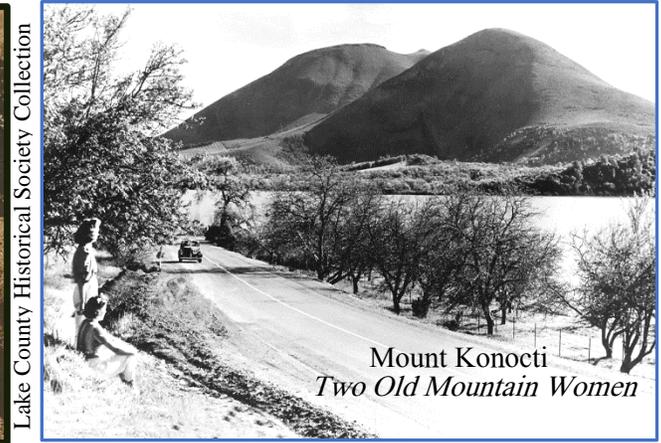
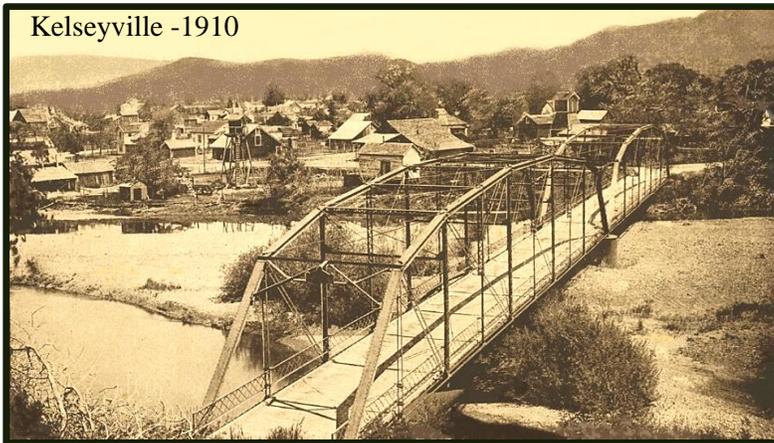


# Various Names Given to Kelseyville, California



Lake County Historical Society Collection

The tale of how Kelseyville acquired its name has received little attention until recently. It's a relatively complex story, the scant details found in old newspapers and dusty volumes of history. Currently, there is renewed interest in what occurred during the Kelsey brothers time in Lake County. Credible historical records & testimonials regarding Samuel, Benjamin and Andrew Kelsey have been reviewed and expose highly questionable actions and dire consequence. Those familiar with the legitimate documentation believe honoring the Kelsey Brothers by naming a town after them is unwarranted and disrespectful, especially towards local citizens of indigenous heritage. Some folks view the town's name as longstanding tradition and memorial to an admired pioneer family.

Keep in mind, the moral compass during pioneer times was pointed in a far different direction than what is considered acceptable today. Of course, in order to fairly contemplate the gravity of this situation, one must keep in mind the political climate of the times too. However, even when considering an 1850's "Wild West" Anglo American mindset, the historic records plainly show the Kelsey Brothers actions were radical, and greatly troubled their pioneer peers. This article does not chronicle the Kelsey Clan's actions, but merely attempts to set the record straight as to how, when, and why the town of Kelseyville was named. For a detailed description of the Kelsey Brothers conduct, recommended reading is the article: *An Act of Survival (Engle 2021)*.

This chronicle begins eons ago with a band of the Eastern Pomo Nation who originally belonged to Big Valley. They called their village on the shore: *Xalanapo (Ha lan'apo)* It means: *The Lily Village* or *Heart of the Lily*. In 1842, Capitan Salvador Vallejo received the Lupyomi Mexican Land Grant that included this village. Vallejo set up his Rancho Lupyomi near Xalanapo, but abandoned this ranch a few years later, leaving behind a herd of one thousand horses and an equal count of long-horned cattle. The Kelsey Brothers bought Vallejo's wayward stock in 1847. They built an adobe house and corral near Xalanapo, intending to round up, rebrand, and sell off Vallejo's vast herd. However, Andrew Kelsey & Charles Stone were executed at Xalanapo in December of 1849.

During the late 1840's, and on into the early 1850's, a handful of hunters & fur trappers were also camping in Big Valley. They called the area: *Kelsey Crick*. In 1853, a few of these bachelor frontiersmen constructed cabins in the valley intending to homestead. Best known among them were Robert Gaddy, Broome Smith and William Graves. Graves was part of Donner Party infamy. In the spring of 1854, a wagon train made its way into Big Valley. The Hammack Party of Missouri is the first group of pioneer families to settle here. This contingent consisted of a dozen wagons, two hundred head of Durham cattle, and twenty-five hopeful emigrants. Martin Hammack & family arrived with Woods Crawford, Joseph Hendricks & their kin, but Joe Hendricks and his family headed a bit further north, settling in Scotts Valley. Three days later, Elijah Reeves' family of six entered Big Valley by wagon from Illinois, traveling on the same trail the Hammack Party blazed from Middletown. Bear Flagger Benjamin Duell & family arrived from Napa Valley a few weeks after Hammack, but pushed on to settle in what would later become Upper Lake. Woods Crawford built a cabin in Big Valley, and the remainder of the Hammack Party followed suit. These pioneers were sure they had found paradise and intended to stay put.

(OVER)

In the next few years, as more pioneers gravitated to Big Valley, a blacksmith shop and other respectable businesses were established. Folks formally began to call this idyllic little crossroads hamlet *Kelsey Creek* or *Kelsey Town*, in honor of the late Andrew Kelsey. However, Woods Crawford & Martin Hammack inadvertently created a popular and long-lasting nickname for the town, which has caused a bit of confusion over the years.

Shortly after their arrival at Big Valley in the spring of 1854, Crawford & Hammack climbed the largest peak in the area, known since The Creation to the South-Eastern Pomo as *Ko-noc-htai*, or *The Two Old Mountain Women*. Upon reaching the summit, the awesome view of the Clear Lake Basin inspired these two explorers to dub this ancient volcano *Uncle Sam*. The nickname came out of their great respect for this mystical mountain and our Federal Government. They quipped: “like Mt. Konocti, Uncle Sam [The U.S. Government] was the biggest thing around.” When the U.S. Army set up a temporary camp at the base of Konocti, the witty nickname Hammack & Crawford coined was etched into local lingo. Mt. Konocti became Uncle Sam, and many locals even referred to the town by this name, but *officially*, the town retained the Kelsey Creek designation for over thirty years.

In 1864, a United States Post Office was installed at Kelsey Creek. It was dubbed *Uncle Sam*. Normally, U.S. postal officials selected the name of a postal facility from written suggestions offered by local residents. Obviously, Uncle Sam won that contest. In this case, Uncle Sam *The Mountain* also becomes Uncle Sam *The Post Office*. However, the town itself was never *officially* named Uncle Sam as some have claimed. The Napa County Federal Census of 1860 and the Lake County Census of 1870 & 1880 all refer to the area as “Kelsey Creek Township.” The name did not officially become Kelseyville until a few years after the 1880 census.



Louisa & Alexander Kelsay & Kin - Circa 1900



Barthena Harmon-Kelsay

According to scattered entries in Lake County Historian Henry Mauldin’s 10,000 pages of research notes, no *direct* relations of the Kelsey Brothers ever settled in Kelsey Creek. One possible exception was a son of Ben Kelsey, who reportedly died of disease shortly after his arrival. However, Alexander Kelsay and his large family moved to town in 1873. His Kelsay Clan is related to the infamous brothers Ben, Sam & Andy Kelsey, but the relationship is a bit distant, being second cousins at best. Matriarch Barthena Kelsay recalled back in ol’ Kentucky a few generations prior, this branch of the Kelsey family tree changed the spelling from Kels(e)y to Kels(a)y. Why they made the change is unknown & curious. The Sylar Clan, who married into this Kelsay line, confirms the Kelsey vs. Kelsay genealogical anomaly. It also appears some of the clan returned to the Kels(e)y spelling upon settling here. Nevertheless, these distant cousins began a campaign to honor the martyred Andrew Kelsey, proposing the town name should rightfully *Kelseyville*. On October 4<sup>th</sup> of 1882, Alexander Kelsay’s crusade to officially call the town Kelseyville was approved by the County Board of Supervisors... And the rest is history.