

A POLITICAL RACE IS DECIDED.

The political race to be the first assessor in Plumas County, between John R. Buckbee and Christopher Porter in 1854, was expected to be close, but not a dead heat.

Supporters of the two candidates had gathered in the North Fork Saloon near Bradley's Hotel as the ballots were counted and shouts rose to the rafter when it was announced there was a tie vote.

The town of Quincy, first called American Ranch, had been booming for several years as gold miners continued to swarm along the Feather River. It seemed that at least once a week, a hardworking stream miner would come whooping into town to announce a rich find and a promise to buy drinks until his poke was empty.

Hugh J. Bradley, who owned the American Ranch where the town was located, had just helped organize the County of Plumas. Earlier he had laid out the town of Quincy, naming it after his hometown in Illinois.

Using his influence, he called for and got an election of county officers, leading up to the confrontation between Buckbee, a Whig candidate, and Porter, a Democrat. Then came the tie vote, a problem that was not easily dealt with in a wide-open town.

Frontier law provided that in the event of a tie vote the county judge would make the appointment. But Buckbee was a strong personal friend of the judge, and residents considered it certain that he would get the job.

Porter's friends, faced with the situation that their man would not get the assessor's job, suggested Porter challenge Buckbee to a game of seven-up, with the winner to be appointed to the office.

Buckbee accepted the challenge, and the two sat down to a game as a large crowd of spectators circled around a poker table at Bradley's Hotel.

As the seven-up game got underway, there were whoops and yells for the candidates of the individual's choice. Held in a room of babbling voices, the game finally got under way.

After several deals, Buckbee totaled nine points and Porter had eight, with 10 points needed to win. Buckbee was dealing a hand and Porter said, "I beg" and got three more cards. When the next card was turned up for trumps, Buckbee could hardly hold back a big grin. The trump was a jack of spades, and every card in his hand was face cards, and all spades.

Amidst rollicking cheers from his supporters, Buckbee won the game easily as well as the office of assessor.

"Drinks are on me," Buckbee shouted, and everyone rushed down Main Street to the bar.

It was a thirsty crowd, and the drinks flowed freely at the North Fork.

Buckbee recalled later that it was a costly win, especially when he remembered details of the day of the election.

“Dammit, I forgot to vote for myself, and it cost me two months of my assessor’s salary to buy drinks for people who didn’t even vote for me.”

Plumas County Assessor's Through the Years

Name	Elected
John R Buckbee	1854
Christopher Porter	1855
E.C. Sterling	1856
J.J.L. Peel	1857
John G. Corey	1858
John W. Williams	1860
W.W. Kellogg	1862
A.D. Halsted	1864
W. Wilson	1868
S.B. Hinds	1870
J. Stiner	1872
R. Smyth	1874
P.L. Hallsted	1876
Thomas Black	1880
E.P. Smith	1883
J.S. Bransford	1887
J.W. Cottingham	1894
P. Young	1905
Frank C. Pazour	1911
H.C. Flourney	1928
Chester Hard	1938
Dow Bettis	1/2/1968
Ernest E. Eaton, Jr.	12/31/1981 - Appointed
Charles W. Leonhardt	7/1/1997

Plumas County was created on March 18, 1854. The Spanish originally called one of the tributaries of the Sacramento River, Rio de las Plumas, or the "River of the Feathers". The Americans subsequently robbed this river of its beautiful name, by changing its Spanish title to the English equivalent, the Feather River, but the Legislature, in creating this county, gave it the name of "Plumas" because of the fact that all of the numerous branches of the Feather River have their origin in the mountains of this county.