

MARY WELCH

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We had an opera house here. You know where Clymas(?) Antique Store is? Right next to the El Dorado. Well, that was the old opera house. I understand that the stage is still there. I think Jenny Lind, and some of these great old people performed there. And then, there were a lot of bars on the other side. And on nights when they had special things going on the people from the saw mill ~~would~~ would bring in sawdust, and put it across this already muddy road so the women wouldn't get their skirts dirty.

There was another place which was our first movie house where their is now a beauty parlor and a barber shop. The Ratto Theater.

When I first moved here there were still the ~~times~~ tin cans that were around the stage lights. These were in the back alley. They would get a set of films and they would go to Jackson, Sutter Creek, Plymouth, Ione. There were five movie houses. And that was a lot when you consider that we don't have any now.

And another interesting thing. You know that the Chinese cleared lots of the areas and malls around here. I understand that there are a lot of springs on this upper hillside, and as I understand, years ago the Chinese had their businesses outside the town. No one would allow them in the town, you see. You might have a little business, but you couldn't live there. Anyway, they had a little Chinese laundry up here. And we've found Chinese coins up there.

And they had their spring here, and they got their drinking water from it. And they would also do the washing for people. Leah Peters has told me a lot, and I wish that I could remember them all. For instance; there was a flood here in Sutter Creek, and there was this Chinese man who swam her across to the other side of the street. This house was originally a miner's cabin. It has had eleven additions over the years. And Mr. Cuneo, who was a plumber, put in a bathtub and a sink. And when we re-did the house and pulled up the floor-boards we found stacks of 1904 newspapers that were used as insulation.

(What do you know about the Indians in the area?)

Ramona Dutschke in Ione. She is a full blooded Miwok. If there were a matriarchal head, she would be it. She is also a marvelous musician who was taught by Nina Winter. She can tell you where all the villages were.

(What happened to the Indians?)

Indians were not considered people. There is a small enclave of them in the Jackson Valley, and another around New York Ranch Road. I went to the opening of the Chaw-Se Grinding Rock. That day I asked the man who seemed to be the chief about things, and ~~XX~~ I discovered that he was their medicine man. And I asked him if he would talk to my school class. He must have been in his 70's then. He must be the upper end of the 80's now. He came to the class, and he was fascinating. His name was Mr. Villa(?), and I don't know if he's still alive. He was the shaman, and when he dies there will be no one to replace him. It was something that was passed on to father, to son. You would grow up knowing that this was your special set of secrets. Now there is no one to pass this information on to.

And he took me to the sight of the old round house that was down in Jackson Valley, and now it's just a big hole.

And they gave the Indians doles. Instead of giving them enough to last for a while, they would give the Indians a pound of this and a couple of pounds of corn meal that required them to make almost daily trips up to a warehouse in Jackson. And there must of been toms of stuff from the governemnt that these people never received. It was just metered out to them in little bits and pieces to make them feel inferior. These people would say they were Mexicians or anything else, but they would never say they were Indians.

Mr Villa was trying so hard to make these people feel their heritage. He knew all the old chants and things. He passed them on to a Mr. Franklin, who is now the titular head of the Miwoks. He lives down somewhere near Slough House.

A few years after we came here they opened up Butte Mountain. In those days you could have bought much of it for pratically nothing. I remember hiking over that area at one time, and being fascinated with it. Well, on the south=east portion of it there is an old burial ground. Someone discovered that you could dig there and come up with all kinds of artifacts. I went over there one time and picked up a few Indian beads that were around. Some of the beads that were dug up there were sold in the local shops. I was in touch with Mr. Villa at that time, and he was terribly incensed that we would be disturbing the burial grounds of the Indians.

I believe that the ~~villages~~ villages were very small; maybe two or three families. And you didn't marry in your village, but out of it.

Do you know where the big rock quarry is as you go down into Jackson Valley? Below Ione. Just east of there was a little Indian village.

(Do you know the mechanics of homesteading?)

Do you know where Sunnybrook is? As you go down 88---that was an old ghost town. You cross the railroad tracks, and it makes a big curve.

And there is a little cluster of houses there. It's very close.

Well, Sunnybrook was quite a little town, and it was on the railroad so students could get on it and go down to Ione to school. There is a road down there that goes into Sutter Creek. And there's a waterfall somewhere in there. Apparently, these used this water power to run a lumber mill. At one time the place was full of Ponderosa pines, and they were all cut down and mainly milled through this little mill down there. So the timber in Ione's and Sutter Creek's oldest buildings probably came from this mill. The mill was on Sutter Creek, and now it's completely gone! So around that little mill and that area there were, perhaps, a hundred or more little homesteads. And Mr. Allen, who came out here in the 1880's, was the tax collector.

You had to advertize in the paper that the taxes were delinquent. Well, he would do it in a San Diego paper or one like it. So he was able to buy up all the land between Sutter Creek and Ione! And his family up until seven or eight ago owned all the land. Where these old houses were, he went in with a bulldozer and destroyed them. Toby Tyler has collected a lot of stuff from there; old watering troughs and pieces of barbed wire---things like that.

The Shenandoah Valley and Ione were our big agricultural areas.

And in the 1880's there was an agricultural station here. It was going to be a great experimental station. There's a woman in Jackson who lived there as a child; I don't remember her name. Her father was a laborer for the center. It was somewhere between 88 and New York Ranch Road.

(What about the Preston School?)

It's in sad shape. Mr. Terhune is the superintendent. His wife has been a member of the historical society. Etta Scully can help you there.