The Hermit

Miss X: Prim, younger woman dressed in period costume perhaps from Lakeport during the 19th century.
Gene Paleno: The 20th century writer of this history

Prescript:
Francis Rupert stands out as a woman of singular grit and independence. Where she came from and who were her people, we do not know. All we know is Rupert was 30 yrs old, as this was written and lived on a mountain in Lake County not far from and East of Upper Lake. She owned 400 acres all on her own and from her mountain top could see Lakeport 10 mi away. The Person who wrote of Ms. Rupert painted her as a "hater of men and women alike, a miser and a hermit." We don't know who Ms. Rupert's Biographer was but we do know that her opinions are, at times, so blatant and ill-conceived the author of this history, feels called upon to defend Ms Rupert in absentia. He refers to her as Miss X. Here are their exact words…..

The time is sometime between 1875 and
Miss X sits at a desk writing. She is unaware of the more modern gentleman commenting on her writing standing to one side.

Miss X: Rupert was plain in feature and a woman with muscles any man would be proud to own. Ms Rupert could send any intruder to her domain down the side of the mountain with no more trouble than any other female might flip a troublesome fly into an ink well.

The woman hermit of Lake County rises before the sun is up. She goes to bed by the light of a lantern with a mongrel watching at the door and her double -barreled gun propped within easy reach. This Amazon performs more actual manual labor than is dreamed of in the average

working man's philosophy….three hundred and sixty-five days a year. She is slowly digging herself a grave.

Gene Paleno:
The last line of her statement smacks of jealousy. Her snide observation that Miss Rupert, who works as hard as a man, 'flies in the face of lady-like behavior', was uncalled for. The writer was making a more damning picture of herself than that of the lady hermit. Besides that, the writer insults her dog. For all she knew, the 'mongrel at the door' was no mongrel but a high-stationed breed of impeccable lineage. If I was looking for a wife, Miss Rupert would be one lady I would like to know better. I liked her dog too.

Miss X: 'Soon after her purchase of the top of the mountain, Francis Rupert improved the 400 acres of her sky farm. Every foot she cleared she did herself. Root by root and stone by stone she felled trees a hundred and twenty-five feet high and wider in diameter than a six ft tall man stands. Miss Rupert managed cross-cut saws seven feet long and she swung a ten-pound, double edged ax. When the monster pine lay upon the ground before her, this creature of herculean effort was happy in her grim, unaccountable, pessimistic way, for she had demonstrated her independence of man, who, poor worm, crawls about the world, three thousand feet below the level of her contempt.'

Man commenting: This Author feels compelled to speak out……again. Now wait just a minute, Miss 'X'. You sound like the man hater.

Miss X: 'To the discomfiture of her pride, the woman hermit was obliged to employ a carpenter to build her little four-room band box where she intends to live out her solitary days. The carpenter quit his job, declaring with verbal explosives, "I know my trade and I am not going to let any woman boss me."

Man commenting: The poor fool. Miss Rupert was his boss. I'm becoming weary of commenting on the obvious. If that writer is female, as I suspect, could she be a lover spurned?

Miss X:' His successor held out for a day. The third man managed to keep his temper and total control, but he was dismissed the moment his work was completed by his eccentric employer.'

Man commenting: Did he expect to be asked to stay for tea? After all this, Writer X gets salvation. She loads on some compliments.

Miss X: 'Miss Rupert is one of the few women on record, who can hammer nails without a disaster to her fingers. She cut all the pine shakes that cover her barn. The low picket fence before her house is as neatly and strongly bound together with wire as any pair of patient hands could fasten. The five acres are enclosed with a fence of pine posts with pine inks for bars. All of these posts, that are as tall as the woman who splits them are of uniform size. She dug all the post holes and made brush fences by the hundred of yards. She pitches her own hay, milks six cows daily, delivers the milk she sells to summer resorts, she raises hay barley, chickens, and vegetables. For fresh meat she goes gunning on her own land for grouse, quail, tree squirrel, and young jackrabbit.

Man Commenting:. It's all garbage, of course, in this Author's opinion. We are what we choose to be in life.

Miss X: There is one final star in Miss Rupert's crown. It was her love of James J Corbett. Corbett was a guest at Bartlett Springs. Miss Rupert journeyed to Bartlett Springs with a pitcher of her purest cream. She sought the champion on the piazza, where he was surrounded with women. Mis Rupert offered Corbett a glass of the cream. Gentleman

that he was, he recognized the offering for what it was and left Ms Rupert a memento; a gold piece. To the last day of her life she wore a little buckskin bag around her neck where she placed the memento for safe keeping.

Man Commenting: This was a fitting finish to a noble and poignant love story……but there is a sad epilog.

Miss X: Black smoke rolled up the mountain from a careless hunter's campfire that got out of control. Her home was lost. Mis Rupert worked; a mad woman trying to save what she could. When, at last , the fire was over, she rebuilt the fences and her home. The fire had filled her lungs and blackened her face. For weeks afterward she could not speak above a whisper. ' She was sick unto death From scorched lungs that had breathed fire that night upon the mountain.

Man Commenting: Rupert may be up there still. Seldom smiling and keeping her peace, alone upon her mountain. I hope so.

Post Script: And so she lived on her land until Barlett Springs Resort burned to the ground on Sept 20th 1934.