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## **The Sagebrush War – Plumas and Lassen County, Ca.**

The Sagebrush War of 1863 was an armed conflict between the residents of Plumas County California, and the residents of Roop County, Nevada.

The Honey Lake Valley was populated by a group of people who were seeking liberty and freedom from foreigners. At one point they, along with neighbors in the Carson Valley, Eagle Valley, and several others created their own territory called the Nataqua Territory. It was to be completely separate from California and the Utah Territory. Mind you, the area was already officially part of Plumas County, California.

When the Provisional Nevada Territory was created in July of 1859, Isaac Roop was sworn in as Governor. Roop had come to California on the Nobles Trail, and been a farmer and rancher in Shasta County, but lost everything to fire in 1853. He then moved his family to Honey Lake Valley. He quickly set up a log cabin trading post on the Nobles Trail and established Roptown, which he would later rename Susanville, after his daughter.

In March 1861, Congress officially created the Nevada Territory, and Honey Lake Valley was considered part of Nevada, because the border had never been officially surveyed. Meanwhile, it was still officially part of California. For more than a year, Nevada authorities tried to get California to voluntarily turn over Honey Lake Valley to Nevada, but to no avail. So in Jan. 1863, Nevada formed Roop County as part of Nevada, in an effort to force California's hand. Plumas County officials were outraged,

and completely ignored Nevada's actions. They decided to tax Honey Lake residents as if they were Plumas County residents.

This caused all kinds of problems. Judges and other elected county officials would become entangled in a web of back and forth actions. Injunctions and other orders would be issued attempting to override the orders and authority of the other county's officials. More injunctions and restraining orders followed, causing the sheriffs of each county to nearly start shooting at each other.

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1863, Sheriff EH Pierce of Plumas descended on Susanville with 40 men. Under a white flag of truce, officials from both counties met for two days and tried to sort out the difficulties. Again, to no avail.

On Feb 14<sup>th</sup>, the sheriff sent word back to Plumas to send 100 men as reinforcements. They started the journey through deep snow, while attempting to drag a cannon along with them. This number is doubtful, because there probably not 100 men left in Plumas at the time. But finally, 45 men arrived. It is said that there were 100 men staged inside Isaac Roop's Cabin, which is also doubtful given the size of the cabin. But the stage was set for the Sagebrush War.

The shooting started on Feb 15<sup>th</sup>, with the Honey Lakers inside Roop's Cabin and the Plumas men holed up in a barn about 200 feet away. It continued for about 4 hours, unabated. There was one casualty on each side...William Bradford from Quincy was shot in the thigh, and the newly elected Honey Lake Judge John S Ward was shot in the collarbone.

Meanwhile, during the four hours of the "war", business in Susanville continued as usual, with the local saloons doing brisk

business with the men who had showed up in town to “watch the fun.”

Finally, a truce was called for four hours. It was extended, when time ran out, into the next morning. During this time, both sides sent for reinforcements and redoubled their fortifications. But in the end, cooler heads prevailed. It was decided that the issue was too big for local politics, and the government should sort it out.

A year later, on April 1, 1864, the border’s location was properly surveyed and decided. Honey Lake Valley was indeed part of California, and Lassen County was created. Susanville, the Lassen County seat, was now and forever a part of California.