

Oroville Mercury Register

3-1-1979

Historical Society Hears Of Early Indian Culture

Approximately 150 persons crowded the double classroom of the Intermediate School, Paradise, at the general meeting of the Butte County Historical Society to learn about Butte County's early Indian culture.

Dorothy Morehead Hill of Chico, wearing Indian apparel described the mode of living before and after the arrival of the white man of the Maidu Indians of the Butte County area. She displayed numerous Indian artifacts and concluded her program with a video-taped interview she had made with Roy Scott, an elderly Concow Indian, followed by a coordinated slide-tape presentation on the life of the Maidu.

At the business meeting Lorna Barth president of Chico,

introduced new members of the society, reported on the changes in the by-laws made by her board, and announced the programs for the remainder of the year.

Awards chairman Norris Bleyhl presented certificates of appreciation and merit to Ethel Bornefeld and Martha Slade of Paradise, Marian Tibbs and Virginia Parker of Oroville, and Hester Patrick of Chico for distinguished service to the society.

Mrs. Barth announced that the March 18 general meeting will be a walking guided tour of downtown Gridley including the old Opera House.

Mrs. Roy Pence and her Paradise committee served refreshments at the Paradise meeting.

Feather River Bulletin

4-26-1979

Miniature museum dedicated at Bidwell Bar Toll House

Dedication of a miniature museum inside the historic Bidwell Bar bridge toll house at Bidwell Canyon depicting the colorful history of Bidwell Bar—now 600 feet beneath the waters of Lake Oroville—was held last Sunday.

James Lenhoff, master of ceremonies, said that the ribbon would be art by Mrs. D. Stephen Coney, president of the California Heritage Council, and Lorna Barth, president of the Butte County Historical Society.

Realistic pen-and-ink drawings highlighting the important events in the history of Bidwell Bar comprised the main content of the museum and were done by Waldemar Wiederhoeft, last state ranger at Bidwell Bar still employed in the area by Department of Parks and Recreation. Supervision of the project was by Allan Hibsich, chief ranger for the Oroville region.

Recently, a vigorous sappling from the Mother Orange tree was planted beside the toll house. Seedlings nurtured by Mrs. Harold (Vy) Belcher of Oroville were presented to guests by Gail Moffitt, a great grand-daughter of Alfred Clark, Butte County pioneer who arrived at Bidwell Bar with his parents in 1852 when he was only ten years old. Young Clark dug the hold for Judge Joseph Lewis, in which the latter secured the curious citrus sappling, someday to be celebrated as the Mother Orange tree of northern California.

The dedication climaxed a weekend sojourn to Butte County by directors and officers of the California Heritage Council. The council's itinerary was arranged by Mrs. Paul J. (Jean) Minasian of Oroville. Lenhoff was long-time chairman of the committee which ultimately succeeded in relocating the historic Bidwell Bar landmarks.

HISTORIC BIDWELL BAR BRIDGE

In 1851, a license was issued to erect the first bridge across the Feather River at Bidwell Bar. One was built but swept away in the raging flood waters of 1852. In April

of that same year, a license was issued to Thomas A. Sherwood and Joseph E. N. Lewis to erect a second bridge. Successful bidders for the job was the firm of Jones & Murry of Sacramento. Construction commenced in 1855 when the metal components were received from the Starbuck Iron Works of Troy, New York.

A unique feature of the bridge was the wrought-iron strand cable which was designed to suspend the bridge above the often turbulent Feather River. The cable was composed of 300 number 10 gauge wires, capable of carrying the full weight of the 240-foot span. Total cost of the bridge was \$35,000.

In December of 1855, the bridge was completed, making it the first iron suspension bridge in the U.S. west of the Mississippi River, according to some records. In January of 1856, amidst rowdy ceremonies staged by happy miners and merchants, the bridge was opened to the public. A horse or buggy were charged 25 cents to cross. People paid 10 cents each, except children coming and going to Sunday school on the Sabbath, who were permitted to cross free.

Howard Burt became the first tollkeeper, retaining his position until 1859 when he went on to other fortunes. He assisted in the planting of the historic Mother Orange tree for Judge Lewis. From 1859 to 1905, Isaac Ketchum was tollkeeper. Highlight of Ketchum's career was his exciting capture of Austrian-George, the murderer of Susie McDanel, belle of Cherokee. Later, Ketchum was buried beside his beloved orange tree.

The bridge remained a private toll crossing until 1889, when the county took it over. In 1915, and again in 1926, the significance of the

area was recognized when appropriate monuments were placed honoring the bridge and tree. (These were removed to the new site.)

In 1945, a 5-ton load limit was placed on the bridge, so school children had to dismount their buses and walk across. Logging trucks continued to creak over at their own risk.

In 1948, 93 years after the pioneer suspension bridge had been completed, it was finally retired, replaced by a new concrete bridge erected a short distance downstream. During the great flood of 1955, the new bridge was submerged, and emergency traffic had to be rerouted over the original bridge.

When the Oroville Dam was approved by state voters, the old bridge was dismantled and stored in 1964, pending promised reconstruction at a new site later. The Mother Orange tree was also removed, as well as a portion of the toll house. In May of 1967, the American Society of Civil Engineers named the bridge a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

The Chico Enterprise Record

5-11-1979

Historical Society to Discuss Site Purchase

The board members of the Butte County Historical Society will discuss the possible acquisition of the "Old Ehmman House" in Oroville, when they meet at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the society's museum trailer at Butte College.

The old house was originally the home of Mrs. Freda Ehmman, who perfected the olive canning process. The society has been negotiating with county supervisors for acquisition of the building to be used for a headquarters office and a mini-museum for rotating public displays of artifacts.

The general meeting of the society will be at 1 p.m. May 20 at the Cherokee Museum on Table Mountain. Speakers at that meeting will discuss the history of Cherokee and Oregon City.

This field trip will also include a stop at Oregon City, the oldest quartz mine in the county.

Participants should bring a lunch. Coffee and cookies will be provided.

Two Survive Frigid Night

By RICH HIGHAM

Two stranded but enterprising Oroville men spent a cold, mostly sleepless night in the high lakes area after their dune buggy broke down Saturday.

Edward V. Yelland, 28, Box 212 Nelson Bar Road, and Kenneth L. Nash, 23, 2243 Jan Court, were found at noon yesterday near Philbrook Reservoir by members of Butte County Search and Rescue. A California Highway Patrol helicopter, an airplane and friends of the stranded men helped in the search.

The two left Oroville Saturday morning for a drive through the rugged mountain terrain above Paradise. They became stranded after the clutch to the vehicle went out. Yelland's wife, Janice, said they attempted to walk out but became lost and, at dusk,

returned to the dune buggy.

The two wore light clothing and sweaters but had no other protection against the night cold. Mrs. Yelland said they managed to start a camp fire with sparks from the dune buggy's battery. They made beds of pine needles.

As the men tried to keep warm, friends in vehicles and in an airplane made a night search. At 7:30 the next morning, the county search and rescue team joined in.

Yelland and Nash began walking out in the morning and were met by searchers in a four-wheel drive vehicle. One of the searchers asked, "Have you seen two men lost up here in a dune buggy?" One of them replied, "Were they real ugly? It must be us."

Except for being tired and hungry, the men were in good condition.

Oroville Mercury Register

12-27-1979

Brothers Meet In Collision

Two brothers driving separate vehicles crashed yesterday on a private road about half a mile south of Detlow Road near Highway 70.

Russell J. Laird, 15, of Yankee Hill was riding a motorcycle when a vehicle driven by his brother, Patrick B. Laird, 17, met him head on.

The highway patrol said the elder Laird was traveling at a

high rate of speed and slammed on his brakes when he saw the motorcycle. His vehicle skidded about 30 feet before hitting the motorcycle and then skidded about 12 more feet before stopping.

The younger brother was treated and released from Feather River Hospital following the 11:15 a.m. accident.