

World's First Long-distance Phone Line

The Milton Mining Co. began to operate the first long-distance phone line in June 1878. It was a 58-mile link from French Corral (3 miles upstream from Bridgeport) to French Lake and included a booster station at Malakoff Diggins. The line passed through Birchville, Sweetland, North San Juan, Cherokee, North Columbia, Lake City, North Bloomfield, Moores Flat, Graniteville and Milton. The purpose was to aid ditch tenders regulate water flow serving the many mining locations along the San Juan Ridge. Gigantic hydraulic mining operations along the Ridge fouled the South Yuba water with sediment, and court decisions in 1884 and 1894 ("The Sawyer Decision") outlawed hydraulic mining unless dams were built to contain the debris. However, some mining continued afterward, and it is alleged that the Ridge Phone Line was used to alert the operations when inspectors were on the way.



Plaque at French Corral