

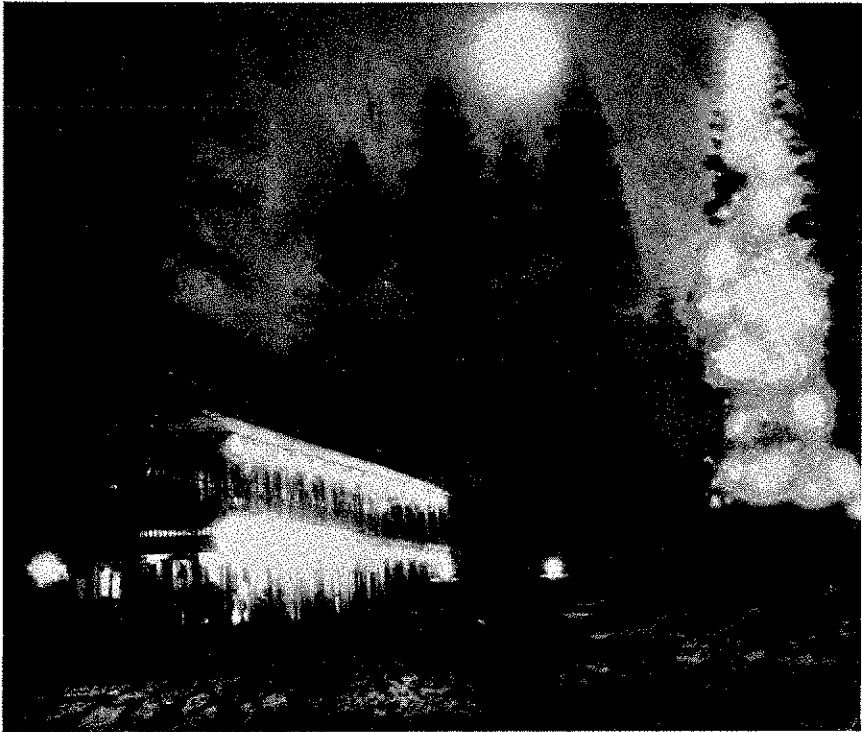
# **Yosemite Nature Notes**



VOL. XXX

DECEMBER, 1951

NO. 12



*National Park Service photo*

**The Old Village, Christmas, 1927**

*As suggested by the cheer and beauty of this historic picture, best wishes for the holiday season are extended by the Yosemite Naturalist Division and the Yosemite Natural History Association.*

**Cover Photo:** Half Dome and Merced River in winter. By Ansel Adams from "My Camera in Yosemite Valley." Reproduction by kind permission of Virginia Adams and Houghton Mifflin Company.

# Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF  
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DIVISION AND  
THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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## A WHITE MEDICINE-MAN<sup>1</sup>

(Concluded)

By James O'Meara

This tremendous power over the Indians was signally utilized by Savage during the first year of the gold-discovery rush to the southern mines in his extensive Mariposa district, where the placers were very rich. It would be unjust to say that he was avaricious, yet he knew the worth and potency of gold, and desired to accumulate large wealth; and the mines, which then proved so rich, afforded him great opportunity to amass it. He chose for his purpose a very large tract of rich gold region, and there not only worked his hundreds of Indians, who were ignorant of its value, and to whom he gave as pay the cheap trinkets, and the blankets and bright calicoes and gaudy handkerchiefs, knives, etc., which they cared most to have, besides their daily support of the commonest food, but also used them as a garrison to keep away intruders, as he taught them to regard all white men, and all who came to prospect for or locate claims or diggings. Hence he held this vast region exclusively to his own benefit, and it

was worked only by his own Indians, according to his sole orders. It is no doubt true, that, in obeying his commands to them, the Indians went to the extremity, on two or three occasions, of taking life; at least, that was the story of that period, as told by parties who were themselves kept from the mines within Savage's boundaries by his Indians. But he never himself took life, nor had recourse to violence.

The product of his gold diggings was enormous, and beyond even approximate estimate. On his rare visits to San Francisco, he had been known to bring with him several hundred pounds of gold-dust, to purchase presents for his Indians and large stocks of supplies. He was not extravagant in his use of money, for his wants were few and his habits simple. He was generous to friends, and ready to pour out his gold to aid or serve them; and every charity, often when it was not meritorious, found in him a ready and a liberal giver. Yet he was an excellent judge of men, and rarely erred in his esti-

1. Editor's Note: This is the second half of the article that was begun in the November issue, providing the best character sketch of Maj. James D. Savage, discoverer of Yosemite Valley, that has come to our attention. It is reprinted here from *The Californian* (now defunct) of February 1882, a photostatic copy of which has been furnished the Yosemite Museum by the University of California Library. Its presentation is another in our series on Yosemite history in observance of this Yosemite Centennial year--the 100th anniversary of the effective discovery of the valley by Major Savage's Mariposa Battalion, on March 25, 1851.

mate or opinion of their character and worth; but he sometimes preferred to bestow money, in order that he should escape the tedious story of the applicant. There was neither the disposition to wild revel in his nature, nor the indication to boisterousness, even in moments of excitement, whether roused to passion or stirred to exhilaration; a natural stealthiness of demeanor, and a diffidence when among strangers, akin to bashfulness, were peculiar to him; although in the company he liked, wherever congeniality and conviviality ruled, he was a boon companion, not apt to be neglected or forgotten. Positive in his manner, without betokening aggressiveness, candid in speech, upright in his dealings, and usually more disposed to avoid an unpleasant scene than to provoke a difficulty, he did not readily form new acquaintances, and he clung with tenacity to strongly formed friendships. He had more disdain and contempt in his composition than hatred or revenge, and he despised rather than feared either foes or danger.

On one of his visits to San Francisco—his last, in fact—he visited Maguire's Jenny Lind Theater, in company with Mr. A. J. Moulder, and there witnessed James Stark, the favorite tragedian of that period, and his wife, formerly Mrs. Kirby, in some of their best acting. It was evidently a fresh and new treat to him, and gave token that he had been a stranger to city life before his advent to this coast. The performance delighted him, and he wanted to express his hearty appreciation of it in a more substantial form than the admission price, or words or applause. He seemed entirely unaware, too, that, as he sat in the theater box, he was himself the object of considerable interest to the audience: for, no sooner had the whisper passed

throughout the theater that the strange-looking man was Major Jim Savage, than all eyes were directed toward him, while his were intent only upon the stage and the actors. He had already made his name famous as an Indian fighter, or, more properly, as one greatly skilled in subduing and governing Indians. And he certainly was a remarkable man to look upon, as he sat there, with his thick long hair parted in the middle, after the manner of "mountain men," so grandly setting off his massive, square, strong, Cromwellian face, emotionless as a statue, in repose, but now and then lighting up, with the more exciting scenes of the play, into startling expression, which gave token of the latent mighty nature of the man when roused.

Among the many stories related of Savage's arts and means by which to manage or overcome intractable Indians, is one wherein he succeeded in ridding his region of a band of renegades from the different tribes, who disregarded all authority and defied every power. He planted, in due season, a large patch of watermelons, and just before they ripened, whilst in dangerous green state, he made a protracted visit to Stockton. In his absence, and not fearing the disciplined Indians he had left in charge of the place, the renegade band made a foray upon the patch, gorging themselves with the unripe and cholera-provoking melons. They glutted to their own destruction. In a few days barely a half-dozen of the whole band were alive, and these in such miserable, debilitated condition, as to be objects of pity more than of fear or anger. On Savage's return, he found, just as he had expected, that his melons and his rebellious subjects had together disappeared, and the manner of their death was their

own misconduct. He had safely enough reckoned upon his clear knowledge of Indian character; and the obedient of his tribe felt that the victims had, by their rapacity and gluttony, deprived them of the luscious feast they had themselves so much craved.

The influx of gold-hunters in Mariposa district—which then comprised the whole country from the Merced to the Tulare lakes—was too great for Savage to withstand or guard against. The consequence was, the Indians came to learn the value of the gold-dust they dug from the rich earth, and a rebellious spirit pervaded all the tribes. Contact with the miners wrought its evils with the Indians, and in the course of time, an "Indian war" was precipitated. Savage had been the first to perceive the trouble, and was also the first to make preparation to meet and subdue it. He soon left his customary camping and mining grounds, made better acquaintance with the miners and whites generally, and abandoned his rule over the plotting tribes.

The war broke out in the winter of 1850-51. At that time Savage had a trading-post on Fresno River, at the point subsequently occupied for a similar purpose by Dr. Lewis Leach, then and still a prominent citizen of that region. Several white men were murdered by the Indians, and attacks from the savages were frequent. A volunteer company, fairly armed, was organized to pursue and capture the hostiles. Other similar organizations soon followed, and Savage, with the rank of major, was chosen to the command of the force, numbering about two hundred men, with Captains Bowling, Keykendall, and Dill, next in grade, and Dr. Leach as surgeon. The war ended, after a decisive defeat of the Indians,

in hard-fought and desperately contested battle. On the head waters of the San Joaquin River a severe fight occurred; and in the Yosemite country, and at the head waters of the Chowchilla, other conflicts were had.

In one of these, upon a bold, jutting point, underneath the mountain range which extends from the Yosemite heights toward the Fresno, Savage's command was once nearly overcome by the Indians, under Bautista, a wild and wily savage, who had been educated and trained at one of the coast missions, but had tired of civilized life, and returned to his horse-stealing, marauding, and warlike tribe, so much the better prepared to prosecute implacable hostilities against the native Californians, and the whites then in the mining district. Savage succeeded in getting his men away in fair order; but Bautista dearly gained the victory. It brought him so much honor and importance, however, that when, in April, 1851, Indian Commissioners Wozencraft, McKee, and Barbour made a treaty of peace with the hostile tribes, the heroic Bautista was selected by Dr. Wozencraft to serve the Commission—much after the purpose that President Jackson took the great Iowa chief Blackhawk to serve in 1832, in a tour of the United States, to convince him of the folly of further warring upon the whites, so overwhelmingly numerous and formidable—by taking him down to Stockton and San Francisco to show him the overpowering superiority of the American people then in California, and thus induce him to maintain the peace.

Bautista greatly enjoyed the free rides on stages, and traveling on river steamers—after he got well over his first scare and a keen run of four miles into the chapparel out-

side of Stockton, when the steam-whistle blew its ear-piercing blast just as he had put his foot on the gang-plank to step aboard the H. T. Clay—and his only fear of mortal peril whilst in San Francisco was at a daguerreotype gallery, when the artist leveled the camera tube at him, and threw the black velvet cloth over his own head, as he prepared to take the frightened warrior's picture. It required time and explanation, and much persuasion, after a keen personal inspection of the wonderful apparatus, besides the taking of a picture of Dr. Wozencraft himself, to satisfy Bautista that it was not a brass cannon loaded to the muzzle that was confronting him as he sat in the operating-chair. But all this agony of mind and terror were dispelled, and exuberant joy spread over his sullen, ferocious, dusky face, strong in its savage characteristics, as he viewed the marvelous taking off of his own form and front in counterfeit presentment. He felt himself, apparently, every inch, "Big Injun, me!" and he was certainly the wickedest in looks and nature. Nor did he ever afterwards neglect occasion to boast his victory over Savage.

So late as 1857, while the writer of this was on his way from Fresno Reservation to Yosemite Valley, with Agent Lewis and a party of four, accompanied by Bautista and five other Reservation Indians as guides and servants, the hero of that war led the party eight miles out of the way to gratify his own pride in bringing them to the scene of the battle, where, in his outburst of exultation, he stole from the writer's coat-pocket a bright red silk handkerchief of generous dimensions, which he deftly hid under his blanket-wrapper, and with his own dirty, red rag of a calico head-dress, energetically waved in the stiff breeze of the morn-

ing, proudly announced, as he stamped his foot upon his native heath, like a badly fire-stained, copper-kettle-colored MacGregor, "Here me combattee Savage! Lick him all up!" He was now a peaceful, disciplined, thieving, vicious, Reservation Indian, the admirer and the suitor of the "Queen," who had been the last, the youngest, the handsomest, and the favorite of Savage's Mormon-like wives; but the "Queen" declined alike the suit of Bautista, and of all others who similarly wooed while she wouldn't.

After the war, Savage engaged again in trading and in cattle-ranching. Bad blood had sprung up between him and some of the settlers along King's River. He was fearless, and felt the security from danger, at the hands of those he disliked, which is expressed in seemingly careless but purposeful disdain and contempt. Among those toward whom he thus felt was Major Harvey, then the County Judge of Tulare. He had spoken foully of Harvey, and his language had been reported to that gentleman. August 16th, 1852, Savage visited King's River Reservation, where William Campbell, whom he also disliked, was agent. Judge Marvin of Tuolumne was there present with Major Harvey. The latter asked Savage if the reported language had been uttered by him, and, on Savage responding that it was correctly reported, Harvey demanded its retraction. Savage's only response was a slap in the face, and at the instant his pistol dropped from his loose shirt bosom. Harvey instantly drew his pistol and fired, with fatal effect. Savage fell dead. An examination before a neighboring justice of the peace ended in Major Harvey's immediate release, as it was held that he had acted in clear self-defense.

The remains of Major Savage

were at the time buried near where he fell. In 1855, they were removed by Dr. Leach, his firm friend, and at one time his business partner, and given permanent sepulture at the point on Fresno River known as "Leach's old store," which had also been Savage's trading-post. Dr. Leach erected over the spot a granite monument, ten feet high, square and massive and stern, typical of the robust form and the sturdy spirit of the strange and strong man whose

memory it commemorates, and upon one of its sides is carved simply his name. He sleeps the everlasting sleep in the enduring, rock-bound bed in the middle of the stream on whose banks he last dwelt, and its gentle murmurings in placid flow, and its wild turbulence when lashed by angry winds, are alike as the calmness and the passionate moments of his lifetime, the lullaby of his peaceful rest, and the weird threnody of his violent end.



## THE CAVES OF YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Peter M. McLellan, Field School, 1951

When looking for natural caves one usually does not go to Yosemite. Obviously, no limestone areas may be expected in a continuous granite formation, of which the park is principally composed. Discouragement was offered from every side, even from six other speleologists who were also in the valley. Nonetheless, in the summer of 1951 an effort was made to locate and describe any existing caves in Yosemite Valley, for its extensive talus slopes do represent opportunity for boulder caves to occur. The Indian Caves of the valley are, of course, a well-known point of interest; and they are also the only caves within the park known by the author to be on record.

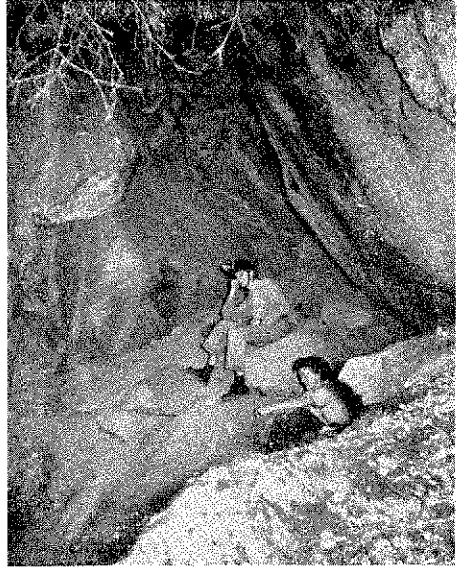
For the purpose of this discussion I wish to define a cave as a rock enclosure having one or more definite entrances, and at least portions of the interior in total darkness. This immediately eliminates the majority of the "hole-in-the-wall" cavities which may be formed almost anywhere from the random accumulation of talus along the base of the high valley walls. It does, on the other hand, establish certain structures as definitely being in the cave category.

One of the more significant finds recorded this summer was that of Carbonate Cave, which is located near the bridle path between Indian Caves and Mirror Lake, just north of

Iron Spring. This is a boulder cave having a small secondary entrance 32 feet beyond the largest or outer limit of the cave. This distance was measured north on a rise of 25 degrees from the horizontal (see photograph). From this point the cave is dark and rises 14 feet vertically, having two standing levels within. The important feature of this cave is the encrustation of cave coral covering the granite boulder walls. This is a surface coating of carbonate resembling tiny stalactites and stalagmites, some being rounded or bead-shaped while others are cylindrical, pointed formations. Examination with hydrochloric acid suggests this to be the mineral dolomite, a calcium-magnesium carbonate.

This material is deposited upon the walls by evaporation of mineral-bearing water. Presence of the deposit is governed by the character of the ground water in the vicinity, which in turn is governed by the kind of water-soluble materials with which it has come in contact. As ground water is exceedingly mobile, it can readily pick up mineral material in one place and deposit it, for example, in a cave many miles from its source. It is thus possible to have, deposited on a wall rock, a mineral which is of an entirely different composition from that of the wall rock.

The occurrence of carbonate encrustations in areas of apparently continuous granite is rather rare. Surface coatings have been observed on some of the talus boulders of the valley and on the sides of a large erratic boulder a quarter of a mile north of the Lyell Glacier. Dr. W. R. Halliday points out in a letter to the author that cave coral has been observed in two southern California granite areas: Coahuila Creek Cave, near Anza Post Office in the San Jacinto area, and on the under-



*Photo by Peter McLellan*

Entrance to Carbonate Cave, Yosemite Valley

side of a granite boulder about one mile west of Soda Creek Cave on the south fork of the Tule River. The proximity of our Carbonate Cave to Iron Spring, which is also seemingly out of place, might indicate a hidden lens or stratum of rock other than granite to be present.

There is also a certain amount of soil present between the boulders of Carbonate Cave. Small funnel-shaped holes, a quarter to half an inch in depth, have developed where the soil covers the ledges, indicating drips during periods of moisture. A live millipede and several dozen dead crane flies were found in the dark portion of the cave.

Just west of Carbonate Cave four lesser caves were observed, none of which contained cave coral.

A discussion of Indian Caves is in order to establish its place in the list of caves being located. The general appearance is one of massive boulders, with one of them dominating the view seen from the parking lot. This particular rock, 40 feet high,



forms the main cave room. The entrance is  $17\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, but as the visitor will see, the average ceiling height is only 2 feet. If this is no obstacle one may proceed straight in for a distance of 44 feet until an accumulation of small rocks is met. Retracing steps to the entrance, one may circle the massive rock either to the right or left and find many small openings, while some are large enough to hide several people. A few hours may be spent examining and exploring these openings. By working one's way well up the talus slope, about 10 feet higher than the main rock, several more continuous openings or entrances may be found. One of the highest of these slants back down for 43 feet before ending in a pile of small rocks—apparently the same ones which terminate the main room below. Here the author made verbal communication with a person in the end of that room. No light could be seen filtering through the rock barrier, which may be 4 to 10 feet thick. If we assume a thickness of 8 feet for this partition, the cave proper is, then, with one discontinuity, about 95 feet long. Several side passages of a minor nature exist in the upper section.

The name Indian Caves is appropriate because flat rocks in the area outside have some mortar holes which the Indians made in pounding acorns. Logically, it may be supposed that the Indians used most of the more accessible portions of the caves for food storage and occasional shelter.

Continuing west along the north edge of the valley we come to the Yosemite Falls Indian Caves. The main cave in this area is only about 100 yards north along the footpath to the falls from the parking lot, and

is at this time the largest known cave in the park. Although a few people have known of this cave it may be assumed that certain portions of it have not been entered since the withdrawal of the Indians. A member of one of the exploring parties this summer found an oblique Yuma spear point lying on the floor of one of the more inaccessible rooms. This is the first record of such a point being found in Yosemite Valley; the point probably predates all other Indian culture in the area.<sup>1</sup>

On approaching this cave from the trail several things about the entrance should be noticed. There are two mortar holes in the large flat rock just outside the entrance. Beyond, there appear to be the remains of an old wall of the kind commonly used by the Indians to block the entrance. About this area a strong cold draft seems to come from the cave. Looking above, it may be seen that there is no lichen growing on the rocks just over and around the entrance due to this localized draft. The draft ceases inside the cave although a cool temperature prevails throughout.

The size of this cave is not readily apparent to the casual observer who enters. Many places require struggling through narrow passages, some no larger than the width of a medium-sized person. Some require crawling on one or the other side, stomach, or back, or head or feet first. Just how large the cave is would be difficult to say, since two reconnaissance parties spent a total of 8 hours in only part of the cave. Over  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours were spent in mapping part of this area. New passageways continually came into view and new rooms appeared after crawling through small holes at

1. Watch for a future article by Mr. McLellan on the significance of Yuma points in Yosemite.  
—Ed.

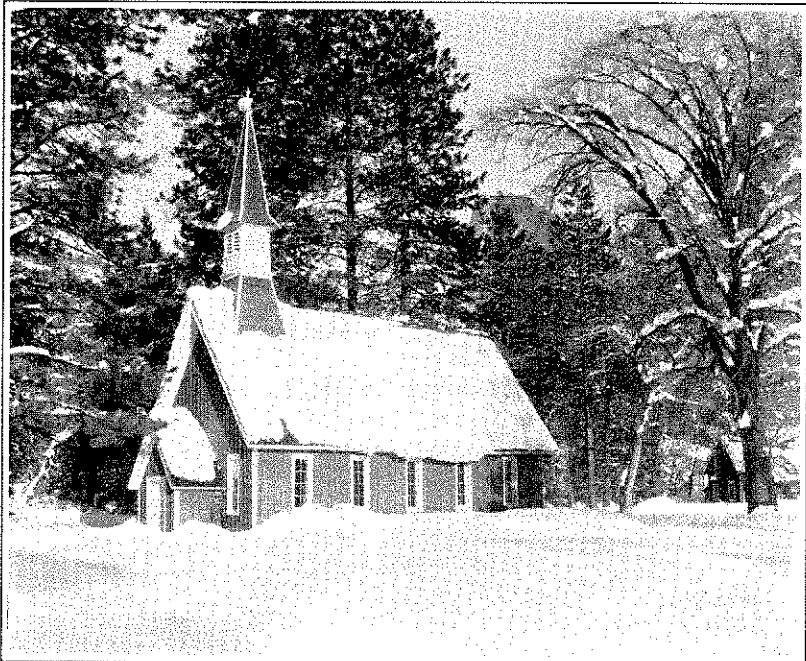
what, even at second glance, would appear to be a dead end.

Part of the south side of the cave has now been mapped. Three levels were found here. The upper level is the most frequently visited, if judged by the papers dropped about. The second lower level contained the room where the Yuma point was found. The lowest level is damp. One room here has a sandy floor. In another section of the cave, probably middle level, cave coral was found. The map now being made will indicate just how large the cave is and, with the aid of the letter bench marks that have been burned onto the rocks, will show the best route to follow in exploring the cave.

A fairly large number of spiders live near the entrances. Just 25 feet into the dark area from an entrance a Sierra Nevada salamander (*Ensatina sierrae*) was found. Acorn cups appeared frequently in parts of the cave.

It is strongly recommended that no one attempt to explore this cave unless accompanied by several people all carrying adequate light source and possessing some degree of climbing skill. Above all, some very strong clothing should be worn as the rocks are quite sharp and immovable in close quarters.

There are undoubtedly many more caves to be found. Already there are reports of a cave near the Mirror Lake Loop Trail and of two in Tenaya Canyon. Another has been reported north of the Yosemite Falls Indian Caves. With stimulated interest it may be possible to locate these as well as others. There is a certain amount of value in knowing just where these caves are and to what use they were put by the Indians. In addition to indicating former Indian campsites, they can, if found in their original condition, be of considerable archaeological value to the park.



Old Village Chapel, Yosemite Valley

Photo by Ansel Adams

DIGEST OF THE PURPOSES OF THE  
YOSEMITE  
NATURAL HISTORY  
ASSOCIATION

Yosemite National Park, California

INCORPORATED for the purpose of cooperating with the National Park Service by assisting the Naturalist Department of Yosemite National Park in the development of a broad public understanding of the geology, plant and animal life, history, Indians and related interests in Yosemite National Park and nearby regions. It aids in the development of the Yosemite Museum and library, fosters scientific investigations along lines of greatest popular interest, offers books on natural history applicable to this area for sale to the public, and cooperates in the publication of

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Dan Anderson