

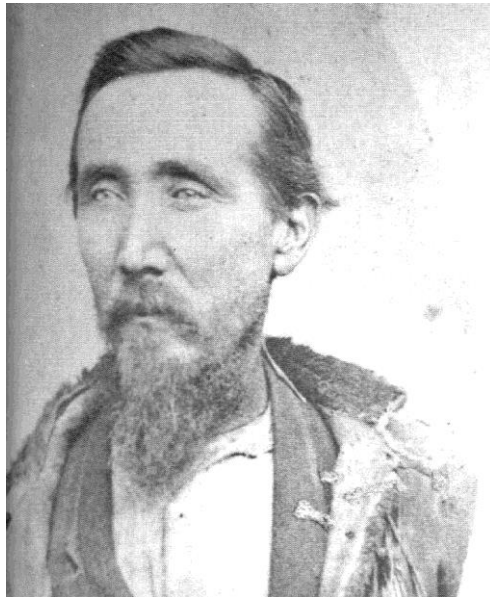
## B06 The John and Polly Duncan family of Long Ridge

See HF17 and HF05.

The section is not an in-depth biography of the Duncan family. Rather, it focuses on the information collected on the Duncan family over the last few decades by the author.

Note that the John Duncan extended family is not related to the Duncan family who at about the same time settled in Hettenshaw Valley (see the Leonidas and Mary Duncan entry). However, just to complicate things even more, both Duncan families married into the Willburn family and became related.

Tom Duncan (A5 m05 Duncan Miller papers) wrote: "First, my father settled on what is known now the Arthur place in the late sixties. I don't think that the land was surveyed at that time. Probably by squatter's rights, like it was done in those early days



John Duncan  
Bauer and Barney 1997: 71)

The John Duncan family first moved to a spot near the main Eel River south of Kekawaka Creek in the late 1860s. Ben Arthur acquired from John Quincy Duncan his original homestead (*Trinity Yearbook* 1957: 25, Jones 1981:345) at that location. The Arthur ranch became one of the largest ranches in the area. In 1871, after Duncan sold out to Arthur, he moved his family to Long Ridge (*Trinity Yearbook* 1956: 25). They were most likely some of the earliest settlers on Long Ridge.

The following is an article written by Thomas Duncan for the *Trinity Yearbook* in 1956 entitled: *Thomas G. Duncan in his own words*. [It is summarized from the original.]

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My father, John Quincy Adams Duncan, and his wife, Polly, settled here in the sixties on what is now known as the Arthur place, which is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Floyd White. In 1871, the year they moved to Long Ridge, the only mode of transportation was by pack and saddle animals. Provisions and mail were packed in from Covelo, also from Red Bluff.

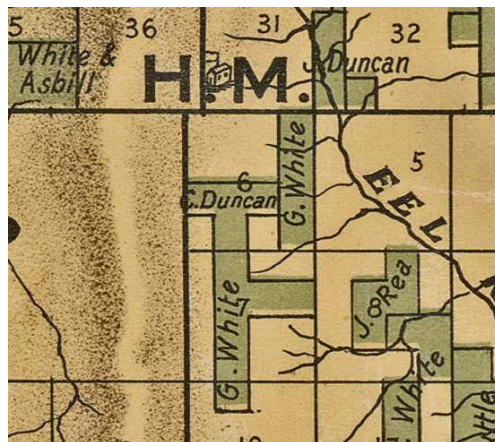
...As long as I can remember, freight was carried in and out by pack train or animals. This used to be a big sheep and cattle country. The wool was carried by pack mules to Hydesville, Humboldt County, and freight was brought back. I know of packing a mowing machine by pack train from Hydesville to Charley Fenton's ranch. I still use a pack mule or horse carrying freight from the mail box. P. S. Our mail in those early days was brought out by whoever made a trip to Covelo and was addressed Long Ridge.

...The land was not surveyed. At that time he acquired title by squatters rights probably, as it was did in those early days.

...Mr. Fenton owned his own pack train. Sid Willburn, and my brother, John Duncan used to run it. They packed that mowing machine in at one load on a mule named Toby. He was raised by Lem Montague of Covelo. My dad took on shares from Montague about 75 mares, and young horses, also jack and stallion. We boys broke all the unbroken ones to ride and pack. Toby never was rode, only packed. Fenton bought him and another one to put in his pack train. Mr. Fenton, married his niece. He went back to Virginia after her. He also brought a piano in, hauled it by wagon as far as they could go with it, then on in by sled. I've heard her play on it. Nielson first located near

...I was born on the place where I live now, on February 11, 1874, in the first house made here. Two other houses have been built since.

The Duncan tract shows up on Lowden's 1894 map. Note that there were problems with the GLO surveys see HF05.



(A2: 05)

**Duncan Family Census Data**

During the 1960s, some of their descendants still lived in the area. Below is a summary of census data on the Duncan family between 1880 and 1910 used in this study.

1880 Census

The 1880 census record shows the family living on Long Ridge.

19	57	Duncan John	H	M	50			1
		Polly	W	F	25	✓	Wife	1
		John F	S	M	11	✓	Son	1
		Anna L	D	F	8		Daughter	1
		Thos G	S	M	6	✓	Son	1
		Minnie L	D	F	4	✓	Daughter	1
		Henry G	S	M	2	✓	Son	1

Image 1

Note Tom Duncan was six years old in 1880 (A3: 1880-7)

1900 Census

John Duncan and extended family shows up on the 1900. Tom Duncan is now the head of a family --Image 3.

		Duncan John	H	M	Mar 1832	70	M	32
		Polly	W	F	1837	45	M	32
		Henry C	S	M	Apr 1838	22	S	
		Lullie F	D	F	June 1884	15	S	
		Ben H	S	M	Dec 1888	12	S	

1900 Census shows John F. and Tom G. not living at home (A3: 1900-5)

11	11	Duncan Thomas	H	M	Feb 1870	30	M	3
		Nancy	W	F	Aug 1880	23	M	3
		Stallburn Anna	B	F	1896	4		

Tom Duncan and his wife are listed on the 1900 census(A3: 1900-6)

22	Duncan	Head	1871	18	0	0
33	Hoag	Wife	1872	17	0	0

Image 4  
(A3: 1900-7)

1900 census first name illegible; single man last name Duncan same vicinity of Long Ridge.

1910 Census

90	92	John Duncan	Head	M	77	80	7-1-43		
		Polly	Wife	F	9	53	7-1-43	8	6
		Ben	Son	M	9	21	S.		

John Duncan, wife Polly, and son Ben.  
(A3: 1910-7a)

14	96	Thomas Duncan	Head	M	77	36	7-1-12		
		Nancy	Wife	F	77	33	7-1-12		

Thomas Duncan and wife on Long Ridge.  
[Possibly Nancy Willburn daughter  
of Jim Willburn (Sr.)]  
(A3: 1910-7)

The family was not traced beyond the 1910 census. It is clear that the elder John Duncan died sometime between 1900 and 1910. An article in the Trinity (1956: 29) notes that Thomas G. Duncan was born on Long Ridge February 11, 1874 and died February 1, 1955.

**Consultant Information**

May Burgess (A6: I#186) noted that: Maude Duncan was the wife of H. M. Gilman.

Bud Goe interview (A6 I315) summary:

The two trails located off Long Ridge are old. The consultant recalls that they were there in 1931 when he arrived in the area and were very well defined at that time. He knew Ben Duncan and his brother Tom. Ben had two houses at different times, both off Haman Ridge. His mail-box trail used to go from Haman Ridge, across Salt Creek, to Long Ridge. He had mailboxes on Haman Ridge and on Long Ridge, depending on where he was living at the time. The box on Long Ridge was the one Ben used first. This first home of Ben

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Duncan's was his original homestead. The consultant believes this trail dates to the late 1800s-early 1900s, but is not sure.

Winston Garcelon (Appendix 5: ms. 01) noted that:

Tom Duncan's mother and father moved to the Ben Arthur place on the north side of Kekawaka Creek and below Neafus Peak, in 1871 by pack animals and saddle horses.

This is the Duncan homestead. It is on the east side of Long Ridge above the North Fork of Eel River. The trail goes by the house and on over to Red Mountain and by the old Caution school and Post Office that was moved from Red Mountain. The trail went along the side of the Duncan cemetery about 100 yards east of the house. Lee Duncan was living here about 1956 or later. Lee Duncan was killed when a tree fell over a jeep he and his boss were riding in on the "AA" ranch at Ruth. They were both killed. There is a road to this place--trail from there. The last Caution was to the south about a mile from the Duncan place.

[also in the MS.]

Tom Duncan was born on the homestead off of Hamon Ridge down what is known as the Tom Duncan trail above Salt Creek Feb. 11, 1874 in the first house built on this claim. Since this house two others were built on the same claim. The trail to the claim is very steep and twisty. About half way down this trail is a very good spring. Some of the buildings are still standing in disrepair. No one has lived here since Tom died that I know of. Tom Duncan owned a car and he left it in a makeshift garage up the hill along side of the Hamon Ridge road and travelled to and from it to the house by horse back. (more later on another house across Hamon Ridge from this trail.) Tom Duncan and Leonard Bean would travel each year to Deerlick Springs for the mineral waters. Leonard Bean had a Model T with about 2 of the steering wheel cut away to make room for his stomach as he was rolly polly. On their last trip they had a wreck and were upside down. Leonard was still conscious and he called to Tom and asked him if he was okay. Tom had some broken bones but he told Leonard he was all right. Leonard then passed away. He bled to death. My wife and I and her folks- Ila and Otis Hardin-attended the funeral at Zenia-- this was about 1940 plus or minus. Tom lived for many years after this accident.

Tom Duncan (Miller papers A5 mso5 Duncan letters 1951).

My father and mother moved here from later called the Arthur place now owned by Floyd White of Alderpoint, Humboldt Co., the year 1871. The only mode of

transportation those days by pack and saddle animals. Provisions and mail packed in from Covelo, also some from Red Bluff.

Interview with John Duncan; July 26, 1936 (copy of the original document is attached to this file as a jpg.) [Minor editing]

John Duncan, age 67 Informant Wintun, but lived among Wailaki and descriptions are chiefly Wailaki....Fri. July 26, 1936...*Back History of J. F. Duncan...*

John Duncan [sr] started from Missouri in 1847 when he was about 18. He and an another brother [traveled] with a wagon train fo about 153 wagons.

[The ms describes their travels west and their venture in mining eventually John Duncan almost broke headed to Trinity County.]

...he [John sr] went north to Trinity County. Up there the Indians were very good to him. There weren't many white people up there then in that part of the country. John stayed with these Indians for about six years. Then he moved to Humboldt County with the Wylacki [sic] tribe at Fort Seward. [this would have been probably in the early 1860s]

There he learned to talk the Wylacki language--he being the only white man with them at this time. Some of the Indians were wild in that part of the country but not hostile. In the winter John helped the Indians get food such as meat and fish. There were quite a few people at Fort Seward. John guessed about a thousand. [this would appear to be an overstatement see Keter 1990.]

In the spring John went back to Hayfork. There he found two other white men to go with him back to Fort Seward in the fall, so they went back but found only ruins of the Indian village. [This would date to the Lucy Young story.] This is one of the reasons why the people got on the warpath. Another reason was some of the bushwhackers, as they were called, stole Indian children and sold them for slaves in the southern part of the state for as much as they could get. What few wild Indians that were left were being caught by people so they would bother the few white settlers that were in the country. The last bad bunch was caught and all the men got together and hacked the wild people at night by following [with] a dog. The white man finally caught up with them and killed all of the men. There were some women but they were saved.

One of the white men was killed by the wild people, so after one of the women saw her man was killed, she went to the man who killed her husband and they raised a family after that. There are two Indians out of the bunch that are living yet in Round Valley that were only small youngsters when they

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were captured. They are Want [possibly Wantt] and [illegible]. There wasn't many children in this bunch because they were all killed when they were born because they made so much noise. There were a few more wild Indians left in Trinity County; but they weren't bad and were rounded up and taken to Hettenshaw Valley where Jim Willburn had charge of them. He made them hunt for him in the winter and he also helped them get foo.. After they were gentle he let them move around to different parts of the country. Some went to the Blocksburg area and some to Fenton [Ranch]. Where Fenton took care of them. Most of the old Indians died not long after they were captured. They couldn't stand the confinement.