

INDIANS AT MURPHYS

Reminiscences of Charles Schwoerer

R. Coke Wood, in his book, "Murphys, Queen of the Sierra," says, "Long before the white man came to the little valley where Murphys is now situated, it was recognized for its charm by the Indians, who related that it had been a gathering place for tribesmen from as far away as Nevada. There were four rancherias of Miwok Indians, with a population of around four hundred when the white miners first came. For many years annual pow-wows were held on the ridge north of Murphys at which the Indians danced, carried on sports and traded among themselves."

By the year 1900, there were yet a few Indian families on the rancheria north of Murphys, where there was a large round house in which they held their annual pow-wows. There were some Indians who didn't live at the rancheria but elsewhere around the town.

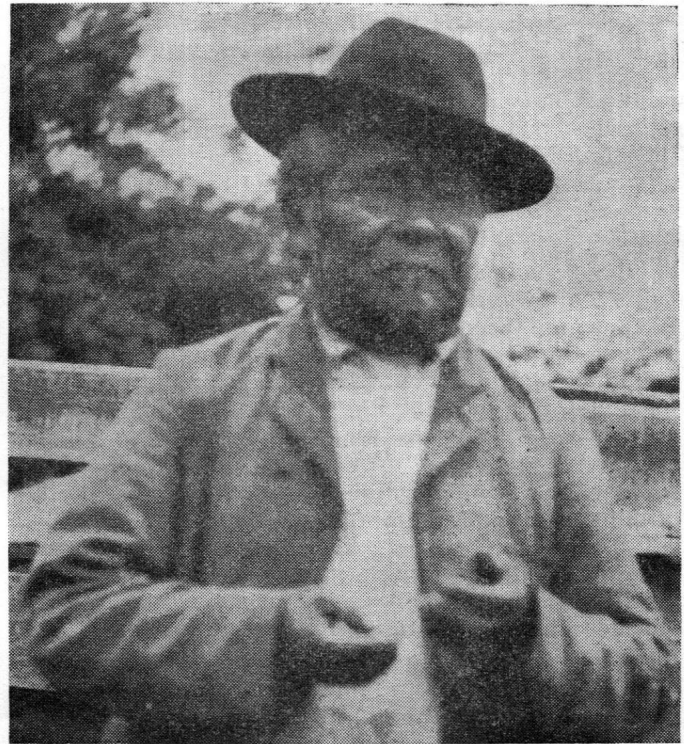
There was another rancheria with several Indian families just about one-half mile northeast of the Six Mile Bowl, where the Schwoerer and Saunders ranches corner. Many of these Indians, both men and women, were employed by the white families. The women did washing while the men worked in the hayfields and cut wood. There were others who made a living by begging. The most prominent of these was Yellow Jacket.

Yellow Jacket was totally blind. He found his way around the community by feeling with a long cane that he carried, and by feeling with his bare feet. Someone gave him a pair of shoes one day and he was unable to find his way until he took them off. He told me that he lost his sight when his eyes were burned as he carried his mother from her burning hut.

Yellow Jacket was the preacher of the Indians at Murphys, and when they were having one of their pow-wows, he could be heard from a long distance as he preached. He lived by begging and one characteristic that he had was that if he was given something when he came to our door he could always find his way out of the yard, but if he received nothing, he never could find his way out! No one knew how old he was.

John Brown and his wife, Manwella, were two kindly Indians who did washing for several families in town. John was also a woodcutter. Yaki was the Chief or Captain of the rancheria when I was a boy, and he cut wood with John Brown for my father. Another Indian who washed for people was one known as Manuel. His wife, Chippy, was deaf and blind.

One of the best known Indians of the Murphys



OLD YELLOW JACKET

Old Miwok Indian preacher who lived in the rancheria north of Murphys around the turn of the century

rancheria was the blind harmonica player called Tuna. For a number of years he was a familiar character on the ferry between Oakland and San Francisco. He was always accompanied by another very tall Indian known only as Willie, who led Tuna around and took up the collection. Tuna also played on the streets of Oakland, San Francisco and Stockton. Although he was blind, his hearing was exceptionally acute. Mary Osslin told me that Mr. Tom Atwood, who at one time ran the Calaveras mine in Indian Creek, said to her that one day in San Francisco he saw a large crowd gathered on the street, so he stopped to see what it was all about. The attraction was Tuna and his harmonica. Mr. Atwood said, "While I stood in that crowd, I said, 'Hello, Tuna!' Without hesitation, Tuna said, 'Hello, Tom, how are you?'"

Another Indian by the name of Big Jack worked for Hauselt in the hay and did other odd jobs for him. His wife was shot by a white man.

The Jesus family consisted of the father, whose first name no one seemed to know, his wife, three sons, Joaquin, Ramon, and Umpawell, and his two daughters, Lily and Nora. This family were not of the same tribe as the other Indians around Murphys. They claimed to be Apache. Jesus's father, who lived on the rancheria near Vallecito and who frequently came to Murphys to visit his son, always carried bow and arrow and was an expert shot with the same.

The boys and girls went to school with white children. Ramon worked for Frank Mitchler at the Hotel while he was at school. His teacher, Miss Mary Mulgrew, one winter's day, asked his class to write her a letter. This

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was what Ramon wrote: "Dear Miss Mulgrew:—I will be glad when summer time comes when I can go swimming. Then I will be nice and clean and sweet." Ramon was later killed in an accident at Manuel Sawmill. I do not know what became of Joaquin. Umpawell at this time is on the reservation in Tuolumne County.

Lily Jesus married a man by the name of Jesse Duncan. They were separated and she died of tuberculosis in Tuolumne County. Nora married a white man by the name of Crosby and they raised a fine family of boys and girls. They lived at Altaville where Nora died several years ago.

Abe Lincoln and his family lived in a cabin on the Price Williams ranch. Lincoln was a very large man, standing over six feet and heavy set. He became Captain of the tribe after Captain Yaki died. There were several children in the family and some of them went to school in Murphys. Miss May Schaeffle, in a letter to me, wrote, "Matilda Lincoln was in the same room at school with me. She was a very nice girl, always very neat and well-liked by the kids in Miss Mulgrew's room. Her mother had a sewing machine and made Matilda's clothes, and she did a good job." Some of Lincoln's grandchildren still live at Murphys.

Old Nashu was another Indian seen on the streets of Murphys in the early 1900's. He lived at the Adams ranch.

Walker was a very old Indian who was quite a character. He resided in several places. In his younger days he lived over on the Stanislaus River between Parrot's Ferry and Camp Nine. Before the Melones Dam was built, when the salmon came up the river, he caught and sold fish in Vallecito and Murphys. In his later years he lived on Bald Mountain beyond the Adams ranch. He had been married three times.

Mamie Keilbar was a great friend of Walker's and knows many incidents in his life. She told me that her mother once recounted to her that when Mamie's sister Rose was just a few months old, she was not making much progress, and her mother was afraid she was going to die. One morning, Walker came to the Pishon home in Vallecito and found Mrs. Pishon crying. He called her by her first name and said, "Why you cry?" When she told him that she was afraid her baby was going to die, he took a look at the baby and said, "She no die, you no wash her till I come back." He left and when he returned he brought a great many herbs and needles that he boiled, and then he bathed the baby in this water. He came every day for several weeks to bathe the baby in this brew. Rose's mother said that in about a week after he started bathing the baby she could see an improvement in her and in about a month she was again a strong and healthy baby.

There were a number of other Indian families that lived in the vicinity of Murphys, Sheep Ranch, and Vallecito. There was Mose and his wife Helena, who was a very large woman. John Jeff and his wife, Tillie, lived in Vallecito. They had a son who was killed in the war in France. Tillie received the Purple Heart. Arron was an Indian who lived in a little cabin behind the Murphys Hotel and who did odd jobs. John Tecumseh spent most of his time around Sheep Ranch and was quite a char-

Indians in Murphys

The Indian rancheria on the hill back of the Oro Plata mine was a gathering place for Indians from many places, even from Nevada. The Murphy brothers had been in here trading with the Indians even before Marshall discovered gold. The Indian women wore quills of large feathers that were filled with gold nuggets and that hung around their necks for an ornament. They had no idea of the value of these ornaments. The Murphys weren't sure it was gold until they took some of it out to San Jose and tested it. They then came back and traded with the Indians for it.

—Jack Morley.

Sheep Ranch Dedication

On July 25th, at the sound of the Hewgag, many fairly steady hands of the Matuca Chapter of E Clampus Vitus set in place a plaque honoring the Sheep Ranch mine. The plaque has the following inscription:

SHEEP RANCH MINE

First located in 1867, the fabulous Sheep Ranch Mine produced more than 8 million dollars in gold while in operation. Acquired in 1875 by Senator George Hearst, J. B. Haggin and associates, it was operated continuously by the Hearst firm until 1893, producing an estimated 4 million dollars in gold, and reaching a depth of 1,400'. By 1942, when finally closed, the mine had reached 3,100' in depth. Sold by the Hearst interest in 1898, the mine was later operated by the St. Joseph Lead Co. It can be described as the most productive in the Sierran East Gold Belt.

This Marker Dedicated

July 25, 1964

By the Matuca Chapter

E. Clampus Vitus

Thus the Clampers, revived as an historical tribute to fun and frolic of old gold-mining days in the Sierra, continue their documentation of historic mining sites in and about the Mother Lode. There are many other sites that should be marked in this manner, and we hope that they will receive the attention of the Clampers.

acter. His picture is to be seen in the museum at San Andreas. John and Potter Hodge lived at Squaw Hollow originally. Potter Hodge, I am told, was only part Indian and in his youth was said to have been a very handsome man. He married Max Bede's daughter; she was also a very beautiful woman. John Hodge killed an Indian woman named Susie. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

There is an Indian burial ground on the road between Avery and Sheep Ranch near the county dump. Indians from Sheep Ranch and Indian Creek were interred here. There is another graveyard at the Jesse Duncan place above Avery. Indians from Murphys rancheria were buried at a burying ground on the Price Williams ranch.

(Presented at the March meeting of the Society)

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES

The Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held at the Murphys Hotel, on July 23. An unusually tasty steak dinner was served by the Hotel management and much enjoyed by the nearly 60 members and guests present.

The new slate offered by the nominating committee was passed by acclamation. We welcome the new members among the officers and directors, and are glad to see some of our veterans returning once again to help us lead the Society on to further accomplishment. A glance at the masthead will identify our leaders for the coming year. Let us all support President Lewis and his staff well, to make 1964-65 a good year for the Society.

Guest speaker on July 23 was Miss Elizabeth Chapman of the Stockton Record. Miss Chapman's message was that our gold-rush background is one of the county's greatest assets, and that we should not fail to capitalize upon it and share it with the great influx of new residents, summer visitors and tourists. She suggested such specific projects as the rehabilitation of historic buildings as exhibits, park facilities centered around historic sites and more comprehensive pamphlet material for distribution to our visitors, as those that the Historical Society could sponsor.

Essay Contest

The winning school essays of the Eighth Annual Contest were stapled together at the yearly gathering at Double Springs on August 8th. The offset stencils were cut and printed at the Calaveras Cement Company's office, under the supervision of Mr. J. J. Vetter. Betty Deakins again did the art work.

In the course of editing the essays for printing, an error crept in regarding the name of the third partner of the Sheep Ranch mine (Essays, p.9). The gentleman in question was named Lloyd Tevis.

Lucille G. Carley

Members of the Society heard with deep regret of the death of Lucille G. Carley (Mrs. Addison Carley) of Vallecito last month. Although due to ill health, Mrs. Carley, an Honorary member, was not able to attend Society functions, the generous support of Mrs. Carley and her husband has played an important part in the successful operation of the Society in recent years.

New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Calaveras County Historical Society:

Mr. William J. Sowden, Valley Springs
Mr. and Mrs. Drew Garland, Murphys
Mr. George Huberty, San Andreas
Mr. Donald C. Biggs, San Francisco
Mr. Don Webb, Stockton
Miss Ethelda Filippini, San Andreas.

The Editor will be happy to receive manuscripts of historical articles submitted for publication in "Las Calaveras."



"LIMPY"

Taken in 1926

"LIMPY"

From "Days of Old in Historical Calaveras County,"
by Judge J. A. Smith

"Limpy," a Miwok Indian, died at Sheep Ranch in February, 1930. It was believed at the time of her death that she was the oldest Indian inhabitant of Calaveras County.

Limpy did not know her exact age. She was friendly with the families of Sheep Ranch, where she lived most of the years of her life. She often told of first seeing a white man who came into the County near Vallecito. She claimed that she was about 14 years of age at that time. She also claimed that the bodies of her father, mother and brother were thrown into "Moaning Cave" near Vallecito which was used as a burial by the Indians of the community.

At the time of her death, she was survived by a son and two daughters. Her son, Jeff Davis, was chief of the local tribe. Limpy was buried at Sheep Ranch according to the ancient rites of her tribe.

Our January, 1953, issue was the first one devoted to the Indians of Calaveras County, and included pictures of Johnny Tecumseh, Chief Wm. Fuller, Old Manuella of Mokelumne Hill, Indian Walker, and Pedro and Lilly.

OFFICERS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

San Andreas, California

President	Paul E. Lewis, San Andreas
1st Vice President	R. Coke Wood, Murphys
2nd Vice President	Mrs. Alice Eldridge, San Andreas
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Editor of Las CalaverasW. P. Fuller, Jr.

Las Calaveras is published quarterly by the Calaveras County Historical Society. Membership in the Society is \$4.00 a year, including subscription to Las Calaveras. Non-members may obtain copies of Las Calaveras from the Secretary. The original historical material in this bulletin is not copyrighted and anyone is invited to use it. Mention of the source will be appreciated.

The Calaveras County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Grange Hall in San Andreas—except for dinner meetings which are held each quarter at different places in the county.

EDITORIAL

This issue of Las Calaveras is the first number of Volume XIII, and the first under a new editorship. We have indeed been fortunate, over the past twelve years, in having Professor Coke Wood for our editor. He has set a high standard for this publication, one that we are anxious to continue.

Leafing through past issues of Las Calaveras, one cannot help but be impressed by the variety of articles on historical subjects of county interest. Much of this material has come from the now stilled pen of Judge J. A. Smith and from his voluminous scrapbooks. Many articles have been contributed by members; some are papers that have been presented at Society meetings, and others are interesting and pertinent historical writings or facts that have been reprinted from obscure or not readily available sources. Most issues have had one or more photographs to illustrate lead articles. The subject matter of the articles included old buildings, Indians of Calaveras, community sketches, bridges and ferries, the Big Trees, railroads, mines, sawmills, pioneer families, place names, violence and murder in old Calaveras (T.V. writers please note!), personal memories of people and events, ditches and water systems, caves, and many more.

History is a living subject, not just a study of the past that is forever gone. Study of historical events and of the lives of people in the past does much to explain why things are as we find them today, and can be of great help to us in guiding the destinies of our communities more ably in the future. Likewise, history should be re-appraised and rewritten from generation to generation as the changing world influences our outlook both toward the past and to the future. We should be proud of the good things in our heritage, but anxious to improve our own communities and community life. May we thus

IDELL SILSBY SMITH

Again death has removed from our midst another of our beloved members. Idell Silsby Smith, widow of the late Judge J. A. Smith, leaves to mourn her several nieces, nephews, cousins and a host of admiring and loving friends.

Born in Murphys, Calaveras County, California, February 26, 1888, to Charles and Clara Louise (nee Shear) Parsons, Idell attended Murphys school, being one time pupil of teacher J. A. Smith, and was herself teaching at Washington Ranch School during their courtship. Married in Stockton June 20, 1911, they made their home in San Andreas and both contributed much to Calaveras County. They celebrated their Golden Anniversary in June, '61; Judge Smith passed away January 27, 1964 and since then Idell had little interest in life.

Though childless, their home was a haven for all children, who were welcomed and always given love, kindness, understanding and assistance when needed. Idell's compassion extended to all living creatures and their home was shared with numerous stray cats and dogs throughout the years.

Idell was an inveterate reader and accumulated many fine books but as Judge Smith's eye-sight failed, she gave up reading the things which interested her most and uncomplainingly devoted hours reading to him newspapers, magazines, historical data, excerpts from his scrap books, and assisted in preparing articles for his weekly column published in the "Calaveras Prospect."

Besides reading, Idell had several hobbies. In her earlier years she was quite a horsewoman. She collected old teapots, Indian baskets and relics, being especially interested in Indian lore and artifacts. She belonged to a National Button Club, and owned thousands of unique buttons, all mounted and labeled.

Idell Smith was a charming hostess, a loyal friend, a devoted wife. Her wit, brilliance, and benevolence was a constant wonder and delight to her family and friends.

Idell was a member of Azalia Chapter No. 77, Order of the Eastern Star; San Andreas Parlor No 113, Native Daughters of the Golden West; Calaveras County Historical Society, Mark Twain Hospital Auxiliary and two bridge clubs which she most thoroughly enjoyed.

furnish succeeding generations with some reasons that they may be proud of us in turn.

Local or community history is a perishable entity. If we don't chronicle this history faithfully, it soon becomes lost. Only fragmentary unrelated facts remain in the dark and dusty archives. Setting down our local history is a pleasant task that each of us can do, in the sphere of our own knowledge and interest. Too many of us, either because we feel unequal to the writing, because we are too busy with our daily living, or because we just think it should be left to George to do, never do record the data that goes to make up community history. As we look back from today's vantage point, over the past century, we are, I think, surprised that so little is known of the details of our local Calaveras communities and of the people that lived out their lives in them.

One of the major purposes of the Calaveras County Historical Society is to encourage our county residents to participate in the chronicling of Calaveras history, and we hope that the new editorship of Las Calaveras will help speed this worthy project.