

Prologue

Part of this book focuses on William Granville “Bill” Meadows, a colorful and well-known miner who arrived in 1932. Other chapters relate stories of additional New River inhabitants, many of whom knew Bill, and document more of the mining history and the mines themselves, from early placer and lode mines to later hydraulic activity.

Serious mining claim issues arose during Meadows’ life up New River, resulting in much conflict between the small “miners” and the U.S. Forest Service, the agency that has jurisdiction over the public lands there. Some of these issues grew into threatened and real violence which brought national attention to Denny in the early 1970s and which were not resolved until the 1980s.

The mining issues evolved into an even more serious situation when many of the individuals living on the claims began cultivating marijuana, in a short time attracting many more “growers.” Bill Meadows died in 1983 when this cannabis activity was at its peak.

Chapter one gives further detail about how changes in mining law affected New River and what Bill himself experienced as he mined for gold from the early 1930s into the late 1970s.

Following is the author’s own background and experience relating to life up New River and the mining claim conflicts.

I lived in Denny fulltime from 1963 to 1970. In 1970 I began working for the Forest Service at Big Bar, returning home to Denny on weekends until 1978 when I married my husband, Rich. and then resided fulltime in Big Bar. I saw the mining claim conflicts from a perspective of trying to understand both sides.

My father, Dick Holland, first ventured up New River in 1939, driving up from our home in Marin County with a friend who was already familiar with the area, and hiking in to visit friends at a mining claim up Slide Creek, which Dad

and his brother and uncle later bought in 1941. He got to know the Ladds and many of the miners very through the years and then he bought the Ladd Ranch from Grover Ladd in late 1961. We moved there in 1963, our family comprising of my parents, my younger brother Ed, and myself, since by that time my older two brothers lived elsewhere; in 1962, though, Ed and I, as teenagers, had spent the summer in Denny by ourselves. I took my senior year of high school via correspondence courses while Ed boarded out with a family in Weaverville for his junior and senior years. Besides undertaking my correspondence courses, I hiked, fished, rode the horses, wrote a little weekly column about Denny for the *Trinity Journal*, and helped Mom and Dad in the store and postal station. [It’s probably not hard to understand why it took me longer than a year to complete my senior year, especially with the riding and fishing.]



(Photo courtesy Trinity County Historical Society)

Grover Ladd, left, posing with his mule, Pedro, and passengers Gay and Ed Holland in 1951. Ladd lent the mule to the Hollands for a trip up the trail to their mining claim.

I first met Grover Ladd in 1951 when I was five, when my brothers and I first accompanied our parents to Denny. At that time I idolized Grover because he had horses. As I grew up, I came to respect him in the same way that many of his other acquaintances and friends did, and through my life he has been one of my favorite people, and, actually, I continued to idolize him. He had been a miner, a store keeper, and a rancher in an interesting gold mining region and I loved to hear him tell stories of his experiences and historical accounts. While in elementary school back in Marin County I wrote a few stories about Denny from

tales we had heard from Grover and his brother, Willard.

In the 1960s there were up to two dozen or so people who lived on mining claims. Around forty lived there in the wintertime on both private land and claims with a handful more living there in the summer. Some had been living on their claims for a long time and were at or near retirement age, while others had more recently come in, just using the claims as places to live while they pursued other occupations. All of them enjoyed New River as we did, but only a few of them actually mined, such as Sparks Divine and Bill Meadows.

I loved talking with some of the oldtimers we got to know, and brother Ed and I both had opportunities to learn from them, such as Ed helping packer/hunter Gordon Langworthy at Lower Jakes Hunting Grounds one fall, or my helping Meadows pack a buck out along one of the trails using one of my horses. Ed and I were the only youths our age in the Denny area and I was by myself while he was gone during the week during the school year, and then when he left to serve in the U.S. Air Force. In 1968 my friend Donna Hamel moved in with her family, after purchasing some acreage from our family (the Adams Ranch which Dad had bought from Grover in 1945) and she has been a close friend ever since. However, I never really felt lonely before that, as I was so happy to be experiencing the area, its history, and the wonderful characters we got to know.

In the store and postal station we ran, our family became acquainted with the various Forest Service people who visited the store while they carried out their usual duties of forest management, fire suppression, and trail maintenance. Some of them would cross the road to visit with Grover Ladd at his house. I remember how excited I was one time to be able to ride a Forest Service horse from the Denny Guard Station eight miles to the New River Trailhead so the packer and pack stock could proceed into the back country the next day.

A few of these same Forest Service people with whom we talked owned mining claims and had lived on them in the past. They understood the predicament the older people found themselves in, living on claims after the passing of the 1955 Surface Rights Act. This understanding, along with conversations I had with district rangers and one of the mining engineers in the years following, left me with the impression that the Big Bar Ranger District did not plan to ultimately push the occupancy issue with the older, long-term claimants.

Realistically, since many of the claimants were older folks and the odds were, given the length of time legal procedures often took—they would either pass away or would arrive at a situation where they'd move out because of health or other changes in their lives. At the same time, it was hoped some claimants would take advantage of the Church-Johnson Act to acquire legal authorization

to remain on their places. Another very practical reality that weighed into the situation was that there wasn't enough funding given to the district to sufficiently process all of the prospective occupancy cases at one time. It was reasonable, then, to focus on newcomers moving into already existing cabins or building new ones.

I believe that if things had stayed the same up in Denny, without the younger generation of people arriving to live on the public lands, the few people still living on the claims would not have been further troubled.

Our family and the Jack Murdocks, close friends of ours, signed waivers to allow the Forest Service to remove our cabins on our mining claims up New River and Slide Creek. We did not live in the cabins, and in past years we had not mined except for the required annual assessment work. So the Forest Service did "push" this issue with us. As already mentioned, then, the local Forest Service chose to direct most of its efforts on (1) those who had structures but used them only seasonally or occasionally, and (2) newcomers after the 1955 Act who moved into structures or built new ones. And this process is what our family saw happening in the 1960s and 1970s.

After the newcomers were contacted and questioned about their occupancies, then, and their observing the older claimants who were still living on their claims, a couple of them pointed their fingers and asked the Forest Service why it wasn't going after someone like Bill Meadows. Meadows was eventually given notice; however, the Forest Service still did not "push" this with him. And Bill and Sparks never had to leave because of pressure from the government: Sparks unfortunately died in a car accident when he was seventy and, because of age and health concerns, Bill moved out within a couple of years prior to his death.

Some of the occupancy cases had been resolved by the Forest Service providing special use agreements with some of those on mining claims. When my family moved to Denny, a couple of these permittees included George and Harriet LaFaver and George and Hazel Maasen—Hazel Maasen had the post office when we first moved in and they had had a special commercial use to allow for the post office; in 1965 the post office came back to our store although it was reduced to a postal station under Burnt Ranch. The Dunlap families had moved out before we moved in, but both Dunlap families had special use permits—one for a regular residence and the other for the post office that Hazel Maasen took over. In later years Ena Neill, widow of mail carrier Earnest "Neill" Neill, was authorized to continue living on the Neill claim following his death, until health issues eventually required her to leave.

From the above, the reader can perhaps understand the background

from which I base my writing regarding the years-long controversies.

My background and research over a long period of time tend to make me feel as though, somehow, I have actually known some of the earlier New River residents about whom I've written in this book, including those who had been gone many years before I was even born.

The first chapter is intended to give the reader a better understanding of the mining restrictions in effect during the various time periods in which miners and mining operations are described in the rest of this book.



The New River, the fork at the right, flows through a rugged gorge into the Trinity River—the entryway to gold mining territory newly discovered in late 1851: a “new” river.

(Photo courtesy Eric Wiseman, taken by drone in February 2023)

GATEWAY TO THE NEW RIVER



BEYOND THE "GATEWAY." It wasn't long after the discovery of the river that little mining settlements were established. The earliest were Hoboken, Quimby, Forks, and Lake City with the placer mining activity, and later White Rock, Marysville, and Old Denny with the 1880s hardrock mining.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA THAT IS REFERRED TO AS "NEW RIVER" IN THIS BOOK

It is more than just a "river" but includes the entire watershed of the New River, encompassing many tributaries. The area is located in the northwestern corner of Trinity County in northwestern California and covers roughly 180 square miles.

The elevation varies from about 1000 feet at the junction of the New River and the Trinity River to over 6000 feet at the north boundary of the watershed.

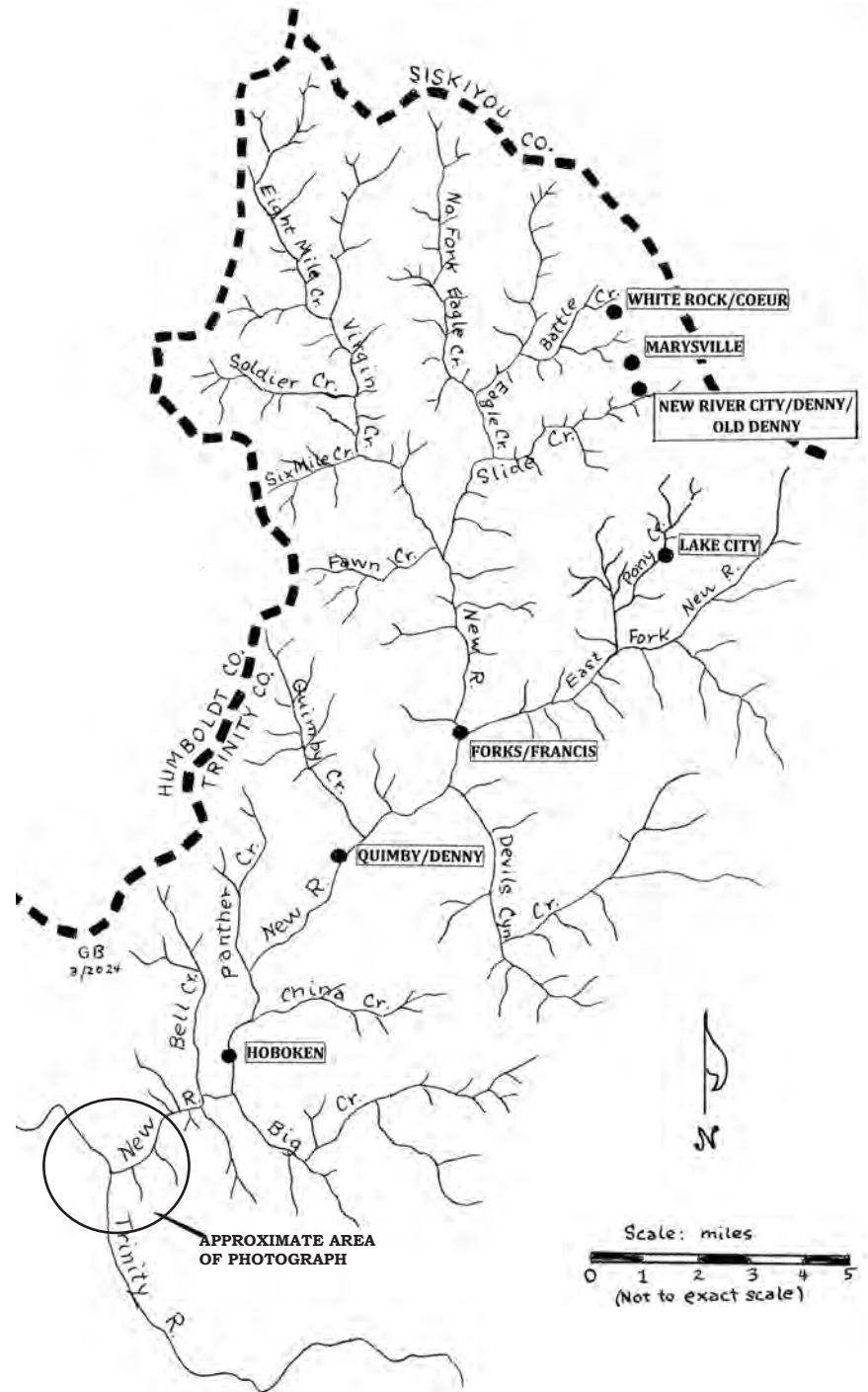
The slopes are considered to be steep to very steep and are covered with dense conifer forests. Habitable "flat areas" are very scarce throughout the entire area.

The weather is typified by dry warm to hot summers and cool wet winters. Precipitation in the lower elevations is mostly rain while the higher elevations get frequent snow. Winter snow levels measure from two to eight feet at upper elevations.

Winter travel is impacted by the snow on the steep slopes and dangerously fast stream run-off in the spring. Cross country travel is most difficult due to the steep slopes. Most travel is via established trails.

The area is best described as scenic, rugged, and wild.

— Charley Fitch



A book about innovation and hard work



Chapter One

MINING LAWS AND CONFLICT

Mining began in the New River watershed in early 1852 after the first non-Native newcomers in late 1851 “discovered” the rocky waterway and then reported it to others.¹ Soon this “new river” and its tributaries were abounding with men operating their picks and shovels in efforts to strike it rich. And soon they found that mining in northern California required the location and operation of claims to follow certain guidelines, and, later, actual laws.

The progression of these guidelines and laws began just before the establishment of California as a state and the realization that mining needed to be regulated. The 1849 Gold Rush was right on the heels of the U.S. Government’s conquest of California. Floods of newcomers swept into the new American territory seeking their fortunes from the recently discovered gold resources—but also bringing a new and unexpected need for some sort of control of these mining enterprises.

The U.S. Government acquired California from Mexico in February 1848, following the Mexican-American War (Mexican-American War, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 2, 1848). The turmoil that came from the after-effects of the Mexican-American War and the changing of governments increased significantly when in that same year gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill. The arrival of thousands of gold seekers accelerated California statehood, declared in September of 1850. In 1848 Pearson B. Reading discovered gold near Douglas City, with hopeful miners spreading to other parts of Trinity County soon after.

The process for locating mining claims in gold-bearing ground in these first years in California was subject to confusion, and the Trinity mountains were no exception.

The prospectors had to respect each other’s claims; some sort of order had to be established to lessen confusion, arguments, and even acts of violence. Local rules were set up for locating and maintaining gold claims. Legal transactions were probably performed in county courthouses soon after the establishment of the state and its counties.

The U.S. Government Land Office (GLO) had been established in 1812 to manage the public domain throughout the states, and it provided some direction for the prospecting and mining of the gold in the new state.

To provide further guidelines in managing mining on Federal lands, the Mineral Land Act of 1866 seemed to legalize the existing process of locating and administering mining claims. The Act of 1866 basically provided that the lands in the public domain “are open to exploration and occupation by the citizens of the United States subject to existing laws and the ‘local customs or rules of miners in the mining districts.’” Miners would file their claims in local offices of the GLO and, by meeting certain requirements could receive a patent, or full title, on the claims.

The General Mining Law of 1872 several years later replaced the 1866 law and became the primary piece of legislation concerning miners for the next eighty-three years.

The Government Land Office (GLO) was the original agency that normally managed mineral resources on public lands in Trinity County, coordinating with the county, which recorded claim locations and the annual assessment work that was required to keep claim ownership current.

Fees required to be paid by the miners for retaining

the claims included annual taxes for personal property—structures, equipment, flumes, etc.—and the small amount paid for the recording of location notices and assessment work with the county. Although the Act of 1866 allowed for U.S. citizens to use the public lands for mining, many immigrants, including the Chinese, streamed in to California and were able to mine as well.

By the last part of the nineteenth century, increased concerns regarding management of forest lands brought about the establishment of the forest reserve system, a designation that included most of Trinity County. In 1905 the Trinity Forest Reserve—soon to be the Trinity National Forest—was created, bringing about the stewardship of the timbered public domain in Trinity County by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The Forest Service at this time took over the management of minerals—including mining claims—but coordinated with the GLO. For example, the Forest Service district rangers would monitor mining claims, those on which they noticed activity. They would work with the miners, advising them about regulations and administering such things as the use of timber related to mining; however, when a mining claim went through a mineral patent, the final records were completed through the GLO. In the same way, the Forest Service handled the initial applications, field inspection, and paperwork for homestead patents, but the final certifications were processed through the GLO (and signed by the President of the United States).

In 1946 the GLO was merged with the U.S. Grazing Service to form the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under the Department of the Interior. The jurisdiction for minerals on the public domain carried over from the GLO to the BLM at this time, requiring the Forest Service to work with the BLM regarding mineral extraction on National Forest lands.

There were hundreds of mining claims in Trinity County, many of them located in remote areas that made it practical for miners to live on the claims where they worked. About seventy percent of Trinity County is public domain

either administered by the Forest Service or the BLM, and this permission for people living on claims contributed greatly to the county's economy. Up New River dozens of little cabins dotted the gold-bearing watersheds where both placer and hardrock mining were conducted. Given the language of the 1866 and 1872 mining laws, miners assumed they had rights to the surface of the public lands as well as for the minerals they were mining.

Gold mining dwindled as areas were mined out and it was not as "easy pickin'" as it had been in the previous decades. By the early 1900s the economy of Trinity County no longer relied on gold revenue to sustain its citizens, and fewer claims were being worked. Many of the claimants still lived in cabins on their claims, but by this time they obtained additional employment in order to supplement their livelihoods. According to the August 24, 1901, *Trinity Journal*, the 1900 U.S. Census listed sixteen people living in Denny.

By the 1950s there was an increased public awareness regarding people occupying mining claims in the public domain. What was allowed during earlier eras, when mines were not easily accessible and when mining seemed more important, was now being questioned. Some claimants were not performing much mining, or were doing none at all, while still living free on public land. Claimant rights to the surface (land use, occupancy, and timber) were not well defined in the Mining Law of 1872. As a result, the Surface Rights Act—the Act of July 23, 1955, Public Law 167—was enacted, providing restrictions and guidelines to address these concerns. Generally, the Act requires a person wishing to live on his claim to prove there is enough gold or other precious metal to actually sustain him, or he would have to officially relinquish all surface rights and be excluded from living there.

By 1962 when the author and her brother, Ed Holland, spent the summer in Denny (the Hollands moved to Denny the following year, in 1963), there were around fifty residents. Additional people came up for the summer to stay at their claims and carry out at least their annual

assessment work or to just enjoy the area. Otherwise, in the winter there were only around forty. The only two men who were year-round residents and seriously mined were Nelson E. “Sparks” Divine² and Bill Meadows. Neither one made his entire living from mining, however.



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

Sparks Divine saw New River first in 1938 when he and some friends visited the area. He joined the Merchant Marine and served through World War II. He then returned to Denny and took up a career of mining, shown here in April 1970, at the age of 68, at his KDW Placer Mine. The “KDW” came from the ship he worked on, the *Katie W*.

Other residents were mostly single men, middle-aged or older, who had either lived in the area for a long time or, like Zack Staer, had lived out of Denny for some years but returned in 1963 when he heard the Hollands were reopening the store. He, Tom Murphy, and Billy Toms lived in little cabins at Snipers Flat, a mining claim just upriver from the Ladd Ranch homestead and owned by Grover Ladd. A few other men in the area were alcoholics who, if they lived outside of Denny, would have been picked up for driving without a license; Denny was a safer place for them to live because of this, but they also loved New River, too.

So, when the author moved in with her family most, people living on claims were not really mining.

Bill Meadows came up New River in 1932 during the Depression when lots of other people moved to claims on public lands trying to mine enough gold to get by. By that time the gold was already becoming harder to find and it was difficult to make a real living. Their efforts did help to purchase beans and other staples, and many admittedly would shoot an occasional deer out of season. Most, however, became frustrated and eventually moved on. Raymond Hillman, Sr., mined up New River during the 1930s and was able to use abandoned cabins that a newcomer could take over and live in while trying his luck. There was a large turn-over of mines as people panned and sluiced for a while and then left. Bill Meadows, like Hillman, was one of those taking advantage of a vacated cabin when he first arrived; however, Hillman was temporary while Meadows stayed.

After the 1955 Surface Rights Law was passed and implemented, attention then became focused on those people continuing to live on their claims. They were in dire straits, wondering what to do. Many were either not truly mining but they were still established on their claim, or they had been mining but were now unable to work as they had when they were younger. Newspaper articles and letters to congressmen ensued, complaining about the Forest Service’s and BLM’s handling the administration of the law, which included the effort to resolve the occupancy question. Newspaper articles alluded to a travesty of “big government attacking the poor small miners.”

The Church-Johnson Act (Mining Claims Occupancy Act) of October 23, 1962, was established by Congress to give aid to the individuals who had lived on their mining claims for a certain length of time but who did not meet the criteria for the 1955 Act. In some cases the people under the Church-Johnson actually received full title to some of the acreage on their claim; in other cases they were allowed to stay in their homes for the rest of their lives, with the land remaining in the public domain. There were some in

the New River area who qualified for the Church-Johnson Act, but for one reason or another did not apply. In at least one case a mining claimant who was actively and publicly fighting the 1955 act told a woman who was qualified not to trust the government, and so she did not accept the opportunity. Bill Meadows also was qualified but chose not to take advantage of it.

As already mentioned, in the early 1930s when Meadows first lived up New River, many others came who, like Bill, tried mining in order to live. Most were single men. They lived in older cabins or built new ones, but for most it was a temporary home for them.

The 1940 Census indicates there were about one hundred thirty residents of New River. Soon, however, people began seeing better job opportunities outside the area, and they left in the first years of the 1940s to join the armed services or perform civilian work at shipbuilding and other similar things, helping the war effort. Bill Meadows was one of those leaving to work “outside”—but he came back.

When the Surface Rights Act of 1955 came about there were still many mining claims up New River that held structures. Most, however, were owned by part-time miners or vacationers who did not actively mine and did not live in them year-round. There was only a handful of cabins occupied fulltime, mostly those around and/or fairly close to Denny, people who had been part of that community for a long time. The Forest Service locally did not actively wish to force the residents to move out in these early years. Most, like Bill Meadows, were getting older, not causing any harm, and time would see the “old-timers” either move out because of health or other reasons, or they would pass away.

In spite of the Forest Service’s publicizing the 1955 law’s restrictions and its striving to relay the information to newcomers, in 1963 a family of six moved onto a claim and constructed a new house, much larger than the little cabin that also stood on the place. This new and very obvious infraction led in March 1964 to the first “mineral

examination” up New River for the “validity” of a mining claim under the 1955 Act. It brought public attention to the controversy and made headlines in local newspapers. Instead of the controversy serving to warn people about unlawful occupation of the mining claims, though, within a few years a newer generation of people began coming in, taking over old claims or staking new ones. By 1971 the population had increased by twenty-one—a large percentage compared with the forty-five before that.³

The newcomers joined with some of the older mining claimants in criticizing and protesting the new law. They joined the Western Mining Council, which had been in existence for a long time, and helped form a new organization, the Northern California, or “Nor-Cal,” Miners Association in 1971. They wrote letters, complained to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, initiated newspaper articles, and even at one point picketed the front of the Big Bar Ranger Station in Big Bar.⁴ Among them, however, were some members who threatened violence, and in April 1971, at a mineral exam at one of the claims, shots were fired from across the New River, and a Forest Service officer was injured in the neck from a bullet ricochet.

This shooting incident brought national attention to the area. It also brought a much needed response from higher offices in the Forest Service. For several years the Big Bar Ranger District had alerted Forest Service officials in the regional office in San Francisco and the main office in Washington, D.C., that the district needed monetary help and other assistance in handling a situation they perceived was becoming increasingly inflammatory. The district, however, had not received the support it requested and had done the best it could without the help. Finally, the wounding of the Forest Service employee brought immediate attention and increased support.

During the subsequent decade, the situation regarding the occupation of mining claims was resolved—but not before a worse crisis arose: many of the people on mining claims began raising marijuana on public lands, and this brought more growers and more illegal residents. By

the early 1980s there were more than two hundred people living up New River, many up the trails living in existing cabins or building new ones—and illegally clearing forest areas on which to grow their product. Besides additional people living on public lands, more were living on the private parcels. Beginning in the 1970s homesteads such as the Ladd Ranch, Dailey Ranch, and the Noble Ranch experienced land splits, allowing more individuals and families to occupy the area, and some of the private lands were used for the illegal cannabis cultivation. This number fluctuated, since some people left while others came in, and the number was less in the winter. But it was still a significant increase of residents in the area.



In 1984, a year after Bill Meadows died, a unique law enforcement team comprised of Trinity County Sheriff's deputies and Forest Service law enforcement personnel, the first time such a partnership between the Forest Service and a county sheriff's department had ever been implemented, set up a camp in the area of the Denny Campground, using trailers in which to live. The team over a period of several years was able to eradicate most of the illegal growing in the forest, allowing local Forest Service personnel to clean up debris and garbage that had been left in multiple sites.

The joint Forest Service-Trinity County Sheriff news release on March 5, 1984, announced the formation of the special task force.

"Public Safety in New River Area Goal of Trinity County Sheriff and Forest Service.

"The New River area in western Trinity County has been described as the most lawless rural area in the state. It has become a place where shootings, arson, and physical violence have been commonplace against those who legitimately use this 115,000-acre part of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The situation, aggravated primarily through the illegal growing of marijuana, has become intolerable according to Forest Supervisor Barney Coster and Trinity County Sheriff Gil Brown."

Two other controversies challenged the Forest Service and New River residents on top of the ongoing mining claim occupancy and illegal cannabis cultivation disputes. The first one involved the Trinity County Building Department beginning in 1973 and lasting a couple of years.⁵ The second was the Big Bar Ranger District's applying herbicide on brush by helicopter, beginning in 1974 up New River and lasting until 1976.

1. In 1973 the Trinity County Building Department began to check building ordinance compliance on mining claims. Were the structures built according to current county and state building standards and did they have adequate plumbing facilities? Most cabins met neither of these criteria and some members of the public wondered if it was really fair for private land owners to have to pay for and follow all the requirements when mining claimants did not. The county began an effort to address this.⁵

People on the claims, however, objected, and a couple of them landed temporarily behind bars. In the end the Trinity County Board of Supervisors backed down on the investigations and actions. The board members decided that what was on public lands—especially up New River—was not any of the building department's concern.

2. In 1971 the Big Bar Ranger District chose a new method to facilitate forest management. For many years it had successfully used herbicides to reduce encroachment of brush on young pine and Douglas-fir plantations—old

timber sale units that had been logged and replanted. The method of application was by hand, employees using backpack sprayers. The new method would use a helicopter to aerially spray the herbicides, which had been found to be very effective and cost-saving in previous trials elsewhere.

In 1971 the helicopter spraying was used in a couple of units in the Salt Log area west of Big French Creek. Three years later, in 1974, it was begun in the New River drainage for treating plantations there. At that time 2,4,5-T was applied in the Jim Jam area and also to the west near the Humboldt-Trinity County Line. It was used up New River again in 1976, with 2,4-D in July and 2,4,5-T in September, this time near the Caraway Road and New River Trailhead.

With the arrival of the spray program up New River in 1974 there also came further threats to Forest Service personnel along with sabotage to private contractors' equipment. Some locals were quoted as accusing the Forest Service of trying to "drive them out" with the herbicide—even though the program had been in use for three years previously on the Big Bar District.

As time went on, further scientific studies confirmed the herbicides' possible harmful effects to humans. Because of this and also respecting the request of the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, the Big Bar District terminated its aerial spray program in late 1976. The U.S. Government/Environmental Protection Agency banned the herbicides in 1979.

Several Denny women reported having miscarriages; one contracted cervical cancer, and another gave birth to a child with a birth defect, described in one article as a "partially closed harelip." All of them maintained that exposure to the herbicide was the cause.

At least two studies were conducted, both in early 1979, with the spray areas inspected and a number of the affected women interviewed. Both studies concluded that there was no evidence to prove the herbicides were responsible. Dr. Dwayne Reed of the California State Department of Health, participated in one of the visits with two others from his office. Although Reed personally

supported the EPA ban—he related that the herbicides were shown to cause cancer, deaths of fetuses, and birth defects in laboratory animals—he was reported in a March 16, 1979, article in the Redding *Record Searchlight* that no direct link could be found between the Denny miscarriages and the spraying of the herbicide. There were too many variables with the women's stories and how and when they may have been exposed. Studies of miscarriages in the area of the Alsea Basin in western Oregon relating to aerial-applied herbicide did show a relationship between the herbicide and the women's health conditions, with the miscarriages occurring about three months after the herbicide application; this study was instrumental in the decision to ban the herbicides. However, the miscarriages in Denny seemed to have no such time relationship. One of the women, who had more than one miscarriage, included in her complaint one that occurred in 1973—before any spraying began up New River.⁶

Reed and others believed the miscarriages could have been caused from the women's lifestyles and lack of adequate nutrition.

Dr. Daniel Morgan, a toxicologist from the University of Iowa, and William Miller from the EPA office in Colorado, formed a second team that visited Denny and interviewed some of the women.⁷ Their report summarized, "It was impossible, on the basis of this study, to blame the herbicides for the miscarriages."

Three of the women who had suffered miscarriages, which included the one who had also contracted cervical cancer and the one who had given birth to the child with the birth defect, filed lawsuits with the government and/or Dow Chemical. Despite the two studies' conclusions that the herbicides could not be blamed, settlements were awarded to most or all of the four. Big Bar District personnel were told by the attorneys that the settlements were given because the cases were considered almost impossible to prove one way or another, either for the women or for the herbicide, and it was also thought to prevent continued legal actions and expenses.



PLANTED IN 1966, this seven-year-old Douglas-fir tree is one of many that are being suppressed by heavy brush on the Gap and Salt Log timber sale areas. Culturist Sid Griffin, shown here, stated that it is hoped that recent spraying of the overstory brush by 2,4,5-T will be successful and remove the brush next spring.



PILOTED BY Larry Vineyard of Evergreen Helicopters, Inc., the helicopter releases 2,4,5-T spray over thick brush composed of tanbark-oak, big leaf maple, chinquapin, and ceanothus. Booms extending about eight feet on each side of the helicopter disperse the spray from as low as 45 feet above the ground. KK

(Article and photos by Gay Holland)

These photos and article from the October 13, 1971, Willow Creek Klam-Ity Kourier, describe the first aerial spray application on the Big Bar Ranger District in 1971. The Forest Service at that time had no idea the helicopter application of the herbicides would bring about such a long-standing and unfortunate backlash.

Brush sprayed from air ^{10/13/71}

10/13/71

Five hundred and twelve acres of brush on two old timber sales on the Big Bar Ranger District have been sprayed with the herbicide 2,4,5-T recently, Big Bar District Ranger Robert Spivey reported.

The spraying was done by Evergreen Helicopter, Inc., of McMinnville, Ore., and supervised on the ground by Big Bar Culturist Sid Griffin. The aerial spray job was on the Gap and Salt Log timber sales and took from Saturday, Sept. 25 through Friday, Oct. 1, to complete, with two days off due to wet, overcast weather. One helicopter was used to apply the solution of 2,4,5-T and one tank truck stood by to keep the sprayer supplied.

The Gap and Salt Log sales were closed in 1964 after the logging contractor had finished removing the timber on the cut blocks. Two year old Douglas Fir and ponderosa pine seedlings were planted in 1966. But fast and heavy growth of tanbark-oak, ceanothus (deer brush), big leaf maple, and chinquapin has caused a brushy condition that has seriously suppressed the young conifers and made removal of the overstory brush the only apparent solution.

The 2,4,5-T—a blend of trichlorophenoxyacetic acid—is reputed to be an organic, hormone spray that creates an abnormally fast growth in deciduous trees that soon kills or stunts them and allows the conifers to get a headstart above new brush that will grow back within two or three years. At a critical time in the fall when the trees are nearly, but not quite, dormant, the 2,4,5-T, is absorbed through the leaves and is apparently stored in the roots to take effect the following spring. If the chemical is applied when the brush is fully dormant it is not readily absorbed, and if the chemical is applied when the plants are still active, it caused the conifers' needles to curl; proper timing is important.

According to information

that the Big Bar District has collected on the subject, 2,4,5-T has been in use for over ten years and has been tested extensively by research institutions throughout the United States including the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Range and Experiment Station, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and colleges such as the University of California and Oregon State University.

The information these centers have compiled has revealed nothing concrete to show that 2,4,5-T when used on brush is harmful or leaves a detrimental effect on the ecology. It is reportedly not a persistent chemical like DDT that remains throughout the food chain, but is broken down quickly and does not leach out in the soil or water system. According to a study by Oregon State University, 87 percent of 2,4,5-T has been found to disappear from an area within two months after having been sprayed, and the only part left is the small amount that has been absorbed by the brush.

The relatively light mixture of 2,4,5-T that is used in spraying brush has not been found to affect wildlife and the results of the application generally increase the area's deer browse. The brush presently in the Gap and Salt Log blocks, some stands averaging eight to ten feet in height, is too old and large for deer feed. The new shoots of brush that will grow within two to three years will provide more forage for animals than the present mature brush.

Grass and other monocotyledons are not stunted by the chemical. According to Evergreen Helicopters, Inc., spokesman Ron Reeser, the spray acts as a fertilizer for grass.

This was the first aerial spraying utilized on the Big Bar District. Before this hand spraying has only been done, but the size and terrain of the Gap and Salt Log areas warranted the use of a specialized helicopter.

Wilderness Area

In 1932 most of the upper New River watershed was placed in what was called the Salmon-Trinity Alps Primitive Area. Motorized vehicles were not allowed up the trails but mining could continue and new claims could still be located.

Following the Wilderness Act of 1964 areas such as the Salmon-Trinity Alps Primitive Area were considered for designation as wilderness. After several Forest Service studies, the present Trinity Alps Wilderness was established in 1984. The final wilderness boundary included the original primitive area plus much more of the New River watershed, many of the drainages still having active mining claims.

After the final boundary of the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area was officially finalized, wilderness regulations only allowed the continuation of mining on already-established claims. If annual assessment work and fees were not kept up, the claims could not be refiled and no new claim locations were allowed.

The Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society were among those entities wanting the government to remove any structures within the wilderness areas. These pressures added to the Forest Service's direction to "clean up" any man-made structures or features.

At present, there is only a handful of claims owned within the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area.



NOTES

1. Discovery of a "new river." General James W. Denver, from whom the city of Denver, Colorado, was later named, helped set up California's statehood and from there went on to fill several federal government positions. In 1851 and 1852, however, he ran a pack train between Humboldt and Trinity counties. The trail's eastern end was Big Bar. The discovery of New River by miners can be at least partially attributed to General Denver.

A letter from Denver printed in the December 12, 1891, *Rohnerville Herald* related:

When I used to travel up and down the [Trinity] river and over the mountains between Big Flat and Humboldt Bay, I always observed that country to the east and north, and concluded there was a river in there somewhere. So, one time, I sent an expedition out there, which discovered quite a large stream that we called New River. The party reported the appearance of gold, also, but it was late in the season, and snow fell there much earlier than it did at Big Flat, so we abandoned any further exploration for that season...

Although Denver did not himself venture up New River, then, he claimed some responsibility for the "discovery" of the New River in 1851.

Another story from Isaac Cox's *Annals of Trinity County* reports that a Captain Bess and his party first approached New River in 1851, the same year as Denver's crew. Cox wrote that the Bess crew found a second party venturing into the canyon at the same time, and, after a fight, the two groups decided to join forces.

2. For more information on Sparks, see the author's book, *Grover Hayden Ladd, A New River Packer*, 2014.

3. List of Denny residents compiled by author in 1971.

4. *Klam-Ity Courier*, Willow Creek, "Miners Picket and Protest USFS Practices Peacefully," July 21, 1971.

5. *Klam-Ity Courier*, Willow Creek, "Building Codes Enforced in Denny," September 26, 1973; *Record Searchlight*, Redding, "DA Neill Says the Laws Will Be Enforced in Denny," October 1, 1973.

6. *Record Searchlight*, Redding, "Herbicide Effect Needs More Study, Report Says," April 4, 1979; *Trinity Journal*, Weaverville, "Denny Miscarriages, Chance May Be Factor," April 5, 1979.

7. *Times Standard*, Eureka, "Interviews Held Investigating Herbicide Effects," February 21, 1979; *Record Searchlight*, Redding, "Experts Deny 2,4,5-T Caused Denny Miscarriages," March 3, 1979.



Chapter Two

WILLIAM GRANVILLE MEADOWS

On July 20, 1932, a Model T coupe arrived at the end of the under-construction Denny Road, stopping where a Forest Service road crew was hard at work, about five miles short of Denny. In the car were four hopeful miners straight from Yuba County: Bill Metcalf, “Smitty” Smith, a man with the last name of Brown—and William Granville “Bill” Meadows. The men had heard about Denny and how mining claims could be located and gold found, and decided they would travel here to try their luck.¹

The road wouldn’t be completed as far as Denny until a few months later, in November, so the men had to park the Model T and continue on foot.

The road crew had set up a portable blacksmith shop at their job site in order to repair and maintain equipment, and before they started their hike, Meadows noticed there was some dynamite stacked near the blacksmith shop. Thinking how handy it would be for his future mining operations, he asked one of the workers, Ted Irving, if some of the dynamite could be purchased. Irving said, no, he could not sell any, but he gave Bill a supply.

Thus began Bill Meadows’s longtime existence up New River at the age of thirty-six.

Bill spent most of the rest of his eighty-seven years in this one watershed, the New River and its tributaries. He was known to be an honest and hard-working man, easy for everyone—no matter what age or background—to get along with. However, although he had some help from friends or temporary partners, he mostly liked to work alone. The only real criticism the author remembers hearing from people who had worked with Bill, was that he wanted things done his way.



(Photo courtesy Trinity County Historical Society)

Bill Meadows, at left, poses with some friends at an unknown hardrock mine sometime in the 1930s.

Meadows’ first thirty-six years before finding his home at Denny seemed to consist of continuous moving. He was born in Chester, Arkansas, on June 8, 1896.² and lived there until the age of five with his parents, two sisters, and one brother. In 1901 the family made the long journey to Dinuba, California, where they bought forty acres to farm. However, after only two years of working the soil in Dinuba, they moved back to Arkansas where they stayed for a brief period—long enough to buy a new wagon, and team of mules with new harness—and then they “pioneered” to Stillwell in the Indian Territory, later to be called Oklahoma.

In Stillwell the Meadows’ built a home and leased acreage a mile and a half from the house. Later they sold the house and moved onto the parcel of land, which they cleared and farmed.

In 1906, while living in Stillwell, the family journeyed to see relatives in Reedley, California, and after visiting

there, they turned around to visit Bill's grandmother back in Chester, Arkansas, by way of Fort Smith, Arkansas. Important news in those days, Bill remembers, was received by telegraph and written out on the telegraph office blackboard for all the town to see, and this was how the Meadows', the morning after their arrival at Fort Smith, learned of the destructive San Francisco earthquake the day before.

Stillwell turned out to be only a temporary move, after all. The family farmed the hilly country there for only two years and then moved to Puyallup, Washington.

At the time the family lived there, the town of Puyallup was widely known for raising hop vines and, later, for growing berries. The Meadows' worked for wages and instead of farming at their new home in Washington, Bill's father worked for the railroad.

Following their stay in Puyallup, the family moved back to Oklahoma for one year.

Bill acquired experience in the oil fields during the early 1920s, on the Osage Indian Reservation in Oklahoma, and in California around Taft and Bakersfield. Later in California he switched his main line of work to trucking, hauling fruits and vegetables in his own truck in the Los Angeles, Taft, Bakersfield, and Watsonville districts.

Fruit-picking, well-drilling, and carpentry were also included among Bill's trades until 1932 when he was attracted to the New River watershed.

Bill was working with friends at North San Juan in Yuba County when he heard about the mining at Denny. A man was talking about the New River country around Denny, stressing the large quantities of gold and wildlife to be found there, and this led to Bill and his three friends arriving at the end of the Denny Road in July 1932.

The first summer was an interesting one for the partners. The men learned how to spear steelhead and salmon for their meals and when the wild berries were ripe, they even went so far as to bake blackberry pie in a gold pan. One time when other "grub" got scarce, according to Bill, the four made a strong effort at a likely spot and within

three days had enough gold for a supply of staples.

Brown left before winter, and the three remaining—Meadows, Metcalf, and Smith—built a large trap nine feet long, two feet wide, and four feet high, in which they were able to catch bears for meat and lard in the cold season. The trap, catching the animals alive and unharmed, allowed the men to either kill the trapped bear, if he was in good and healthy condition, or let him loose. Letting a bear loose, however, could prove an intriguing experience, and they had to have a nearby tree picked out in case the freed bear decided not to leave right away.

Eventually the three men split up, but Bill stayed on in Denny. Until 1941 he prospected up and down the New River watershed, from Mary Blaine Meadows down to Denny. Then during World War II he left to join the outside workforce. He spent two years in the shipyards in Richmond and then at the Inyo-Kern Naval Base east of Bakersfield. At the end of the war just before returning to Denny, he was employed at the Edison Power Company in the Greenhorn Mountains near the Kern River.



(Photo courtesy Trinity County Historical Society)
Bill Meadows, center, packing a mule at Denny, probably in the 1950s.

By the mid-1940s Meadows filed on the Birdie M Mine, a hardrock mine a couple miles up Birdie M Creek across the New River from the Denny town site. There was a cabin next to a small meadow in which he lived and for some time kept a horse. According to retired Lower Trinity District Ranger Wes Hotelling,³ Bill had a horse named Blackie which he packed all over the back country checking out mining opportunities or conducting assessment work. Trinity County Courthouse mining records show him recording assessment work at least in 1947 through 1949 for the claim, filed as “Birdie M Gold.”



(Photo courtesy Tony and Anne Gully)

The cabin at the Birdie M, photo taken in 1966.

In the 1940s or 1950s Meadows was married for a very short time. Bill’s reason for the short-lived marriage, he told the *San Jose Mercury* in an interview in 1975, was, “Too many in-laws; I couldn’t stand ‘em.” There were apparently three Dunlap brothers: Robert, Bill, and Jim, and their wives Ann, Malvena, and Zona, respectively, who spent

time up New River, beginning in the early 1920s. Meadows was married to a Dunlap sister, Rachel “Rae” Melvin, who was documented in the 1940 U.S. Census as living there with Robert. Jim and Zona maintained a mining claim cabin along the New River Trail several miles above Denny, to which the couple frequently came from their home in Eureka. Ann Dunlap became the Denny Postmaster in 1952 following the death of Clara Ladd, the previous postmaster; at this time Ann and Robert lived along the Denny Road near the main part of Denny to facilitate the post office. For this, the Forest Service provided a special use permit in order for them to live there.



(Photo courtesy the Trinity County Historical Society)

The Bill Dunlap cabin along the New River Trail in 1954. Left to right are Mildred McIntyre, Malvena and Bill Dunlap, Rachel “Rae” Melvin (who was married to Meadows for a short time), Evelyn Gifford (sitting), George “Mac” McIntyre, and Frank Gifford (sitting)

The Dunlaps often socialized with other Denny residents, getting together for dinner and sometimes playing poker, which Bill Meadows was known to like. It may have been through the get-togethers and poker games that Bill

and Rae Melvin became acquainted; Rae was also said to have been a poker player. It is not known why Bill and Rae divorced. Being that Bill had been a long-time bachelor who was known to have had his own ways of doing things, there may have been more to the break-up than his described conflict with in-laws.

Besides mining whenever he could, Bill's years in the New River area incorporated other work as it came available. Over the years Bill accomplished such projects as trail-building, and peeling his own poles and splitting his own shakes for a U.S. Forest Service A-frame he built at Virgin Creek in 1966, as well as always being a dependable firefighter when called upon.

In the summer of 1951 Bill worked on the large Jim Jam Fire, which began during a thunderstorm and extended over several thousand acres on the Jim Jam Ridge and nearby terrain. The blaze began on Thursday, August 19, and was controlled by September 25, at about 8,000 acres. Bill told the author that he watched the beginning of the fire from his location on Potato Mountain, a peak on the ridgeline between Siskiyou and Trinity counties at the head of Eagle Creek.

Meadows was "second cook" for one of the Jim Jam fire camps, but got in his share of actual fire chasing, too.

Over a hundred horses and mules were used to pack supplies and equipment from Denny to the fire camps approximately five miles upriver. The main road did not go much beyond Denny at that time, so trails on both sides of the new River were used for the frequent pack trains. "It was like a two-way street," Bill recollected, with the trails in use on each side of the river to prevent pack trains from meeting each other head-on.

More than five hundred men were involved in the fire fighting on that job. Local sawmills out on the highway were shut down to allow the employees to come in to help on the fire, and any woodsman in the surrounding territory was obliged to join the crews. Convicts and a fire crew of Apache Indians rounded out the many contrasting people working together.

When the big fire was considered under control, Bill was included with a skeleton crew that had remained to watch it. Unexpectedly, the fire flared up again, and the firefighters had to return before the blaze was finally and completely put out.



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

Potato Mountain, where Bill Meadows said he was standing when the Jim Jam Fire ignited, as seen from a cabin at Bill's Utica Mine in 1987.

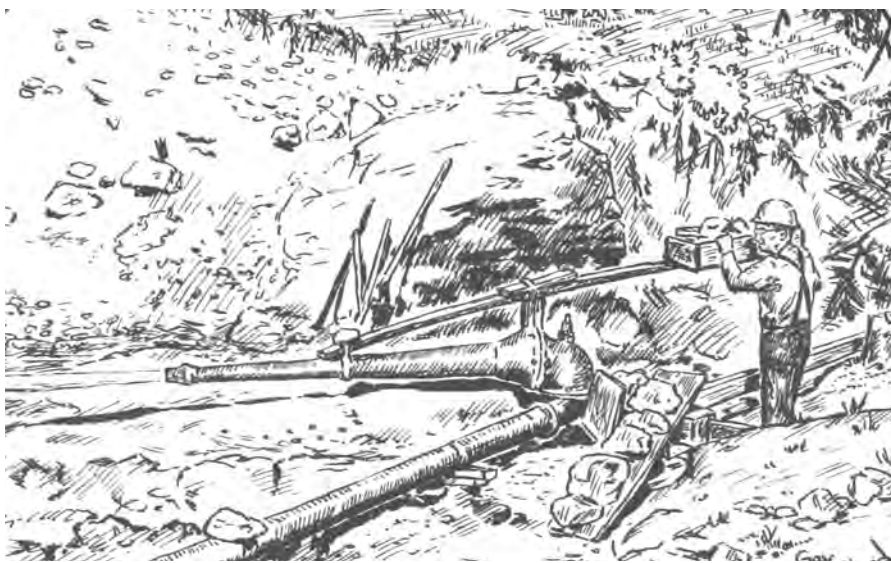
In 1954 he filed a claim a couple miles upriver from Denny, calling it the Meadowbrook Placer Mine and building a wood frame cabin on a small flat just above the New River. At first he had to cross the main river via a bridge downriver from Birdie M Creek and then take a trail a mile or so to his new location. At some point he constructed a foot bridge closer to his claim and that was connected with the road.

He set up a hydraulic "giant" or "monitor"⁴ and followed the requirements given by the Forest Service on its operation.

The first year he mined at this spot he used a nozzle and four-inch pipe, serviced by a ditch carrying water

from a nearby spring to the penstock. He dug a pond to store water for additional pressure through the pipe, and beginning in 1956 he used his hydraulic giant with six-inch pipe from the little reservoir.

The giant can be compared to a huge garden hose with a force of water enough to tear earth and rock from gold-bearing sources underneath. In Bill's operation, soil and gravel that the water washed up was swept through two rows of boxes that acted like elongated sluice boxes, keeping the gold in the riffles of the boxes and allowing the water and lighter materials to pass over and empty into the river below.



This sketch of Bill Meadows, drawn by the author in the late 1960s, shows the use of a giant on his mining claim. The sketch was entitled “A New River Giant,” which in many ways might have referred to Bill himself in his life up New River.

Meadows constructed a large derrick out of timbers which was used to lift large boulders from the major portion of his work area where the giant was operating. He had plans to include the addition of a large conveyor belt that would conveniently carry boulders, rocks, and other obstructions away from where Meadows was working.

Meadows always had plans and was always thinking

about or working on some sort of mining project. It is not known when he became interested in the Utica Lode Mine near Old Denny—courthouse mining records would show—but he was known to maintain a cabin there to work on or repair the original workings, including a stamp mill. Mining records would probably reveal other mines on which he filed and kept up the annual assessment work.

The Utica made regional news in 1969 from Bill's stories about a “rain rock” he claimed was located at the mine.

February 4, 1969 *The Times-Standard*, Eureka, CA, “Redwood Country” by Andrew Genzoli

Lots of Rain Rocks. It looks as though there are quite a few “Rain Rocks” around the country. I have been told of some in the midwest and the southern parts of the Nation, as well as of others right here in California.

So far, we've accounted for a Rain Rock at Sugar Bowl in the Klamath-Trinity country; a Rain Rock which was moved from the Klamath River to the museum at Fort Jones. Now, Barry Carroll, editor and co-publisher (with his frau) of the lively little newspaper, *The Klam-Ity Kourier* of Willow Creek, sends me a back issue (Sept. 4, 1969) concerning another Rain Rock.

This time the story is from the K-K's correspondent, Gay Holland of Denny. This is what she reported:

“Many people may wonder about the highly unusual August rains—even Larry Fitzgerald, general manager for Roseburg Loggers which presently is logging and road building in places along New River, remarked that this was the first time that some of the logging outfit's operations were rained out in August—but the natives of Denny know the cause of the heavy summer rains.

“It is common knowledge in Denny that resident Bill Meadows has a ‘rain rock’ that changes the weather whenever the stone is turned. When Bill was doing assessment work at his Utica mine past Old Denny, he mistakenly flipped over his rock, and thus brought about the showers. After a few days of wet weather Bill almost hiked back up the trail to re-turn the rain rock, but apparently a passing animal did the job for him as the rain stopped.”

—Now, that is quite a story, Barry. Nevertheless, we'll add it to our Rain Rock collection. Any more Rain Rocks, Redwood Country readers?

In his almost fifty years up New River, Bill Meadows planned, built, and/or maintained many different types of structures for both hardrock and placer mining operations. He constructed and repaired both small and large bridges, and he built at least three small A-frame cabins. One was on a placer mine several miles up Devils Canyon, another was at the Utica, and a third was one he completed near the mouth of Virgin Creek under contract for the Forest Service.



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

Bill's 1966 A-frame at Virgin Creek being dismantled eight years later in 1974 because of wilderness area concerns.

The July 7, 1966, *Klam-Ity Courier* reported that Meadows was awarded the contract to construct a pole-and-shake A-frame at Virgin Creek. "In order to build the cabin," the article said, "he'll have to take 'time off' from his hydraulic mining and fishing." He completed the structure by mid-September. During the same summer he also completed a Forest Service trail contract on Uncle Sam Ridge—and he was 70. (Coincidentally, the trail he was paid to work on was the trail to the Utica.)

Unfortunately, the nice and neat A-frame was

removed eight years later. The passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act brought new concerns about recently constructed, non-historical Forest Service administrative structures in areas such as the Salmon-Trinity Alps Primitive Area. As a result of these concerns the A-frame was scheduled for removal.

In July 1974 the Big Bar Ranger District supervised a crew of high school youths, members of the Neighborhood Youth Corps, or NYC. This was a special program for young people to gain experience in such work as brushing fuelbreaks and cleaning campgrounds. The removal of the A-frame was an opportunity for the youths to dismantle a wood structure while also requiring them to pack in their gear, and required tools.⁵

Sometime in the mid-1960s Bill started working a mining claim several miles up Devils Canyon with Jerry Clement. They constructed another A-frame there in 1968 to facilitate their prospecting activities, and also use for shelter for himself and Clement during the fall deer hunting season.

In October 1968 Bill had shot a buck near the Devils Canyon mining claim. Bill hiked out to Denny and asked the author if he could borrow her and her twenty-eight-year-old gelding to pack the buck out. The author wrote about this experience in a letter to her friend, Dorothea Carroll, who was one of the owners of the Willow Creek *Klam-Ity Courier*. It was later printed in the newspaper.

"I had quite an interesting Sunday, using one of my horses to help oldtimer Bill Meadows pack out his buck. He did the actual packing—tying of knots and such—I went along with horse and pack saddle just for the walk.

"Late Saturday afternoon Bill arrived down to let me know about his getting a buck, six miles up the Devil's Canyon trail, which begins four miles up the river from here. We had arranged before that I would attempt to use one of my horses to pack the deer out, so as soon as I could adjust a saddle to my big 28 (or 29)-year old, I rode him up the first four miles, just in time for nightfall, crossed the river and put him in a corral at the beginning of the trail to wait until morning.

“Sunday we both hiked and led the old horse up the trail and arrived in Bill’s camp in time to prepare lunch with Bill’s hunting partner, Jerry Clement from Eureka, who was already there at the site. Bill fried the last of the buck liver and heart, and some eggs in buck grease in a pan over their campfire (he renders all the fat from the animal and puts it in a coffee can for later use) and, along with bread and coffee, we had a meal that didn’t need any improving in the least!

“The campfire is outside and away from the two’s brand new little A-frame cabin. (Bill also built an A-frame up a trail for the Forest Service a few years ago and always seems to do a good job with his hand-split boards and shakes.) There are pole frames for beds inside with ‘mattresses’ of woven inner tube rubber strips, devised by Jerry. (Bill added three inches of foam rubber to his bed!) Next the two will add a little stove and they’ll ‘have it made’ rain or shine whenever they mine there and fish and hunt.”

Heading out with the horse, Lucky, packed, he might have been an elderly horse, but he wanted to get moving. He was nickering and whinnying at times at Bill and Holland, why, they didn’t know.

“As I was leading him, Lucky would crowd up behind me, and soon his nose would be even with one of my shoulders or the other...eventually his front feet would be banging into my heels. I’d elbow him back and the same thing would repeat itself. Toward the end of the trip I speeded up to see if that would keep him back a little. It worked out a little better except that then, for lack of something else



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

Bill heading out the Devils Canyon Trail, leading the author’s horse that is packed with his buck.

to do, I’d feel his teeth on my knuckles...not hard at all, but hinting, ‘Get going—I haven’t got all day.’

“When we would stop for an occasional rest—as much for Bill and me as for Lucky—Lucky would turn his head, look directly at Bill, and nicker. Why, we don’t know.”

Changes in the Mining Laws during Bill’s Life in Denny

As previously explained, mining and other uses of the public lands up New River were first managed by the Government Land Office (GLO) which later morphed into the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In 1905 the Forest Service was established and took over mining responsibilities on National Forest lands in coordination with the BLM. Trinity National Forest consisted of several “ranger districts.” The district that first administered the public lands in the New River area was the Lower Trinity District. Over time the districts were reorganized, New River becoming part of the Big Bar Ranger District.⁶

The Forest Service’s early mission included encouraging the public to use the National Forest lands. Remote forest areas were opened up to expedite forest management and provide more access for fighting forest fires—but to also attract the public, both residents and visitors. Roads, trails, bridges, and telephone lines, as well as the development of public campgrounds, were all projects of great priority for the early Trinity Forest. Some people came in and homesteaded tracts of land while people living on mining claims continued to do so. In some instances special use permits were issued for people to construct vacation homes. In Robert and Ann Dunlap’s case, they were afforded a special use permit to live on the National Forest while Ann operated the post office, as did Hazel Maasen at the same place for four years after the Dunlaps left. George La Faver, who had moved to Denny in 1940, was allowed a lifetime special use permit to live at the place he occupied. The Bill Dunlaps as well as the Frank Blomquists, who had a vacation cabin near the mouth of Quimby Creek, also had special use permits.⁷

(Continued on Page 19)

BILL'S MEADOWBROOK HYDRAULIC OPERATION.

Meadows seemed to be at home in both placer and hardrock (lode) mining, as could be shown by his work at both the Meadowbrook Placer Mine, where he lived for so many years, and the Utica Mine Lode Mine in the upper reaches of the New River near Old Denny. The two mines required different methods, equipment, and tools by which to extract gold, and Bill was experienced in all of these. Here are photos of Bill working at the Meadowbrook Mine on May 5, 1969, when the author visited him.



Bill operates his hydraulic monitor, or "giant," with his cabin shown in the upper right background and his derrick in the left foreground. The cabin was built on a mild slope but it didn't keep Bill from cultivating and maintaining a small garden whenever it didn't get in the way of the time he needed for mining.



Above, Bill opens the valve to let water through the pipe to the giant. Below, Bill is shown cleaning out one of the boxes prior to working the area above it. The framework above Bill is the start of a future conveyor belt that will carry boulders from the mining works. Sand, gravel, and rocks are washed through these boxes to the river below. Gold collects in the riffles of the boxes.



Bill continues his work. The water from Bill's reservoir provides enough to run the giant for fifteen to twenty minutes. When there is enough water in the springtime Bill can make two "shots" a day, in the morning and evening.

In between other mining projects, such as up at the Utica, and contract work for the Forest Service, he conducted his hydraulic operation from 1956 to at least 1969.

BRIDGES

Bill Meadows may not have ever seen a bridge he couldn't handle. even into his seventies. He constructed them for his own use at least a couple of times and was paid by contract to replace at least one trail bridge for the Forest Service. One contract was with another Denny resident, Earl Lewis, when the two built a bridge crossing Eagle Creek on the New River Trail.

In June to August 1970, when he was seventy-four, he replaced the logs on a bridge across the New River below where the Grover Ladd Elementary School then stood. The bridge provided access for the Beartooth and Birdie M mines as well as McAtee Bar. This photograph, taken by the author, shows him preparing the bridge base for concrete.



Meadows erected a foot bridge across the New River after he established his Meadowbrook mining claim in 1954, and he rebuilt it at least once over the years. In 1966 the first United Parcel Service (UPS) driver to venture up the Denny Road had to cross the bridge to hand-carry a package for Meadows. This was the first time the UPS delivered to the remote Denny area—nineteen miles up a curvy road from the main highway and about an hour to drive—and probably the last. After that Denny residents had to pick up their packages out near the highway. In December 1970 the suspension bridge was washed out by high water. At that time another resident, Paul Gibson, who lived on a claim just upriver from Bill, was also using the bridge. So Bill had Paul's help in rebuilding it that time.



BILL'S SOCIAL LIFE AND SUCH



(Photo courtesy Ed Holland)

Bill Meadows, second from the right, is shown sharing Thanksgiving dinner with about forty Denny residents at the Richard “Dick” Holland home in Denny. In 1962 through 1964 the Hollands provided the turkey and ham and others brought potluck items. At one or two of the gatherings, Bill joined in an after-dinner poker game. Some of the “old-timers” were pretty serious players, so even though the author didn’t play with them, she liked to watch. Besides Bill in the photo, pictured are, left to right, Ena Neill, John Hosman, Billy Toms, Bill Meadows, and Luke Collins. (Note that Bill is wearing a tie.)

Toms died within a couple of years of this photo. In 1964, after being diagnosed with cancer, he committed suicide in his little cabin. When the Hollands were collecting contributions for flowers for the funeral, the author was taking care of the store when Meadows happened to come by. She was surprised when Bill declined to contribute; he explained he could not, because Toms had taken his own life. This was not an uncommon belief, but she was interested to learn this about Bill. She figured it was an example of Bill retaining some principles he had been raised with.

In October 1966 Gordon Langworthy, a resident of Denny for about thirty-four years, met his death from a heart attack while driving his truck on the Denny Road. Local residents got together, as was their practice, to dig the grave in the Denny (or Ladd Ranch) Cemetery—which this time required

blasting with dynamite when they met with more than the usual rocks. Meadows attended Langworthy’s little graveside service on the wooded cemetery hillside on October 28 and was standing near Ralph Beans from the Eureka area. The author watched Bill reach down and pick up a madrone berry—small, round, and orange-colored—and put it in his pocket. He did this more than once and seemed to be eyeing Beans, making sure Beans noticed. Sure enough, Beans finally asked Bill what it was he was picking up. Bill answered, “Indian beads.”

Bill was known to have a sweet tooth. One log truck driver remembered this in June 1970 by delivering two birthday cakes to Bill, catching him at the store on a mail day (when people gathered at the postal station) as he headed to a timber sale up the road.

Bill liked pies. He would pay Blanche Day, who had lived on a claim at Devils Canyon, to bake pies for him. When Blanche left the area to join family elsewhere, Bill asked the author if she would take over the pie baking job. She did, and since she was a beginner, the pies did not meet the standards of Blanche’s. But he did not complain at all.

Bill liked to talk and had a lot of stories to tell, “Yep” and “Yessir” being two words he frequently used in conversation. The author remembers that during the trail trip she took with Bill in 1968 he talked practically continuously, even when she was far enough away she could not hear him.

Ed Holland, the author’s younger brother, remembers that in the mid-1960s when he was staying a couple nights at the family’s mining claim cabin up Slide Creek, Bill had stopped by. Meadows was returning to Denny from the Utica Mine where he had been working. Holland said Bill spent the night, camping outside the cabin, and the next morning he fixed Bill a breakfast of bacon and eggs, using the wood cook stove.⁸

The author never knew Bill to swear—at least he never did in front of her—and she suspects that was part of his traditional upbringing, not commonly using bad language. He didn’t smoke but chewed Copenhagen. He drank, but not excessively.

With the newcomers coming to New River, those who lived on the mining claims and many of whom branched off into the growing of cannabis, Bill saw many changes in the surrounding social “culture.” One time he attended a wedding to which several guests attended in the nude—it was held along the river. Another time he was invited to dinner but did not realize until he arrived that it was a “nude dinner party.” He later told friends that he enjoyed the food but did not remove his clothes.

(Continued from Page 15)

Local residents were given some privileges in uses of some of their nearby forest resources. They were allowed up to a one hundred dollar value in firewood from the surrounding forest for free, with additional firewood available at a nominal cost if needed. Contract or short-term jobs—such as trail and building construction, stand-by for firefighting, or putting up a Forest Service employee for a night of board and lodging—were often just given to locals with little or no bidding or advertising.

In 1976 the National Forest Management Act changed many of these “free” privileges and contracting availability for locals. It required the nation’s forest resources to be used for the benefit of all American citizens, not just locals who happened to be living in the forest areas. Since that time, for example, the local Forest Service districts have had to charge for all firewood permits.

The largest change for those up New River who occupied mining claims, however, came from the Surface Rights Act of July 23, 1955, Public Law 167.

For eighty-three years the Mining Law of 1872 was in effect for miners up New River, like Bill Meadows, who sought to extract gold from public lands and actually lived in cabins on their claims. This made sense in cases where the claim was in a remote location where traveling in and out on a daily basis to conduct one’s work was time-consuming and less than economical. However, the law’s intent was first of all for the purpose of mining, not as a means to simply live on public lands without seriously mining. It also was not meant as a substitute for the homestead laws, although a miner could achieve full title to the land through a mineral patent process if he met the criteria and decided to do this. At least two mines up New River were patented through a mineral patent process—the Tough Nut Mine near Old Denny in 1892 and the Brooks Mine to the east of Old Denny in 1916; the latter was later traded back to the U.S. Government.⁹

There came to be an awareness by the public that many people on claims were living under the “guise” of

mining. They carried out other enterprises not related to mining, or otherwise made their livings through other means. With more roads and easier access, it was no longer necessary in most areas to live on a claim, and more public awareness developed around these questionable occupancies. Even Bill Meadows, who could be described as a real miner by anyone who knew him, at times worked for other people, such as for the Forest Service on various contracts, and in later years he received social security or other “old age” relief checks to help.

Congress decided to resolve this issue of the occupancy of mining claims on public lands by passing the Surface Rights Act of 1955. It replaced the 1872 law in that it no longer allowed the residence of a mining claim unless the miner could show there was a significant deposit of gold that was enough to provide a living, much the same as required for a mineral patent. For the New River area it was the job of the Forest Service’s Big Bar Ranger District to inventory claims, contact those claimants with residence structures, and start a process to administer the new law.

In New River the main concern of the miners regarding the 1955 law was its effect on mining claim occupancies. However, nationwide there were also issues with mining claimants preventing or hampering the use of the public lands for timber harvesting. Mining laws allowed miners to utilize timber on their claims with which to construct apparatus (such as tunnel supports, etc.) related to their mining. Apparently, some mining claimants instead used this practice to charge for or otherwise hamper the harvesting of timber on their claims. Sometimes the use of “No Trespassing” signs on mining claims intimidated the public from using the area for recreation such as fishing and hiking.

The Big Bar Ranger District, as were all the districts that contained mineral resources within their jurisdictions, was charged with implementing the 1955 law in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It was a few years before the Forest Service and

BLM formulated guidelines to transmit to the districts for implementation.

Sometime in 1959 Big Bar District Ranger James “Jim” O’Keefe received detailed guidelines for how to proceed with on-the-ground implementation of Public Law 167. The first task was to post public announcements in the newspapers, alerting Trinity County’s mining claimants of the law and how it would affect them. The advertisements were printed in February 1960. O’Keefe’s staff went through the district files and county courthouse records to list all known people holding mining claims on the Big Bar District. The district at the time covered about 265,000 acres of northwestern Trinity County, including New River, and it was determined that there were around 2,000 known mining claims, not all of them active with a relatively small percent having occupancies.¹⁰

To confirm active and/or occupied mining claims, district personnel hiked up all the trails and drove all the roads to map out what they found, where claims were located, where cabins stood, and where mining operations existed. This entailed many months, often involving trips and camping out along the rugged trails.

After records were studied and integrated with the field reconnaissance results, claim owner names and addresses were listed. Letters were then sent to those claimants who had structures.

People whose claims were filed after the 1955 law was established would already have had to adhere to the new law. Those who had claims that were filed before and which had structures were required to answer the letter as to whether they would (1) sign a waiver whereby they would relinquish the surface rights (timber, etc.) on the claim or (2) file a “verified statement” that they believed their claims included a valuable enough “discovery” of gold that made the claims eligible for retaining all surface rights, such as what is required for patenting the claim for “full title.” Filing the verified statement, which several people up New River did, eventually would result in the government checking their claim for its meeting this criteria. If it did not, then

the occupancy—the structure the claimant lived in—would not be allowed to continue, since the claim did not warrant surface rights. Mineral rights would not be lost; the law was to straighten out the question of surface rights. The miner could continue mining but could no longer live on the claim.

Bill Meadows’ claim and cabin were included in the list. In February 1960, about the same time the legal advertisement was published in the newspaper, Forest Service employee Bob Mace visited Bill’s cabin and filled out a short report. At that time, Bill was still hiking to the cabin—he didn’t have his more convenient foot bridge yet—and Mace reported that Bill did have a cabin and was actively mining. The operation, Mace wrote, was a “hydraulic set-up—pipe, little giant in good shape.”

By late summer 1961 one of the 1955 law letters was sent to the author’s father, Richard S. “Dick” Holland of San Rafael, Marin County, California. Holland had been part owner (with his brother Harold Black and family of Salinas) of a mining claim up Slide Creek since 1941. The Fairy D and its connected Snipers Delight placer mines included two cabins, one of which was

a unique cabin built in 1936 of upright logs. The family loved the cabins and loved the mining claim, where they would spend a week or two every summer. Besides panning for gold in Slide Creek and working the “high bar” to bring dirt to the creek to run through a sluice box, they enjoyed fishing and hiking. However, they were honest and agreed that the mine was not a source of income for them and they



A letter from the Forest Service to the Holland family regarding the 1955 law. This was sent from the Shasta-Trinity National Forest office in Redding.

used the claim as a vacation spot. After receiving the first letter from the Forest Service, Holland responded that he would sign the waiver. Later in the 1960s—after he and his family had actually moved from Marin County to the Ladd Ranch at Denny—the family allowed the Forest Service to remove the cabins. (The easiest and most practical method was by burning.) They could and did continue using the spot for occasional recreational mining and annual assessment work, but they camped out when they did.

At about the same time, the Hollands' good friends, Jack and Helen Murdock, who also had moved to Denny, released for removal the cabin they had built up the main stem of the New River.

If the Hollands and Murdocks had refused to release the buildings for removal, the cases would have been taken to court and they would have lost. The courts upheld the 1955 changes to the 1872 law.

Many claimants disagreed with the new law and became active with organized groups such as the Western Mining Council and the newer Northern California or "Nor-Cal" Miners which was founded in May 1971.¹¹ They wrote letters and newspaper articles, attended meetings with the county board of supervisors, and complained to the Forest Service. Many of the newspaper accounts sided with the miners, contending it was a matter of "big government" harassing the "poor small miners."

The district ranger and staff at Big Bar handled the situation as they could. As time went on they actually were not focusing strongly on the few older residents living on their claims, such as Bill Meadows. Meanwhile, the Forest Service made an effort to contact people who recently bought or filed mining claims, to make sure they understood the 1955 law and that they could not build cabins and/or live on their claims unless they wanted to go through the process to verify the claim's mineral value. Mining was encouraged, but not living on the public lands.

Then, despite the concentrated effort to advise newcomers that they could not move in and erect living quarters, in 1963 the Ray Bryant family moved up to a

claim at the mouth of East Fork and built a house for the family of six.

J & J Mine

Bryant owned the J & J Mine with Nelson E. "Sparks" Divine, a miner up in Denny who was as well-known as Bill Meadows. The pair were informed of the concern the Forest Service had with the new structure, and a mineral examination was conducted on March 19, 1964.¹²

Herb Walk, a vice-president for the Western Mining Council, wrote a letter to Big Bar District Ranger John Coburn, advising him that the claimants and the mining council wanted to make sure the Forest Service mining engineers would have adequate qualifications and that there would be witnesses to watch the proceedings. Approximately fifty people gathered and the process was completed without any great problem. The Bryants eventually did move out of Denny and the house was removed. This was the first such mineral exam on the Big Bar District as a result of the 1955 Act.

Julie May Mine

In 1970, when Meadows was almost seventy-four, he and a partner held a claim at which the area's second mineral exam was conducted, six years after the J & J. Ed Stefanek had come into Denny the year before and wanted to try mining. He got together with Meadows and the two decided to stake a new claim on an old one, not too far from Meadows' Meadowbrook Mine. They named it the Julie May, after one of Stefanek's two daughters.

Part of their hope was to construct a "shack" on the claim to serve as a shelter while mining. Cognizant of the restrictions regarding building on claims, they went to the Big Bar Forest Service office and discussed the situation with District Ranger Johnny Brewer and Resource Officer Lorenz "Bud" Swendner. Meadows and Stefanek were open to a mineral exam to check out the location they had

opened up in their prospecting, and the exam took place on April 15.¹³



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

At the Julie May Claim on April 15, 1970, Bill Meadows is shown picking a sample of dirt for the gold pan held by mining engineer Emmett Ball while Big Bar District Ranger Johnny Brewer looks on.

There representing the Forest Service interests were Brewer, Swendner, and mining engineer Emmett Ball. Besides the mining claimants, Bill and Ed, there were ten others present as witnesses. Stefanek commented that he was “favorably impressed” with the way the procedure was conducted, even though later assay results did not qualify the claim as having sufficient gold content to pass as a valid claim.

Vista Lee Mine

The April 21, 1971, mineral exam at the Vista Lee Placer Mining Claim, owned by Ed “Zeke” Isaacs and the third such exam in the New River watershed, was the one that instigated more support for the Big Bar District from

the government when a Forest Service officer was wounded from a bullet ricochet. While Forest Service employees were working in the river to obtain the mineral samples and a crowd of people stood on the river bank behind them, someone began shooting toward them from the other side of the New River.¹⁴

Emmett Ball, the mining engineer who had worked on the previous two exams up New River, was present for this one along with a second Forest Service mining engineer, Hank Jones. Big Bar District Ranger Paul Meischke and Resource Officer Charles “Chuck” McFadin represented the Big Bar District. The shooting, about four shots total, started from across the river while McFadin was at the river’s edge checking the pump located next to the sluice box. He was hit in the neck by a bullet ricochet while the rest of the group behind him, once they identified the noise as gun shots, scattered up the hillside. Following this, the two mining engineers, Ball and Jones, were accosted by a group of the onlookers and physically attacked.

McFadin fortunately was not badly injured, although the bullet fragment had lodged close to the jugular vein. He was driven to the hospital in Weaverville, about two hours from Denny, and was released following medical attention.

The author was one of those scattering up the hillside as the rifle shots occurred. She remembers that while she was running, she saw Bill Meadows crouched behind a big boulder. He told her, “I wish this rock were bigger.”

Although an investigation was performed by the Trinity County Sheriff’s office, the FBI, and the Forest Service, a shooter was never indicted and the men who attacked the mining engineers were only temporarily detained in the Trinity County jail.

Another visit was made to the Vista Lee to complete the process that had been started before the shooting incident. This was accomplished on July 13, this time with the Forest Service employees accompanied by U.S. Marshal’s deputies and the Northeastern U.S. Marshal himself, Arthur Van Court.¹⁵ Almost thirty people were on

hand, either involved or just there to witness the activity, and all was peaceful. The marshal's deputies continued to be on hand to support the Forest Service and ensure peace for continuing mineral examinations on other claims.



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

U.S. Marshal Arthur Van Court trying his own hand at panning in the New River in 1971.

The local Forest Service went through this process as necessary for other claims that had cabins or other structures. It sometimes included going through the court system which supported the process according to the 1955 law, and then the cabins were removed or burned. Burning was the most practical, cost effective method to remove the wooden structures. However, there was still evidence left on the ground, such as metal cans, pieces of iron stoves, etc., which were not very aesthetic to hikers and which reasonably brought criticism from the public.

An exaggeration that was sometimes quoted in newspaper articles or letters to the editor was that the Big

Bar District conducted massive burning of cabins, many of them thought to be historic. In the 1960s and 1970s, most of the cabins burned on the Big Bar District had been constructed in the 1930s to 1960s, not historic at the time of removal. In later years when clean-up was performed on vacated cannabis growing sites, those structures were usually much later in age. Cabins were not removed until a legal process was completed.

It did not seem, however, that the Forest Service really pushed the cabin removal effort regarding those New River residents who had lived there for a long period. Nelson E. "Sparks" Divine, who first came to Denny in 1938, was one who vehemently opposed the Forest Service actions. He was outspoken against the government and was an active member of the Western Mining Council and Nor-Cal Miners. Divine had lived at his claim since 1948. He died in a car accident on June 10, 1973, when he was seventy years old. It is likely that had he lived, he would not have been actually made to move. One Forest Service official commented to the author years ago, for example, that Bill Meadows probably wouldn't have been bothered if it were not for the newer claimants pointedly asking the Forest Service, "Why aren't you going after Bill Meadows?"

Bill Meadows was sent an eviction letter in 1977.¹⁶ He was never made to leave his cabin by the Forest Service, however. Because of his age and it becoming more difficult for him to live at his remote cabin, he moved to a trailer at Hawkins Bar. He died a year and a half or so later at Hawkins Bar. The cabin was not removed until some time after his death.

As previously mentioned, Bill Meadows generally got along with everyone. He attended Nor-Cal Miners meetings and talked with the more vocal mining claimants. Unlike Sparks, however, who was outspoken against the government, Meadows was not. He had known the local Forest Service employees through the years since he'd come to New River in 1932 and probably had talked with all the district rangers as they transferred in and out. Even in 1980, when he was eighty-four, he was still visiting Forest

Service personnel. Retired Big Bar employee Larry McLean remembers Bill stopping at the Denny Guard Station to talk with the fire crew. The crew would bring out ice cream for him. Personnel stationed in the Denny area always knew Bill Meadows.

He experienced changes in the social culture—in some cases, radically so—through his time up New River. Compared with the first decades of Bill's life up New River, the 1970s and 1980s were a great contrast to those earlier days, the lifestyles of the incoming younger generation residents being extremely different from what Bill had been used to.



(Photo courtesy Gay Berrien)

Bill eating lunch and talking with a couple of Forest Service employees following the exam at the Julie May claim.

William Granville Meadows was a unique man, a real miner and a gentleman who was accepted by all sorts of people, exemplified by how well he got along with people from all sides in the center of controversy. And all of them respected and liked him in return.

Katherine Bauer-Helwig, who with the help of her husband, Paul, carried the mail in to Denny from November 1975 to March 2022, has known virtually all the

residents up New River through these years, and especially remembers Bill, even having a wedding ring made from a large New River gold nugget that Bill had given her. She agrees that Meadows was well liked. She said that everyone “considered Bill a font of knowledge and loved him as a revered elder.”

Bill, the well loved miner of New River for over fifty years, died on June 22, 1983, at the age of eighty-seven.

“It was as if a vacuum was created when he was lost to us,” Katherine Bauer-Helwig commented.

Meadows told the author in 1969 that he considered himself “living the life of Riley” up along the New River. Bill



(Photo courtesy Katherine Bauer-Helwig)

The people of Denny, Bill's neighbors and friends, gathered at the graveside service on Monday, June 27, five days after his death on June 22. Roland Dailey officiated and Bill's friends brought some tokens of Bill's life to place with him, drinking a toast to him with a brand of whiskey he liked. Buried around him at the Ladd Ranch Cemetery are people he had known in the fifty years he had lived up New River.

