatch* April 26, 1882) observed that:

> G.E. White occupies southwest portion of Indian Reservation with about 7,000 head [of sheep] -additional herd of cattle and horses and an area of additional unsurveyed land, if divided would make good homes to settlers....But as it is these men are becoming millionaires by its use, having no taxes to pay on the land that has been laid in reserve for the Indians by the Government.

The remoteness of the Yolla Bolly country and the near total lack of the presence of law enforcement seemed to provide the conditions for the lawlessness that existed. The 1880s in

the Yolla Bolly country were marked by a level of violence and law breaking of an astounding magnitude given that fewer than three hundred people lived in the whole region. In her memoirs one elderly woman who homesteaded in the late 1800s wrote:

> Before coming to this country I had never heard or known of the many empty cabins that stood over these hills, the mute testimony of a missing settler, or I never would have faced the stark tragedy that brooded over these hills (Gummer Ms).

George White "the King of Round Valley"

George White was, by this time, not only a major economic force in the Yolla Bolly country but in Round Valley as well. He was by far the wealthiest man in this part of northern California. One Trinity County historian (Robb 1978: 18) wrote that by the early 1880s:

> George and Pitt White had untold thousands of stock, unrecorded numbers of sheep and many prize horses, control of many of the transportation routes, hotels and saloons and over 150,000 acres in three counties.

White not only controlled large areas of the public domain in the North Fork basin, he also, as noted earlier, grazed his livestock illegally on Indian reservation lands. White even traveled to Washington along with Charlie Fenton to try and lobby Congress to pass what became known as the Land Fraud Laws. In effect, this legislation further reduced the size of the Round Valley Reservation and insured that White could use Indian lands for free grazing (Robb 1978: 16).

During the 1880s the violence continued in the Yolla Bolly country--most of it in some way or another can be traced back to George White and his buckaroos lead by Wylackie John. Small-scale subsistence homesteaders were not the only ones White did not want on the portions of the public domain that he considered his "empire." In the early 1880s, George Ericson established a ranch in the Mad River country and soon he became too big for George White. White's buckaroos ran off his stock, tore down his fences, and filed so many false complaints against him with the Trinity County sheriff that he was almost ruined financially but he refused to leave. Finally, Ercison was shot and killed. Although a murder trial took place and one of the perpetrators, George Kunz, was convicted, he appealed and was given a retrial in which he was found not guilty (Carranco and Beard 1981: 236).

In another case, poison was used to kill a man named Skaggs who had rented some grazing land from White. Skaggs apparently had considerable property and money and about twelve hundred sheep. He was found dead in his bed a victim of poisoning and all his property was missing (Carranco and Beard 1985: 337).

George White also wasn't above trying to cheat Trinity County out taxes that he owed. During the mid-1880s, the county passed a tax on sheep of five cents a head per year. White refused to pay. He was hauled into court and was fined for contempt of court. Next, he tried to

have the southern part of Trinity County succeed from the rest of the county. He even tried to bribe the state legislature to make the southern portion of Trinity County a part of Humboldt County where there was no sheep tax.

During the last half of the decade, however, two incidents occurred which began a series of events that would eventually, in the mid-1890s, lead to the end of both George White's power and the lawlessness which infested the North Fork basin. The first was his divorce from Frankie White his third wife and the second was the killing of his henchman Wylackie John.

White [a distant cousin of Stonewall Jackson] had married Frankie White (his second cousin and daughter of John White) in 1881 when he was fifty and she was twenty-four. Carranco and Beard (1981: 240) write that it was not until after she had married White that "she discovered his cold, brutal, and selfish nature." Before too long, Frankie learned that he was dealing in counterfeit money. After registering her displeasure with that and a number of other things that White was doing (including setting up her sister as a "house keeper" at a place he owned in Berkeley) she "overheard her husband and Wylackie John plotting to kill her" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 241). She went to Berkeley in an attempt to catch White with her sister but Wylackie John refused her entry [to the hotel]. She moved to San Francisco after this incident fearful for her life if she returned to Round Valley. White then filed suit for divorce on grounds of desertion and adultery.

To avoid a costly trial, White had tried to have Frankie murdered one more time. In San Francisco, he hired a man named McPherson and told him, "kill her, I don't care how; throw her in the bay, anything, so you get rid of her" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 246). Frankie got word of this plot from McPherson himself who told her about it. Eventually, White ended up in court. He put Wylackie John to work spreading false rumors about White's "infidelity." He assembled over 50 persons who were promised money in return for swearing that they had relations with White or had seen her in compromising situations.

The trial began in San Francisco in December of 1887 and was headlined in all the San Francisco newspapers--it was also written up in other state and even the national newspapers. When the witnesses testified in court, the public, and even the judge: "reacted with revulsion at the lurid obviously contrived stories being repeated by rote" (Lynn 1977: 33). During the Christmas holiday the trial was moved to Round Valley. When the trial reopened on January 2, 1888, nearly every resident of Round Valley was called to testify for one side or the other. Even White's first wife (Ann Elizabeth Welling whom White had divorced in 1860 with the help of perjured testimony by Wylackie John for her "infidelities") came into testify against White as a "cruel, cold man" (Lynn 1977: 33).

Frankie White's brothers were in the milling crowd outside the Gibson House in Covelo where the trial was being held. When Wylackie John refused to step aside to let Clarence White into the court room an altercation ensued. Wylackie John spoke his last words-- "I'll do you in right here." As he attempted to draw his gun got hung up in the folds of his long jacket. White in the meantime drew his gun from his holster and shot Wylackie John through the left eye, killing him instantly. A hush fell over the crowd. Then someone yelled "hurrah!" and "inside the court room the judge broke into a jig as he dismissed the court for the remainder of the day" (Lynn

1977: 33). [Everyone then headed to the saloon across the street to celebrate.]

The divorce trial went on for eight years until 1895 when it ended in a $103,000 settlement for Frankie White. During this period the trial took up much of White's energies and along with the killing of Wylackie John [finally] began to reduce White's power and influence in the North Fork basin.

Homesteads in the North Fork Basin: 1880-1890

Given White's control over much of the public domain within the North Fork basin, few homesteaders moved into the area during this decade. In Hoaglin Valley, D. Osborne settled on the northwestern edge of the valley (Robb 1978: 22, Lowden 1894: map). Osborne's name does not appear in the 1880 census and one early resident (Holtorf Ms.) thought that he had moved into Hoaglin Valley sometime after about 1885.

Henry Holtorf and his family settled in Hoaglin Valley in 1888. They traveled from Sacramento to Covelo via Mendocino Pass. They then headed to Blocksburg where they spent a short time before moving to Hoaglin Valley. They brought with them a few cattle and horses (Gray Ms). Holtorf ran a small farm and even owned a thrasher. The Holtorf's daughter Amanda was the first white child to be born in the valley (Holtorf Ms.). In the 1890s, he also had the first contract for carrying the mail from Alderpoint to the Hoaglin post office.

Just to the north of Red Mountain Fields where the Doolittles were still living was a parcel of land owned by George White. During this decade it was the location of sheep herder's camp. In John Wathen's (Wylackie John) diary (Wathen Ms.) for the twenty-seventh of June 1883 he notes that: "Tuttle sends and gets 100 lbs flour, 30 lbs. Beans, 5 lb. Table Salt for Red Mountain Camp."

<u>The First Generation</u>

Although few new settlers moved into the North Fork basin during the 1880s, the area continued to grow as the first generation of children born to the earliest settlers and ranchers of the Yolla Bolly country came of age and began to settle on small homesteads in the area. Many of the men who had come to settle in this region during the late 1850s, 1860s, and early 1870s had taken Indian women for wives. One elderly Wailaki man (I378) said that:

> My father tell me that when white men make all Indians go to reservation, us Wailaki said 'hell no!' ...It not so good in some ways because white man while he hate us, he take our women. My father says all the men sad because our women were forced to live with white men. We lose a lot of Indians like that.

The children of these marriages half-Indian and half-white were known as "half-breeds." In the North Fork region during the last several decades of the nineteenth century, a large portion of the population had some Indian blood. One chronicler of Trinity County history

(Jones 1981:340) noted that "Indian blood runs deep in Southern Trinity County to this day." Interestingly, although full-blooded Indians had no rights and were discriminated against in every possible manner, the children who were half-Indian managed to integrate into the local white society to a surprisingly large degree. Had they traveled elsewhere in California that might not have been the case, but in the Yolla Bolly country so many white men had taken Indian wives that their children were largely accepted in the white community on the strength of the ties to their fathers. This fact may help to explain why so many of the "first generation" born in the Yolla Bolly country chose to remain.

The Rangelands During the 1880s

By the mid-1880s the large-scale ranchers like George White were beginning to have problems. In addition to the deterioration of the rangelands due to overgrazing, the ranchers were also beginning to lose large numbers of sheep in the Yolla Bolly country to coyotes. Originally not much of a problem, the coyote population increased rapidly during the 1880s. The result was the loss of significant numbers of sheep to coyotes in the mountains of the Yolla Bolly country (Herbert et al n.d.: 5). For this reason, during the late 1880s there was the beginning of a gradual shift back to cattle. This shift was accelerated during the 1890s as the price of wool declined. By the turn of the century, while the region to the west of the main Eel River continued to raise mainly sheep, the ranchers to the east of the Eel in the Yolla Bolly country, raised about as many cattle as sheep (INF1). Interestingly, large numbers of sheep still summered in the Yolla Bolly Mountains as this extremely rugged and steep country was still relatively good sheep country. By about the mid-1890s, however, most of these sheep came from the Sacramento Valley side and the great herds of sheep which had passed through the North Fork basin were nearly all gone.

<u>The Wool Market and the Disappearance of Blockenburger</u>

[Note: The subject of Blockenburger and the events surrounding the following incident in this section have been called into question by some local historians on the Blocksburg web site (no longer active). . I would suggest further research to clarify the issue.]

Sometime in the late 1880s (about 1888) there was another serious blow to the local sheep industry. It eventually led to the financial ruin of the Asbills and a number of other ranchers in the Yolla Bolly country. When Blockenburger first began his business in the late 1870s he visited the many local ranches in the southern Humboldt and Trinity County area (including those to the west of the main Eel along the Bells Springs Road and in the Island Mountain area). The poorly educated ranchers were impressed by his "pompous speech" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 197).

His plan was simple; to eliminate the middlemen in the sheep market namely Schubert and Beck or John S. Wise who were "robbing them" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 199). First,

however, Blockenburger needed the ranchers help. They would mortgage their ranches to "go his security" so that he could get the finances to buy their wool directly. It was not uncommon at this time for settlers to help one another by "going their security." Essentially, by cooperating it provided a system so that ranchers could secure loans in order to buy land, cattle or sheep. So Blockenburger taking advantage of the trusting ranchers (plus their desire to make a bigger profit) collected $50,000 in security notes which he then took to the bank in Springville (later Fortuna).

Blockenburger used the rancher's promissory notes as collateral to purchase supplies to sell to the ranchers as well as cash to buy the wool of those who had mortgaged their ranches. For a number of years (from about 1882 to 1887) this system worked well. Blockenburger became wealthy and the ranchers made money. Nationwide, however, economic conditions were declining and a terrible depression was in its early stages. [The Panic of 1993; see Keter 2015.] When the market began to collapse, Blockenburger and his new wife disappeared and were never heard from again.

[It appears that in 1877, he abandoned his common-law Indian wife Bonnie; who was widely respected and well-liked in the Yolla Bolly country and southern Humboldt County to marry a woman living in San Francisco.]

With Blockenburger gone, the bank in Springville [Fortuna] notified the ranchers that their notes were due. The bank foreclosed on a number of ranches due to this crime including Asbill brother's ranch in Summit Valley. Pierce Asbill borrowed money from a Ukiah Bank to pay off the debt to the Springville bank but this left him badly in debt. A number of ranchers along the main Eel lost their ranches as a result of this incident (Carranco and Beard 1981: 203).

Wailaki Living in the North Fork Basin

There were a number of Indian families still living in the basin during the last several decades of the nineteenth century (perhaps as many as one hundred men, women, and children), but it appears that as time went on this number steadily declined. During the 1880s nearly all the Indian men and women still worked on the large ranches especially those of George White, the Asbills, and Charlie Fenton.

One elderly Wailaki informant ([I#378]--this man was 96 years old at the time of the interview in 1985--indicated that in the late 1800s a number of Indian families, including his, lived in Hull's Valley on reservation lands and worked for Charlie Fenton. They lived there year-around. In the summer, the men would move the bands of sheep to the South Fork Mountain area and return in the fall.

The interviewee also said that if more than one or two Indian families lived together they would usually build a dance house. He remembered that:

> We had dances any chance we could get, even on white man's holidays like Fourth of July and Christmas. The one everyone liked best was in the spring.

> It was the coming out dance. And of course, when the medicine man called one, we always danced.
>
> All of us danced together, our best friends were the Yuki, but we liked to dance with the Nomlaki too because all our dances and songs and dance outfits were almost the same.
>
> Our dance house always were big, real big, not like the Yuki's. Ours was always big because we had lots of Indians at Charlie Fentons and our dances everybody come to. They [dance houses] always have center posts and most always had lots of center posts. Because if its big, it needs those center posts to hold everything up.
>
> When everyone from all around come to these dances, they all camp around there for two-three days. A dance, even a doctor dance, has to have lots of people at it.
>
> ...I was a young one who liked to dance so I went to all the dances. I'd travel up to two days to get to Indian dances, white man dance too, but that wasn't until later in time when white men let us in to dance. They'd let half-breed in their dance because most their kids are half-breed, but not us wild injuns as they call us like that to dance in round house. Last dance I was in was about 1920.
>
> Yeah, dancing, dancing--good times. Us young men like to show off to the pretty women when we are dancing. We strut and stick our chests out and hear the music the way it is supposed to be heard and we catch their eyes. Then, before you know it, the pretty one has your will and heart and you have little ones running around. Many a dancer ended in this way. I was a good dancer and I got one of the pretty ones--Yeah, I got one of the pretty ones. [Quoted from the original.]

Charlie Fenton employed a large number of Indians to work on his ranch. The 1880 census records sixty-two Indian men, women, and children as living in what were quite likely one or more encampments adjacent to his ranch. The census lists "Fenton, Chas" [sic] as "Single", his occupation was recorded as "Sheep Farmer." Following his name is a list of Indians with a notation by the census taker that "all of this list of Indians are in charge of Fenton and work on his sheep ranch."

Both Indian men and women worked on the ranch and there were few children. The census rolls record twenty-two marriages. Of the total marriages, only seven couples had any children. Of the fifteen couples with no children, only two couples were above child bearing age and may have had children who were no longer living in the household. Most couples were between the ages of seventeen and forty, with many in their twenties and thirties. The total number of children was 13 or an average of .65 children per married couple (one single woman had one child and was also raising another child in her household) of child bearing age. This birth rate is extremely low and helps to explain why the population of the Wailaki

continued to steadily decline after 1865.

There are several possible explanations for this low birthrate. It may have been the result of one or a combination of factors including stress, poor nutrition, and the extremely difficult living conditions faced by the Wailaki still living both on and off the Round Valley Indian Reservation. Moreover, in traditional Wailaki society the birth rate had always been relatively low.

The Indian families living in the basin at this time still relied on traditional subsistence resources including acorns and salmon for at least a part of their food supply. One interviewee (I378) said that the Indians working on the local ranches would travel to the North Fork to fish when the steelhead or salmon were running:

> We all used to go there and dam up the North Fork Eel and catch our fish [salmon] at night with flares. Nobody bother us, not even white man bother us. Of course there were no game wardens like today then so nobody care---there was plenty of fish.

Another location where the Indians used to fish was at Soldier Basin (I#316).

The Winter of 1889-1890

The severe winter of 1889-1890 was a watershed event in the history of the Yolla Bolly country. The loss of livestock was tremendous as most of the winter ranges lie under a thick blanket of snow. Thousands of cattle and sheep died of starvation (*Trinity Yearbook* 1955: 29). Some ranchers lost their entire herds. Most years there were heavy winter storms but usually the snow remained throughout the winter only on the highest ridges. At lower elevations the snow would melt after a few days or so. For this reason, ranchers stored very little winter feed for their livestock; other than a small amount for their working stock and saddle horses.

By late winter, the snow was fifteen feet deep on top of Bell Springs Mountain on the west side of the main Eel River. This region usually experienced much milder winters than the North Fork basin. At Hettenshaw Valley, the snow was seven to nine feet deep and several barns collapsed (Carranco and Beard 1981:205). The Willburns raised "Willburn Mules" a breed of pack mules noted for their endurance that were popular with the residents of the Yolla Bolly country. They lost their thousand dollar Jack but managed to save some of the mules by bringing them in to their cabin. James Howe also of Hettenshaw Valley lost everything during that winter. George Eaton of Humboldt County lost all of his cattle and two thousand of his three thousand sheep and a man named Jensen had eleven sheep left out of a band of three thousand. One early resident of the Zenia area wrote:

> The winter of 89 and 90 is a memorable winter for the early settlers as most everyone living here at that time had their herds entirely wiped out by the cold and deep snow and many ranches were abandoned at that time (Gummer Ms.).

Hazel Hill in the *Humboldt Times* (December 18, 1955) wrote about the economic problems caused by the severe weather:

> Prior to what is still spoken of as the 'hard winter' of 1889-1890, Blocksburg was the congregating point for ranchers from the counties of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Trinity. The post office served as the district center for Zenia, Hoaglin, Ruth, and Caution, with mail going out by pack train. Because times had been so good for the years just preceding the 'hard winter' many farmers had mortgaged their property to the limit to buy additional sheep and cattle. When the hard winter hit, the heavy long lasting snows killed their livestock and crops, making it necessary for many of the homesteaders to give up their ranches and move to other communities.

In the North Fork basin there was also a heavy loss of livestock. The *Trinity Journal* (in Carranco and Beard 1981: 205) noted that:

> The past winter has been unusually severe for stockmen and southwestern Trinity has been swept pretty clean...Mad River has lost three-fourths of its stock. On the north fork, down as far as Fenton's, half of the sheep and lots of horses and cattle have perished. Some have lost all but the land.
>
> There is no doubt but that the past winter has been a backset to the people of southwest Trinity, and it will be fully ten years before they recover from it.

The Asbills of Summit Valley lost most of their sheep that winter and after a number of other earlier setbacks (including the Blockenburger incident) they were financially ruined and lost the ranch to the bank in Mendocino County which held the mortgage they had placed on the ranch to pay off the Blockenburger debt. Pierce Asbill left the Yolla Bolly country for a while and when he returned he was broke except for a few horses and pack animals. He traveled up to Hettenshaw Valley which he had first entered nearly forty years earlier with his brother and Jim Neafus. He stopped to visit his close friend Jim Willburn [at the southern end of the valley]. When Willburn came out to greet his old friend he said "wall Pierce, wich way ye travlin?." Pierce replied, "by gad-a-mity Jim, rite back whar hi started from almost forty yer ago." Willburn pointing out to his collapsed barns said, "Pierce, if ye'll look around a bit, it looks like I'd better start with ye" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 210).

After a steady deterioration in the condition of the rangelands due to severe overgrazing for a period of about twenty years and then a disastrous winter resulting in the death of, quite likely over half of the livestock in the North Fork region, the numbers of sheep and cattle running the ranges of the Yolla Bolly country never again equaled the numbers of the 1870-1890 period. It appears that the sheep ranches in the Sacramento Valley managed to avoid any severe losses due to the winter weather. As noted earlier, as time progressed more and more of the sheep grazing in the high Yolla Bolly country during the summer were from the Sacramento Valley region.

1890-1900
The End of an Era

The decade of the 1890s would mark the end of the control of the North Fork basin by George White as well as an end to the general lawlessness which seemed to thrive in such a remote area so infrequently visited by the law. By the end of the decade, the stage was set for the brief florescence of the early twentieth century when the population reached its zenith (probably about 1920-1930) and numerous homesteads doted the North Fork basin.

The Murder of Jack Littlefield and the Decline of George White' Ranching Empire

Perhaps the most important event influencing the history of the North Fork basin during this period was the murder of Jack Littlefield in September of 1895. Murders had been a regular occurrence in the Long Ridge country for nearly three decades but times were changing. The outside world was beginning to view with disgust and anger the lawlessness that was taking place in the Yolla Bolly country. Jack Littlefield was a well-liked and popular man with many of the people in the Yolla Bolly country--but not with George White.

Littlefield had actually worked for White briefly when he first moved to the Yolla Bolly country from Eureka but he eventually went to work for Ves Palmer. Palmer had married the widow of Wylackie John, Ellen Wathen, and she had brought a lawsuit against George White to get an equitable share in the 600 head of cattle the Wathen's had held in partnership with White on a ranch in southwestern Trinity County (quite possibly the Long Ridge Ranch). Ves Palmer pressed the case and he would not back down despite White's threats. For this he gained the animosity of George White, as did Littlefield who had quit working for White to become the foreman on Palmer's ranch. Palmer was a good businessman and his ranch began to grow in size but he knew that he was in a dangerous situation as his ranch was surrounded by the lands of George White. He moved his wife and family to Round Valley as a precaution but continued to operate his ranch with the help of Littlefield (Carranco and Beard 1981:264).

It was at this time that, as Carranco and Beard (1985: 264) state, "White began his vendetta to frame the two men." False warrants were sworn out against the men (Ves Palmer was tried and acquitted four times for stealing cattle) and several other incidents involving attempts to either frame or kill Palmer and Littlefield took place. In one incident, Littlefield was shot in the back and nearly killed when heading back to Long Ridge from Covelo in September of 1894. Later that year, he got in a fight with one of White's men, Joe Gregory, and nearly died when his throat was slashed.

After all this effort by White, Palmer and Littlefield were still continuing to operate their ranch. In August of 1895, Gregory asked Frank Hanover, a Trinity County Deputy, to help him:

> assemble a mob to lynch Palmer and Littlefield, and that White, who would pay

> five thousand dollars, and others would stand to assist them in escaping the penalty of the crime....The die was cast: Littlefield and Palmer had to be killed (Carranco and Beard 1981: 267-268).

George E. Ward (Ms.) who studied the trial transcripts and spent years researching the case writes:

> John Vinton [whom White hoped would replace Wylackie John as leader of his buckaroos] had appeared at the home of Thomas Haydon on the 25th of September and at that time, or shortly thereafter, a group of men gathered there whose sole purpose was to do away with their common enemy...There was Thomas Haydon, a short, fat faced man with silted eyes and his hat pulled low over them; Joe Gregory, a good looking young cowboy with curly brown hair; Buck Laycock, an old bowlegged gun man who carried a double barreled shotgun as well as two guns strapped around his waist; Fred Radcliff, John Crow, John Vinton, Gordon Van Horn, and Bayliss Van Horn, a constable.

It was now the 26th, and I quote from the Trinity County court records:

> These men spent their time at Haydon's house talking to Vinton and resting at ease, Gregory cleaning his rifle. They then, with the exception of Vinton [the conspirators had fabricated a story in which Littlefield had shot him], started to go to the place where he claimed the shooting took place. Before they got there Van Horn deputized Crow and the two rode down towards the river [North Fork] where they knew Littlefield and his men were resting their cattle before starting the drive up the mountain. [the location is still calls Jacks Flat.] The others rode over to a place on Wylackie Hill from where they could see the trail and anyone riding on it. In this way they could tell if their plan was working out. These men were all heavily armed and mounted on horses with the exception of Radcliff, who was riding and unshod mule.
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> As Littlefield and his companions were resting beside the trail Van Horn and Crow rode up and told him he was under arrest. He must have had no suspicion of anything wrong as he gave up his guns and went along with them. Van Horn did not have a warrant and it was not until they were on their way that he told Jack what the arrest was for. He denied the charge and said that he could prove his whereabouts at the time Vinton claimed he shot him.
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> As the men on the Hill saw the men on the trail they knew that their scheme was working just as they had planned it. Van Horn was riding in front, Littlefield in the middle and Crow behind. The elder Van Horn and Haydon now rode back to the latter's house while the other three rode on to the agreed on place at the Forks of the Trail, tied their animals in the brush out of sight and waited.
>
> One can get various stories as to just what took place then. Only the

> conspirators themselves know and they had all agreed on a story of their prisoner being taken away from them and being killed by a mob, they being out numbered and helpless to prevent it...as they rode up to the three men near the trail that Crow shot Jack in the neck and that as he rolled from his frightened horse Gregory put two bullets in his chest. They then placed a riata [noose] around his neck, drug him to an oak tree and hung him up, his feet barely off the ground. As the shot in the neck was fatal and as there was an interval between the shots the more likely story is that Gregory put two bullets into him after he was hung, an act of depravity. The bullet in the neck was a 45, the other being 38 caliber.

The murder took place about a mile and a half south of Red Mountain House. Today, a small red granite headstone marks the grave of Alfred "Jack" Littlefield. The scene of the murder was just to the north of this spot near the edge of a small glade along the Covelo-Weaverville Trail.

[In the fall of 1987 I guided the grandnephew of Jack Littlefield to the grave site--photos and more details on this trail and gravesite will be provided in a paper currently being written in 2016 and will be posted on my web site.]

The brutal murder of Jack Littlefield became front page headlines in newspapers throughout the state. Governor Budd, in Sacramento sent his deputy attorney general, N.C. Post, to investigate the murder and offered a $500 reward for "the arrest of each and every man connected with the lynching" (Carranco and Beard 1981: 272). The notoriety of the murder finally focused the attention of the public on what was happening in the area. The *San Francisco Call* (October 20-24, 1895) published an exposé on the "reign of terror in Round Valley where a murderous wretch named George E. White runs an entire valley by hiring men and assassinates anyone in his way." When Whites third ex-wife Frankie White heard of the accusations related to the murder of Littlefield she said:

> The lynching of Littlefield was part of a plot and it differed little from many other tragedies of the same nature that have occurred between the White and anti-White people....White runs the whole country and has his minions in every corner of the country but personally he is a coward but is cold-blooded as a lizard (Carranco and Beard 1981: 272).

The lawmen from two counties finally descended on the Long Ridge country. A few days after the shooting (September 27, 1895), in early October, Trinity County coroner Heath, Sheriff Tom Bergin, former Sheriff Bowie, and Deputy Sheriff Box met the sheriff of Mendocino County at the scene of the killing. They dug up the body, and reconstructed the crime scene. Rumors began to spread through the Yolla Bolly country of who was involved in the murder.

Eventually, three of the men, B.W. Van Horn, John Crow, and Joseph Gregory, who took part in the murder, were arrested. The subsequent trials of White's henchmen are recounted in a number of histories of southern Trinity County (Carranco and Beard 1981, George Ward Ms., Jackson 1957).

The trials took place in Weaverville and were some of the most famous in the history of Trinity County--and some of the most expensive (the three trials had so drained the county of funds that it made it impossible to carry out any more prosecutions of the rest of the conspirators). The Weaverville paper published front page stories everyday on the trial proceedings and the San Francisco papers closely followed the case. Eventually, the three men were found guilty of murder and all were sentenced to San Quentin Prison. John Crow and Joseph Gregory died in prison and Van Horn served about 14 years before being pardoned on December 23, 1910 (Carranco and Beard 1981: 303). None of the other conspirators Laycock, Fred Radcliffe, John Vinton, Thomas Haydon, nor George White were ever brought to trial despite strong evidence of their involvement in the murder.

The importance of this event in the development of the North Fork basin is that it focused the attention of the outside world on the activities of George White and resulted in an increase in the presence of law enforcement in the area. Moreover, White was already beginning to lose his grip on the Yolla Bolly country. He had lost some of his property (including a number of parcels in the North Fork Basin to the east of Long Ridge) in the divorce settlement with his third wife Frankie White. He also began to spend more and more time in San Francisco and less time managing his ranch in Round Valley. The result of this combination of circumstances finally began to make it safe for homesteaders to move into the area without fear of losing their property or their lives.

For all practical purposes by early 1897, the iron grip that White had maintained on the North Fork basin and in fact, much of the Yolla Bolly country was broken. George White married one more time. At sixty-seven years of age in February of 1898, he married Louise Bogan who was attending Ayer's Business College in San Francisco. This marriage only lasted a few years. The principal cause for the divorce was White's fascination with the occult and a medium named Mrs. J. J. Whitney whom he had been visiting on his many trips to San Francisco. The fourth Mrs. White stated that:

> Mrs. Whitney was continually writing long letters to my husband and often he would leave me at the ranch and come to the city to be with her. We spent six months in the country and six months in this city, usually stopping at the house of Mrs. Whitney on O'Farrell Street. I could do nothing with these spiritualistic people, and as I am a Catholic they did not desire me around, I could not remain with them and my husband refused to reside elsewhere I decided to leave him (Carranco and Beard 1981:305).

Louise Brogan White filed for divorce on December 25, 1900. In the spring of 1902, White began to experience stomach pains and he was diagnosed as having cancer of the stomach. He died peacefully in his sleep on June 8, 1902.

[After having worked over 35 years researching the history of the North Fork Eel River region I have yet to encounter a single individual who has a good thing to say about George White. His house in Covelo burned to the ground in April of 1986.]

Homesteads in the North Fork Basin: 1890-1900

By the 1890s, with White beginning to lose his control over the North Fork basin, a few homesteaders began to move into the area. In the 1890 Census the Long Ridge Precinct recorded 261 residents in the southern Trinity County region (221 White, 39 Indian, 1 African American recorded as "colored"). As the area continued to grow, a post office was established at Hoaglin in about 1894. Henry Holtorf had the first contract to carry the mail in from Alderpoint. Osborn was the first postmaster (Gray MS.). In about 1890, the school was voted from Long Ridge to Hoaglin and was named Hettenpom. The name was later change to Hoaglin (Jones 1981:358). Peter Nelson came in about 1890 (Sheubeck Ms.) settling to the west of the southern end of Long Ridge. Sam Gettis settled in the area south of Lake Mountain towards Covelo in 1898 (Sheubeck Ms.).

During the late 1880s or early 1890s, Frank Doolittle established a "roadhouse" at his homestead at Red Mountain Fields; the location of numerous strong flowing perennial springs [personal observation]. The Red Mountain House was on the Covelo to Weaverville Trail (Keter 1987). This trail led north from Covelo and passed through Summit Valley. It then dropped down to cross the North Fork at the mouth of Hull's Creek. The trail then headed north paralleling the river for about a mile. Here, it crossed the North Fork (at Jack's Flat situated across from a huge rock outcropping several hundred feet high) and headed up slope to the east on the main trending ridge to the south of Wylackie Hill. It then crossed over into the headwaters of Littlefield Creek near Antone Ridge and dropped down to Red Mountain House. From there the trail climbed Red Mountain on its northwest flank to Jones Ridge. Here, the trail headed north to Three Forks and eventually climbed South Fork Mountain continuing on to Weaverville via Hayfork. Besides the Covelo to Weaverville Trail, two other trails led to Red Mountain Fields one from the west connecting over to Long Ridge and one from the northwest crossing from the Little Red Mountain Creek drainage into the Lightfoot Creek drainage.

The Red Mountain House provided a meal and a bed and some companionship to the weary traveler in this remote and isolated country. The Doolittle's had poor relations with White as did many of the homesteaders. It even appears that White may have tried without success to drive the Doolittles off their homestead. During the 1890s it was known as a hangout for the gunmen who lived in the lawless "Long Ridge country." One history of the area (*Trinity YearBook* 1957: 22) recorded (with some hyperbole) that:

> "[t]he Red Mountain House, located on the Red Mountain trail, had long been the hangout of the Long Ridge rustlers and gunmen. Here they could gamble, swill rot gut likker, and receive the favors of transient ladies of easy virtue"

No other documentation could be found supporting the assertion that ladies of "easy virtue" were living at Red Mountain House, but quite likely there was plenty of liquor and gambling.

During the 1890s a few more homesteaders moved into the east of the North Fork region. One of the earliest homesteaders in this portion of the basin, Thomas Raglan and his wife Sue Hoaglin (related to the Hoaglins on Long Ridge) settled in the sparsely settled region to the

north of Rock Creek. It is not certain exactly when Raglan settled at what is now referred to as Raglan Flat but it appears to have been in the late 1880s. One informant (I444) indicated that he did not stay long in this country and was driven out by White. It was said that he built his house over a well that he dug on the flat. The well was rock-lined and of very good construction (the well still exists and retains its integrity although there is no evidence of the structure associated with it). The homestead had a few fruit trees (apple and plum) and a barn or out building most likely built of fir pole construction.

Raglan shows up on the Humboldt County voter register for 1887 and this was probably prior to his moving to Raglan Flat (or as is not uncommon in the area he may have only spent part of the year on his homestead). Lowden's Map of Trinity County for 1894 indicates a homestead in this Section (23 T3S., R7E.) as belonging to "S. Hoaglen." Tom Raglan married Sue Hoaglin in 1889 when he was fifty-five. She had also been previously married (1900 Census, I316). It is possible that this parcel of land was owned by her at the time of their marriage.

Not too far away from this remote homestead is the location of a large pit feature over thirty foot in diameter (CA-TRI-991/H). One interviewee (I#379) indicated that he learned in about 1964 from two of the elderly Duncan brothers from Long Ridge that the Indians had built some "lodges, sweathouses, and a large ceremonial pit" at this location. Evidence (Keter 1989) suggests that this dance house was constructed between about 1895 and 1905. Some evidence (including size of the pit and orientation of the entrance) suggest the possibility the pit is related to the Big Head Dance (Dubois 1946). Anthropologist Virginia Miller (1976:73) who worked in the Round Valley area notes that some forms of these cults persisted into the early twentieth century.

Jack Littlefield had a cabin near the mouth of Rock Creek on a small flat (most of which is badly eroded today). There were remains of the cabin still visible as late as the 1930s according to Ted Shannon (I#444). It should be noted that no homestead claim for this location shows on Lowden's 1894 map but it was not unusual for men to build a cabin in this country to use when they were running stock. No other sources could be located to confirm the information on this cabin site.

The typical settler in the North Fork region during the late 1800s lived on a 160 acre homestead. Usually the cabins were of fir pole construction with shake siding and many had a rock foundation. A few were log cabins. They took longer to build but were warmer. They nearly all had windows--most common was the small 8-16 pane type. Usually there was a fireplace at one end of the cabin. Most cabins had crude wooden floors (a few had dirt floors) with many cracks between the boards so a bear rug or something similar was usually placed over the floor. They usually had very steep roofs of ponderosa pine or cedar (sugar pine was preferred but uncommon, cedar was also hard to find in some parts of the North Fork basin) because they "used to get lots of snow out in this country--more than they do today" (I444). Many of the cabins had a loft for sleeping with a ladder up to the loft. There were usually a few outbuildings and a wood-shed or lean-to for storing tools.

By this time, most of the homesteads in the area were occupied by families (although single

men trying to establish homesteads were not uncommon). The homesteader usually ran a few cows and/or sheep (perhaps as many as 50) that grazed on the homestead and adjacent government lands. Often, the homesteader worked part of the year in order to secure wages for staples and needed supplies. One interviewee noted that some of the homesteaders also raised turkeys (I316). They used dogs to drive them to markets as far away as the Fortuna area.

The small mountain homesteads were for the most part self- sufficient. The following description of the typical homesteader is by Mrs. Jessie Gummer of Zenia who moved into the area in 1899 (*Trinity Yearbook* 1960: 29):

> At this time there was no post office in Poison Camp [Zenia]. Twice a year they [residents] went into Blocksburg for supplies, which consisted of tea, coffee, beans, flour, and sugar and kerosene. Five gallons of kerosene lasted one year as the fireplace was used for light. Everything else they needed was raised at the ranch. They had a large grinder used to grind whole wheat for mush and corn for cornmeal and chicken feed. Fruits and vegetables were canned for winter's use.

Another early resident reminiscing about the early days in the Yolla Bolly country wrote:

> And you want to know of some hardships, don't know that we had any hard times, we had plenty to eat, raised wheat and ground flour on a coffee mill and had some white flour from Covelo , for 75 [cents] per sack. Had plenty of milk, butter and cheese and plenty of meat such as venison, pork, grouse, quail, squirrels, trout, and salmon. That would be a treat to people nowadays, wouldn't it? (Southern Trinity County File #4)

Nearly all the homesteads had small gardens and most had at least a few fruit trees; often plum and apple. These were canned for the winter. They hunted the deer that were so common in the basin for meat which was jerked or canned. Deer meat stored well in the cooler months and was just hung up in a cool area. Gardens were usually planted in about April and by July they were harvesting vegetables. It appears homesteaders-- even those of who were part Indian--did not collect and process acorns (INF1).

[The above statement appears to be questionable given the number of groundstone artifacts I personally recorded on a number of Indian and Homestead allotments in the North Fork area subsequent to publication of this paper. See for example the Yellowjacket Indian allotment and site record. Along with contemporary pots and pans, farm implements (shovels, hay cutters), etc., I found numerous ground stone artifacts used for processing acorns and seeds for *pinole*. This subject will be discussed in a publication due out in 2016 or 2017 that will be placed on my web site.]

Another source of fresh meat were wild pigs. Wild pigs were common in this region and were a regular part of the diet for many of the local homesteaders. In addition, wild pigs sold for 2 and 3 cents a pound on the hoof. They were usually driven to Blocksburg and sold. The

purchasers would then drive them to Ferndale where dairymen would buy them and fatten them up for market. It took days of keeping the wild hogs in a dark pen before they would eat. Anyone who had tame hogs that would eat received a cent more a pound. One resident of the area wrote that, "[w]ild hogs roamed everywhere and the children of the different families had great fun catching wild pigs" (Gummer Ms.).

One early resident (Davis Ms.) wrote that there were so many wild hogs on the Merritt Ranch that they were eating newborn calves as soon as they were dropped. He was hired along with his brother to kill them (this was the winter of 1908/1909). They used five dogs in the hunts and killed several hundred pigs over the course of the winter.

Although the homesteaders did not have much money they provided nearly all their basic needs including shelter and food from the land. When one interviewee (INF1) was asked what the homesteaders did to earn money he said "they didn't have any." He said that what little money people had in the back country they got from doing odd jobs on the larger ranches.

During this decade, the settlers in the North Fork basin were isolated from the main transportation routes and there was still no wagon road into Hoaglin Valley. There were still no bridges across the North Fork of the Eel for those traveling south to Round Valley from the North Fork region or Zenia during the winter time and when the waters were high [as was often the case] it was dangerous to ford. The people traveling to Round Valley usually crossed the North Fork at Ackerly Crossing (Gummer Ms.). Pack trains brought in nearly all the supplies for the region. There were regularly scheduled pack trains from Weaverville and Eureka to the Zenia area. A pack train was always led by what was called a "Bell Mare." One early resident wrote: "were ever she went the mules would follow." A mule was never used as the lead animal (Gummer MS). Before the wagon road to Round Valley was completed along Haman Ridge, it took three days to get to Covelo for supplies and return (*Trinity Yearbook* 1960: 30).

The Ranching Industry

The early part of this decade was marked by a number of setbacks both legal and economic for the ranchers with large-scale operations. In addition, the entire nation was in the midst of a severe depression and economic times were difficult throughout the nation. The depression which had begun in the late 1880s continued into the early 1890s. Nationally, by 1893, more than six hundred banks had collapsed and many businesses had failed (Keter 2015). In the Yolla Bolly country, the economic problems depressed the stock industry.

Other ranchers in the Yolla Bolly country besides George White were also having legal and financial problems. In 1884 Ben Arthur had to mortgage his ranch to pay expenses related legal problems. In 1894, Arthur had to sell the ranch to pay off the mortgage to the German Savings and Loan Bank. At that time Ben Arthur left for the Trinity Mines and his family moved in with the Nowlins near Harris (Thomas Ms.).

After the disastrous winter or 1889/1890, many of the ranches further reduced the number of sheep they were running in favor of cattle. This shift to cattle had begun in the late 1880s and continued through the mid-1890s. Another reason encouraging this change was that transportation was improving and the rail line now extended all the way up to Willits making the shipping of beef cattle to market easier. Then in August of 1894, the Cleveland administration put raw wool on the free list (ie. removed import duties). The result was that the price for wool collapsed due to cheap imports mainly from Australia. This action further accelerated the change by ranchers to raising cattle and over the years cattle gradually began to replace sheep on many of the ranches in the western portions of the Yolla Bolly country.

The largest cattle ranch to be established within the North Fork basin during this period was the Travis Ranch. The Travis brothers, John, Frank, and Al, were sheepshearers from Forestville in Sonoma County and in 1895 bought a 2,500 acre tract of land located to the east of the North Fork just above its confluence of Hull's Creek. The Travis brothers bought the ranch from Nelson Rea, a Covelo banker and Mendocino County supervisor. Much of the land for this ranch was originally owned by the Asbills who acquired the lands in the 1860s. By the late 1880s, George White owned most of the parcels of land in the area (Lowden 1894:Map). White lost this land a result of legal problems related to his divorce of Frankie White.

It was said that the Travis brothers were the first ranchers in the region to import white-faced Herefords. They brought in 1000 white-faced Herefords from Ukiah in 1895. Brothers Frank and Al took the most active part in running the ranch and immediately began to buy any of the 160 acre sized homesteads in the area that came on the market (Herbert et al n.d. Appendix IV).

They also convinced family members and friends to homestead in this area of Trinity County and once the land was "proved up" and title secured the brothers would add the land to their ranch. They also fenced these parcels to make access to public rangelands difficult for the smaller 160 sized homesteaders. Unable to make it on a 160 acre homestead without some use of public lands, the smaller ranchers were forced to sell to the Travis Brothers at rock bottom prices. By the time the last Travis brother died in 1940 the ranch was 14,000 acres in size and with 1,500 head of cattle, stretched along both sides of the North Fork of the Eel River from Hull's Creek north for several miles (Herbert et al n.d. Appendix IV:5). The only access to the ranch was by pack trail until sometime in the 1940s (Southern Trinity County Files #:53).

[Today (2015) most of this property of isolated private parcels surrounded by national forest lands, are part of the Flying AA Ranch owned by the descendants of Larry Brown.]

The region just to the east of the North Fork basin, the high country of the Yolla Bolly region, was still prime summer sheep range. Before the Forest Service took over administration in 1905, it was noted that over 30,000 sheep grazed in the Shell Mountain area and in the region just to the north at the headwaters of the Mad River basin above Waterspout Camp. During this era, there were many small sheep herder cabins located in what is now the Yolla Bolly Wilderness Area. As noted earlier, by the 1890s most of the sheep summering in the high Yolla Bolly Mountain country were from the Sacramento Valley side. Some bands of sheep

were still driven into the region from the west, but the number was greatly reduced due to the setbacks to the Asbills, Ben Arthur (the early 1890s marked the end of the use of the Ben Arthur trail to drive sheep to the high country in the summer [Southern Trinity County Files #32]), and George White. In addition, the gradual shift on the ranches from sheep to cattle was continuing.

The increase in the number of homesteaders was also affecting the ability of the large ranchers to use the public domain as their own private range and made the driving of their bands of sheep through the North Fork basin a more difficult task. One chronicler of the ranching industry at that time wrote:

> Ten years ago there were many thousands of sheep in the Mendocino ranges, but now the number is greatly reduced. Before the general survey of the county, sheepmen had their choice of government lands for pasture, and their wool brought them forty cents a pound. They had no taxes to pay and no improvements to make. Now there is more or less fencing required in order to control a range...add to these disadvantages of the appropriation of the best lands by settlers, and it is easy to see the general interests of the county have been advanced at the expense of the sheep owners (Eames 1892 in Herbert et al n.d.:80).

This rise of the cattle industry during this decade is a colorful part of the history of the region. One southern Trinity resident wrote about the cattle round ups in the Yolla Bolly country during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

> The cattle owned by the cattle barons roamed the hills for 90 miles around.
>
> It was fun when the Vaqueros came in the spring and fall to round up the wandering herds, marking and branding the calves and cutting out the beeves and driving them out to Round Valley where they were fed and then driven to market.
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> The cattle were wilder than the deer and many an outlawed steer was chased for days before being caught and tied up. Dogs were trained to track cattle at that time.
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> Those were the days when the cowboys had to ride and each one related his experience around the camp fire at the end of the day. The older settlers had trained oxen to lead out the wildest steers where they were tied up in inaccessible places. They here hitched together like a team of oxen and the trained animal led out the wild one. When they started on their long drive taking the cattle away, they would sew up the eyes of the wildest ones with buck skin strings and they would never leave the bunch. Each night they would cut the strings and whenever one left the bunch, he was caught and his eyes were sewn up. They very seldom lost or had any cattle get away on these drives.

> The famous mark and brand at that time was a crop and lop for the ears and Brand 71. They killed a beef a day in the camp and anyone living in the vicinity of the camp could come by and get all the beef they wanted as a slick ear was always butchered...Later they brought along an Indian woman to tend camp. She baked pones over the camp fire, cooked beans and made the coffee and any meat that was left over she dried. Each morning as the cowboys rode away they would ride past the drying line and fill their pockets with dried beef and that would be their refreshment for the day (Gummer Ms.).

Nearby communities

Prior to 1890 there was only one voting precinct in southern Trinity County--Hettenshaw. A second precinct was established in 1890 for the Hoaglin/Kettenpom area (Holtorf Ms.). During the 1890s people from Zenia traveled to Hoaglin Valley to vote. The Kindred, Shields, and Cox families all moved to the Zenia area in about 1895 and in 1897 a precinct was finally established in Zenia (Burgess Ms.). The Zenia School District was established in 1897 when the Hettenshaw District was divided. Sam Ledgerwood donated an acre of land to build the school on the southeastern corner of his property.

The Zenia school house was built by Edward F. Burgess, George W. Counts, and Thomas C. Records. It was made of split sugar pine hauled down from Grizzly Mountain. Both the teacher's and student's desks were also made of split pine. In July of 1897 the school opened with Henry M. Marvel as the first teacher. There were 18 students in the first class.

1900-1905: The North Fork "Community"

By the turn of the century, North Fork basin was growing at a steady rate and the region was beginning to be recognized as a community. Many families were now living on small subsistence-sized homesteads scattered on small flats in the hills and the few terraces found along the North Fork throughout the basin. In 1902 Gus Russ and his wife Nancy Willburn homesteaded a parcel of land near the headwaters of Rock Creek. In 1903 George Gray moved to the Buff Creek area with his family (Davis Ms.) and at about this time, the Wright family moved into Hoaglin Valley.

William and Gertrude Shannon and their children moved into the North Fork basin in 1902. They were typical of the families who moved into the region during this period of time. They had few resources but a lot of dreams and energy to try and make a life on inexpensive land in country that still provided opportunity. Shannon had no credit in this area and had to return to Hydesville for groceries that first year. The Shannons at first settled in Hoaglin

Valley but almost immediately moved down along the North Fork of the Eel to a place which had been occupied by a squatter named George Kindred. Shannon filed for homestead rights and the family lived here for 17 years (Shannon Ms.).

The Shannon's had a small orchard with several varieties of fruit trees (I342). The orchard was fenced with hand-hewn oak fence posts and was strung with barbed wire (this type of fencing was common in the North Fork region and some of the fence posts are still standing at many of the old homestead sites in the basin). He also grazed a few livestock on his homestead and the surrounding land. A trail led upstream along the North Fork of the Eel from the Shannon Place (I316) to where the Gilman family homesteaded just to the south of Soldier Creek. Other families living near the Shannons were Fred Crabtree (about two and one-half miles east of Shannon) and Wade and Grace Atkinson about two miles to the west. [see Keter 1997]

A number of settlers were living on Long Ridge in the early 1900s, including the families of Bill Davis, Bob Hoaglin, Bill Hoaglin, Tom Duncan, Ed Betts, Church Willburn, and Nan Duncan. Most of these places were subsistence homesteads (I316).

In his memoirs, written in 1967 (Davis Ms.), Andrew Davis wrote that his family, including his father Dudley L. and mother Minnie Rice Davis with six children and one grandson, moved to the North Fork basin settling at a place known as Seven Cedars (about one mile southeast of Kettenpom peak). They traveled from Riverside to their new home by covered wagon. In 1903 his father started a general store which operated until his death in 1920. He also planted 12 acres in apple trees. Davis wrote that at that time, the store was a stopping place for everyone coming through the country (it was located along the road from Round Valley to Zenia) and that:

> The people in the back country used to come in for supplies with 20 to 30 pack horses. We had long hitching racks and it was quite a sight to see them get the packs ready and load up ready for the trip back. They always had a lead mare, that wore a bell, therefore, the mare was called a lead bell mare. They would turn all of the pack animals loose and they would follow the lead bell mare back home. There were always 2 to 6 men with the pack train and they always stayed overnight.
>
> We used to get our supplies from Carlotta a distance of 60 miles...it took six days to make the round trip with 4 horses. I hauled about 1 ton [sic].
>
> Trinity County in 1902 was a sportsman's paradise. There were deer by the hundreds, lots of wild hogs, bear and panther, and all kinds of small game animals, also plenty of trout, salmon, and steelhead (Davis Ms.).

Sometime around the turn of the century Frank Doolittle sold the Red Mountain House to members of the Willburn family. A post office was established here on August 31, 1901 (*Trinity Yearbook* 1971: 24). The Post Office was named Caution, and Mrs. Georgia Ann Willburn was the postmaster (homestead records indicate that William S. Willburn acquired

the Red Mountain House May 19, 1904). The name Caution was suggested by John S. Reid who later became Trinity County district attorney (*Trinity Yearbook* 1971:24). The mail was first carried in from Alderpoint via Hoaglin by Henry Reed. Beginning in 1904, William Shannon carried the mail from Hoaglin to Caution. Ted Shannon (Ms.) writes that his father:

> ...carried the mail from Hoaglin to Caution for eight years [1904 to 1912]. There was a cable crossing the main Northfork [sic] branch of Eel River near Bob Hoaglin [sic] place. When the river was too high father tied the horse and walked the four miles to Caution and carried the mail on his back.

The mail was brought in from Hoaglin twice a week. For his services Shannon was paid $30 a month. The Caution Post Office moved two times over the next twenty years but where ever its location, it was always a community gathering place. No special building was constructed--it was just located in the ranch house of the post mistress (Jones 1981:363).

Gathering for dances and music was one of the most popular activities for the local southern Trinity County community during this era. These get-togethers provided an opportunity for everyone to visit and socialize. Dances were held in Zenia, Ruth, Hoaglin Valley, Long Ridge Hettenshaw Valley, and the Peak Schoolhouse (T4S., R6E., Section 14) near the junction of the Kekawaka Creek and Kettenpom road as well as some of the local ranches. People used to travel to the dances by horseback and dance all night returning home at dawn (I316). Everyone would bring food and a "donation" to pay the fiddler. They always had a good turnout because it was the only form of entertainment in the remote backcountry. Local lore says that everyone in the Long Ridge area could play a musical instrument and they were often at the dances (Burgess Ms.).

At the dances the homesteaders, cowboys, and ranchers would all get together. Since many of the homesteads in the North Fork region were so isolated and accessible only by narrow winding trails, people usually spent the night at the dance and would return home at dawn the next morning to do their chores and feed their animals. One early resident of the Zenia area wrote:

> I can never forget the first dance I attended in Poison Camp [Zenia]. It was a bitter cold night in January and it was held in the little school house on the Grizzly Trail. Everyone came on horseback from far and near--mothers with babies in their arms and one or two small children riding in back of her and fathers with the pack horse with bundles of bedding and necessary articles. Beds were made on the floor for the small children and many a grizzled old mountaineer tended the children while the mother danced. All classes were there. I danced with everyone - even the cattle rustlers of which I didn't even know. Everyone danced to keep warm and after the fiddlers were worn out, the boys brought out their harmonicas and we danced until dawn. The cowboys slipped behind the schoolhouse and changed their dancing shoes for riding boots and took their best girls by the hand, saddled their horses and rode away to their different homes in the early dawn....We danced so hard, we found in the morning we had danced the underpinning loose and only a few props were

> holding up the building. Families came from afar and it was customary to ask any visiting family home for breakfast and a day of rest and many lasting friendships were made... (Gummer Ms.).

Although homesteaders now predominated in the North Fork basin, some ranching activities continued. The Travis Brothers and some of the larger ranches lying to the west of Hamam Ridge (the western divide of the North Fork basin and main Eel River) still used portions of the basin for cattle grazing. In addition, many "wild" cattle roamed the Yolla Bolly country. Some of these cattle had spent years growing wild in the backcountry and avoiding the yearly round-up.

Some of the local residents would capture these unbranded cattle in order to sell them in Round Valley where they would be fattened before being sent to market. These cattle were extremely wild and would hide in the brush during the day and feed at night. One resident (Davis Ms.) wrote:

> We used dogs to jump them and chase them until we could get close enough to rope them, then we would tie them up to a tree for one to two days. When we had six or eight tied up we would take a small bunch of tame cattle and drive them around and pick up the steers we would either sew their eyes shut or tie their head down real short to a front foot then they would stay with the tame herd [sic].
>
> We kept repeating this process until we had a large bunch and would drive them to Covelo where they were put in feed lots and fattened for market during the time I rode on these roundups Brick Hoaglin was 'Buckaroo" boss.

By the turn of the century, bands of sheep passing through the North Fork basin to summer in the high country to the east were uncommon. A few bands may still have traveled through the basin but the numerous bands of sheep numbering in the tens of thousands which for over two decades had passed through the North Fork basin every year were gone. The vast tracts of open land, much of it in the public domain, that the ranchers had needed to run and maintain their huge herds of livestock were now being homesteaded and the ranchers were no longer in control. Instead, there was within the North Fork basin a small community of family homesteaders with two post offices (Hoaglin and Caution), a general store (Seven Cedars), and a school (Hoaglin). In April of 1905, the U.S. Forest Service took over administration of most of the public lands within the North Fork basin to the North of Hull's Creek. This date which marks the beginning of a more active role by the Federal Government in administration of the public lands within the North Fork basin and much of southern Trinity County will be the subject of the next portion of the history of the North Fork of the Eel River Basin.

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