

osemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

Elizabeth H. Godfrey
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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 1 |
| <u>About the Author</u> | 1 |
| <u>Bibliographical Information</u> | 1 |
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 3 |
| <u>YOSEMITE INDIANSr r Yesterday and Todayr</u> | 4 |
| <u>r FOREWORDr</u> | 4 |
| <u>r THE STORY OF CHIEF TENAYAr</u> | 4 |
| <u>r THE MARIPOSA BATTALIONr</u> | 6 |
| <u>r YOSEMITE VALLEY ENTEREDr</u> | 7 |
| <u>r SECOND EXPEDITION TOr YOSEMITEr</u> | 10 |
| <u>r TENAYA'S LAST DAYSr</u> | 11 |
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 13 |
| <u>r FOODr</u> | 13 |
| <u>r Method of Preparing Acorn Mush.r Bread and Pattiesr</u> | 14 |
| <u>r Insectsr</u> | 15 |
| <u>r Greensr</u> | 15 |
| <u>r Bulbsr</u> | 16 |
| <u>r Fish and Gamer</u> | 16 |
| <u>r Mushroomsr</u> | 17 |
| <u>r Berriesr</u> | 17 |
| <u>r EATINGr</u> | 17 |
| <u>r BASKETRYr</u> | 17 |
| <u>r WEAPONSr</u> | 20 |
| <u>r FISHING AND HUNTINGr</u> | 22 |
| <u>r BONE AND ANTLER IMPLEMENTSr</u> | 23 |
| <u>r CLOTHINGr</u> | 23 |
| <u>r HAIRr</u> | 24 |
| <u>r SHELTERr</u> | 25 |
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 27 |
| <u>r CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMSr</u> | 27 |
| <u>r MEDICINE MENr</u> | 27 |
| <u>r DEATH AND MOURNINGr</u> | 28 |
| <u>r CEREMONY OF THANKSGIVINGr</u> | 28 |
| <u>r YOSEMITE INDIANS TODAYr</u> | 29 |
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 31 |
| <u>INDIAN LEGENDS</u> | 31 |
| <u>r LEGEND OF EL CAPITANr</u> | 31 |
| <u>r LEGEND OF THE LOST ARROWr</u> | 33 |
| <u>r LEGEND OF HALF DOMEr</u> | 34 |
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 38 |
| <u>SELECTED REFERENCES</u> | 38 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| <u>Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey</u> | 41 |
| <u>About the Author</u> | 41 |
| <u>Bibliographical Information</u> | 41 |

***Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941)* by Elizabeth H. Godfrey**

r r r

- r
- [History](#)

- r
- [Life](#)

- r
- [Ceremonies and Customs](#)

- r
- [Indian Legends](#)

- r
- [Selected References](#)

r r r

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About the Author

r r

r Elizabeth H. “Babs” Godfrey, r a student and writer of Yosemite history. r Her husband was William C. Godfrey. r He wrote and illustratedr “Among the Big Trees in the Mariposa Grove”r forr *Yosemite Nature Notes*, in 1929. r He transferred to Crater Lake National Park, where her died of exposure Nov. 1929. r She moved back to Yosemite after his death andr worked as secretary for the Yosemite Museum. r Elizabeth Godfrey collected historical material on Yosemite for the Museumr and wrote articles forr *Yosemite Nature Notes*. r She was transferred to ther National Park Service Region Four Headquarters (San Francisco) in 1945. r She later married a Mr. Baker. r

r r r

r r

Bibliographical Information

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Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

Revisions in printings before 1951 were trivial (removal of foreword, mention of Ta-bu-ce death). The 1951 and later editions were major rewrites.

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- [Original 1941 edition of *Yosemite Indians* \[PDF\]](#)
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r —Dan Anderson, www.yosemite.ca.us

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r [Yosemite](#) > [Library](#) > [Yosemite Indians](#) > [History](#) >

r r

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r r r

r [Next: Lifer](#) • [Contents](#)

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Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

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rrr

r Cover illustration: Ta-bu-cer [Editor's note: Maggie Howard—dea.],r for many years a familiar figure in Yosemite, shortly before herr death in 1947 at a probable age of more than 90 years.r This and other illustrations in this booklet are by Ralph Anderson, unless otherwise credited.r

rrrr

YOSEMITE INDIANS r Yesterday and Todayr

r r

r r By Elizabeth H. Godfreyr r

r r

r FOREWORDr

r r

r [Editor's note:r the first printing of this book has the following foreword,r which was omitted in a latter printing.—dea.]r

r r

r After looking over the Indian exhibit in the museum many park visitorsr desire a publication on the history, habits, and livelihood of the originalr inhabitants of this area. With a hope of supplying such a requirement at ar minimum cost, this special issue of Yosemite Nature Notes has been prepared.r It is in part a compilation of historical information obtained from variousr articles that have appeared from time to time inr Yosemite Nature Notesr andr other publications. Due credit must also be given James E. Cole, formerr Junior Park Naturalist, whose exhaustive notes on this subject were ofr considerable value. The help of M. E. Beatty, former Associate Park Naturalist,r under whose supervision the original edition of this booklet was preparedr should also be noted. The publication of this second edition was made possiblerr through the assistance of former Park Naturalist C. Frank Brockman.r

r r

r THE STORY OF CHIEF TENAYAr

r r

r Centuries before the advent of ther white man, Yosemite Valley is believedr to have been inhabited by Indians.r With the ravages of wars andr black sickness the Ahwahneeches, ar powerful tribe—and one of the lastr to occupy the “deep, grassy valley”r —became practically annihilatedr The few disheartened survivors left r to affiliate with other neighboringr tribes.r

r r

r [Editor's note:r the correct meaning of Ahwahnee is “(gaping) mouth,” not “deep, grassy valley.” Seer “Origin of the Place Name Yosemite”—dea.]r

r r

r After many years of abandonment,r a young and adventurous Indian byr the name of Tenaya, who claimedr to be a direct descendant of ther Chief of the Ahwahneeches, and whor had been born and raised amongr the

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

Monos, decided to return to what he considered his homeland. From the Monos, Piutes, and other tribes, he persuaded remnants of his father's people to join him, and with a band of approximately two hundred he reoccupied the valley, naming himself as chief. These Indians represented a small part of the Interior California Miwoks, which in ancient times numbered in the neighborhood of 9,000, and comprised a group of closely related tribes occupying the western foothills and lower slopes of the Sierra Nevada.

r r

In accordance with Indian tradition, Tenaya's tribesmen were separated into two divisions—the "Coyote" side and the "Grizzly Bear" side. Outsiders eventually designated the whole tribe as "Yosemites," which means "Grizzly Bear." The valley itself remained "Ahwahnee" to the Indians, as it had been so called by the earlier Ahwahneechee inhabitants.

r r

[Editor's note: for the correct meaning of Yosemite, see "[Origin of the Place Name Yosemite](#)"—de.]

r r

For a few score years Tenaya reigned supreme in "Ahwahnee." Then in his declining years came the California gold rush. Wherever mining activities flourished, Indian supremacy quickly vanished. Driven from his home, the red man sought another dwelling place, only to be routed out again and again with further aggression of the whites. His final destination was the Indian reservation.

r r

Nearer and nearer came the greedy gold-seekers to Tenaya's domain. Such towns as Mariposa, Mt. Bullion, and Coulterville sprang up with suddenness when gold discoveries drew throngs of white men to their vicinities. While Indians of the foothills made treaties with the whites, many mountain Indians including the Yosemites resented their intrusion. In retaliation and in a futile effort to discourage the white men from further usurping their



Miniature Indian Village Diorama—Indian Room. Yosemite Museum

lands, a number of Indian outrager were committed, some of which werer charged directly to ther Yosemite Indians.

THE MARIPOSA BATTALION

In March, 1851, under the authority of Governor McDougal, the Mariposa Battalion was organized to subdue the Yosemite and their neighboring tribes, and to convey them to the Fresno River Reservation where Indians of the San Joaquin Valley and the coast had already been established by the Indian Commissioners.

James D. Savage, a trader, was elected major of the battalion. Savage had a personal grudge to settle. The previous December, his Fresno River store had been attacked by the Indians and destroyed. The two men in charge had been ruthlessly murdered. Simultaneously, his Mariposa Creek Station had been ravaged and three white men killed. Being thoroughly convinced that the Yosemite were the ringleaders in these outrages, Savage vowed he would rout them out to the last Indian from their stronghold where they believed themselves secure, and would bring them to submission either by treaty or force of arms.

After the Mariposa Battalion had surprised and captured an Indian rancheria on the South Fork of the Merced River at what is now called Wawona, Savage sent an Indian messenger ahead to demand Tenaya to surrender, emphasizing that it would be to the advantage of the Yosemite to immediately sign a treaty with the Indian Commissioners to quitclaim their lands, and to leave for the reservation on the Fresno River

without resistance.

r r r r



r r Francisco, an early day Yosemite in dancer
r costume. (Boysen photo)r r

r r r [Editor's note:r Francisco Georgley, a Chowchilla Indian—DEA]r r r

r r

r Upon Tenaya's advice, the Yosemite's agreed to make treaty, and their old chief himself went on ahead to report to Savage that his people were coming in. Savage waited three days for the fulfillment of Tenaya's promise, and then suspecting him of deceit, took part of his company and set out toward the valley with Tenaya acting as guide. Following along an old Indian trail in the approximate location of the present Wawona Road, they came mid-way upon a scattered line of seventy-two Indians. There were old squaws, younger women with papooses on their backs, small children, but no braves. All were weary from the long march over and through snow several feet deep. Although Tenaya assured Savage that this group represented his entire tribe, Savage was still suspicious. He sent Tenaya back to the South Fork Camp with the Indians, while he and his soldiers went on in search for the rest of the Yosemite's.

r r

r YOSEMITE VALLEY ENTEREDr

r r

r Through Savage's grim determination to rout out the Yosemite's from their mountain refuge, Yosemite Valley was first entered by him and his small company of soldiers on March 21, 1851.*r

r YOSEMITE VALLEY ENTEREDr

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

r r

r Emerging from the forest, the detachment suddenly came out on a clearing—old Inspiration Point. Revealed in panorama before their eyes was Tenaya's secret fortress—a gem of a valley, river-ribboned, in a setting of sheer, precipitous, granite cliffs, domes, and spires of surpassing grandeur. What they witnessed had been wrought by millions of years of geologic changes, but history bears record that only one of these rough mountaineers, Dr. L. H. Bunnell, was emotionally stirred by the awe-inspiring view. Their thought uppermost was to blot out the Indians who claimed this valley as their own.

r r

r That night while Savage and his men chatted around a campfire near Bridalveil Fall, Dr. Bunnell, who was thrilled with the rare scenic value of the valley, suggested that it be called "Yosemite," after the Indians who were being driven out. Thus Yosemite Valley was entered for the first time by white men and named the same day.

r r

r The following day Savage and his men searched the valley floor in vain; they scouted up Tenaya Creek

r r

r (*) Actual discovery of Yosemite Valley occurred at an earlier date. In the fall of 1833 a party of approximately 40 men, under the leadership of Joseph Reddeford Walker, passed through the area now included in Yosemite National Park. This journey was memorable in that it represented one of the first crossings of the Sierra Nevada. Members of the Walker party were thus the first white men to enter the area now included in Yosemite National Park.

r

r Unfamiliarity with the region, its rugged terrain, and the season's lateness combined to make their journey through this region a long and extremely arduous one. Records indicate that members of this group, in scouting for a suitable westward route through the mountains, first saw the Valley from a point on the north rim. However, the Walker party never entered the Valley and their discovery made no great impression upon them. Thus this fact was not fully substantiated until comparatively recent years. In consequence, the existence of Yosemite Valley was generally unknown in 1851 when it was first entered by the Mariposa Battalion, although certain Indians had hinted of the presence of a formidable mountain refuge on several occasions co-incident with the Indian troubles of that period. (See "Narrative and Adventures of Zenas Leonard." edited by M. M. Quaife, Lakeside Press, Chicago, 1934; also Walker's Discovery of Yosemite, Francis P. Farquhar, Sierra Club Bulletin, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, August 1942),

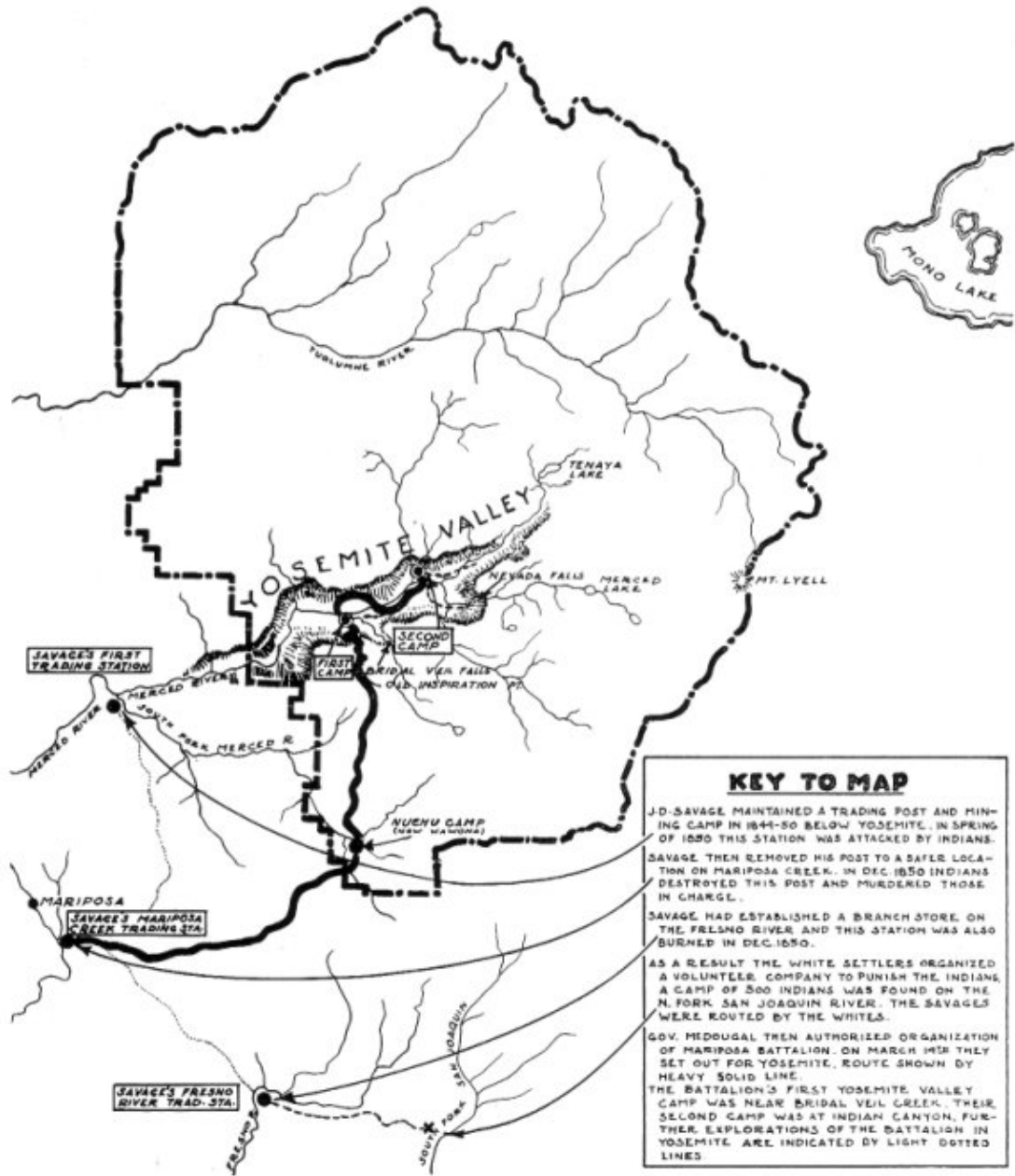
r r

[Editor's note: today historians generally believe the Walker party looked down The Cascades, which are just west of Yosemite Valley, instead of Yosemite Valley itself.—dea]

r r r r r

r YOSEMITE VALLEY ENTERED

ROUTE OF MARIPOSA BATTALION
First Expedition—March, 1851



r r beyond Mirror Lake; they climbed up the Merced River canyon to above Nevada Fall, but not a trace of an Indian brave was discovered. The only living soul was an aged squaw who had been too feeble to join the others in the exodus. r r

r Savage soothed his disappointment and failure by burning their dwellings, large caches of acorns and other provisions the Indians had left behind. r

r r

r Although they were the first to enter Yosemite Valley, and were responsible for its name, this expedition of the Mariposa Battalion did not accomplish its purpose: i.e., to exterminate the Indians. Through

r YOSEMITE VALLEY ENTERED r

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

carelessness of the guards in charge, r tricky Chief Tenaya and his entire r r r people were able to delay their relegation r on the Fresno River Reservation r by escaping during the night. r

r r r r



r r *Three Brothers, named for sons of Chief Tenaya* r

r r

r SECOND EXPEDITION TO r YOSEMITE r

r r

r The second expedition against the Yosemite Indians took place in May, 1851, r under command of Captain John Boling, whose company was a part of the Mariposa Battalion. r

r r

r At the outset, five Yosemite Indians were captured, three of whom were Chief Tenaya's sons. Of these captives, r Captain Boling released one of Tenaya's sons and his son-in-law, under the promise that they would bring in the old chief so that the treaty might be made; the other three were held as hostages. r

r r

r The soldiers in Captain Boling's camp practiced archery with the three remaining prisoners, and one of the captives shot his arrow far beyond the others. He was allowed to search for it, but the opportunity for freedom was so overpowering that he took a chance and darted off. The other two prisoners were then tied back to back and fastened to a tree. r Later they were able to unfasten the ropes that bound them, but when attempting to slip off, the guard discovered them and fired. Tenaya's youngest son was killed; the other Indian managed to escape into Indian Canyon. r

r r

r A short time after this unfortunate episode, Tenaya entered Boling's camp to surrender, and great sorrow confronted him. Before him on the ground lay the lifeless form of one very dear to his heart—his youngest and most beloved son. Captain Boling's regret did not in any way alleviate Tenaya's grief. He stood in repressed anguish, facing not only the death of his son, but the end of his liberty and happiness. A few days passed, and when Tenaya's people failed to join him in surrender, he too attempted escape, but was caught by Captain Boling just as he was about to plunge into the river. In a state of utter failure, mental anguish, r and grief he piteously begged Captain Boling to kill him as he had killed his son, but warned him that his spirit would return to torment the white man. r

r r

r Captain Boling continued his pursuit of the remainder of the Yosemite Indians into the snow-clad high country, and with his soldiers surprised them as they were encamped on their shores of Tenaya Lake. The Indians, realizing that resistance was futile, surrendered. Records state that so anxious was Captain Boling to advance upon the Indians when their camp was discovered that he did not allow his soldiers sufficient time to don their uniforms. They were given the command to march four miles over and through ten feet of snow stripped to their red flannel underwear.

r r

r In 1928, oldr Maria Lebrado, the last of Tenaya's people, described this incident as seeing "lots of red."

r r

r TENAYA'S LAST DAYSr

r r

r Subsequent to the success of their second Yosemite expedition Tenaya and his people were assigned to the Fresno River Indian Reservation along with many other subdued tribes. Here, Tenaya chafed miserably under restraints placed upon him, and was unable to adapt himself to his new environment. After constant appeals, the Indian Commissioners permitted him to return to Yosemite Valley under promise that he would provoke no more trouble. Tenaya was soon joined in his old stamping grounds by other Indians of his tribe who managed to escape from the reservation. The winters of 1851 and 1852 passed and Tenaya kept his promise to the commissioners by causing no disturbances. In May 1852, a party of eight prospectors fearlessly entered Yosemite Valley with no idea of trouble with what they supposed were peaceable Indians. To their utter horror and astonishment the Yosemite Indians made an unexpected and vicious attack. Two of their number were brutally murdered and the others barely escaped with their lives.

r r

r As the Mariposa Battalion had been disbanded, a detachment of the regular army was immediately sent into the valley from Fort Miller to forestall further trouble. Five Indians



r r *Tenaya Lake, named for Chief Tenaya, last chief of the Yosemite.* r r

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rrrrr were captured. When the soldiers found clothing belonging to the murdered men among their belongings, the captives were at once shot by Army orders. Tenaya and his remaining tribesmen managed to escape and took refuge with their allies, the Piutes, at Mono Lake.

In the late summer of 1853, old Chief Tenaya and his small group of followers returned to Yosemite Valley for the last time. Having no horses of their own for meat, they treacherously stole a number belonging to the Monos. When this theft was discovered by the owners, they at once made ready to pursue Tenaya, and to administer revenge for this gross expression of ingratitude. While Tenaya and his band sat around a campfire enjoying a feast, the Monos suddenly swept down upon them. One Mono Indian hurled a rock directly at Tenaya's head, which crushed his skull. For the old chief, who had escaped death so many times, there was final darkness and oblivion. The Monos killed all of Tenaya's followers, except a few women and children, one of whom was Maria Lebrado. In 1928, Dr. Carl P. Russell, at that time Yosemite's Park Naturalist, interviewed aged Maria Lebrado as the only living survivor of Tenaya's people.

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[Next: Life](#) • [Contents](#)

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http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians/history.html

rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

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rr

[Yosemite](#) > [Library](#) > [Yosemite Indians](#) > [Life](#) >

rr

r

rrr

[Next: Ceremonies & Customs](#) • [Contents](#) • [Previous: History](#)

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Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

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r FOODr

r r

r Although the Yosemite Indiansr had neither knowledge of cultivationr nor a market place to buy provisions,r
r r



r r

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r r *Shelling acorns in advance of preparing an meal* r
r r r [Editor's note: *Ta-bu-ce (Maggie Howard)—dea.*]r r r

r r r r the food supply furnished byr native plants, animals, birds and insectsr afforded them a varied diet.r For
meat they killed the deer, smallr mammals, birds, and caught fish. Inr addition, there were acorns, berries,r
pine nuts, edible plants, bulbs, mushrooms,r fungi, larvae of ants and otherr insects in their season. The
acornsr of the Black Oak, rich in nutritiousr vitamins, constituted the “staff ofr life.”r r

r Gathering the acorns, storing themr in the chuck-ah granary, along withr the complicated preparation of
acornr mush and bread constituted a laboriousr and lengthy task that the Indianr woman accepted as a matter
ofr routine.r

r r

r The chuck-ahs in the Museum Gardenr “Indian Village” constructed byr Maggie (Ta-bu-ce) are typical of
ther granaries employed for storing ther acorns. At first glance these huge,r cylindrical, basket-like affairs
remindr one of big, clumsy nests built by some giant bird. Four slenderr poles of Incense Cedar about eightr

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

feet high arranged in a square, and a center log or rock two feet high for the bottom of the chuck-ah, constituting the frame support. The basket-like interior is of interwoven branches of deer brush (*Ceanothus*) tied at the ends with willow stems and fastened together with wild grapevine. This is lined with dry pine needles and wormwood. The latter supposedly discourages the invasion of insects and rodents, and grows abundantly in the museum region. After the chuck-ah has been filled with acorns gathered in the



Chuck-ah, used for acorn storage

Photo by C. A. Harwell

[Editor's note: Ta-bu-ce (Maggie Howard)—dea.]

fall, it is topped with pine needles, wormwood, and sections of Incense Cedar bark that are bound down firmly with wild grapevines to withstand windstorms. The final touch is thatching the exterior with short boughs of White Fir or Incense Cedar, with needles pointing downward to shed snow and rain, and fastening them securely with bands of wild grapevine.

Method of Preparing Acorn Mush, Bread and Patties

After cracking and shelling the acorns, the spoiled meats were removed, and the kernels pounded into fine yellow meal. Mortar holes in granite are found at every villager site. In order to remove the bitter tasting tannin from the meal, leaching was required. In this process the acorn meal was first placed in a previously prepared shallow, hard-packed sand basin. At short intervals water was poured over the mixture, and allowed to seep through the sand. About seven applications of water were necessary to remove the tannin—the last three being increasingly warm.

Three products were obtained from the leaching according to the fineness of the meal: the fine meal served for gruel or thin soup; the middle product for mush, and from the coarser material small patties were formed, and baked on hot, flat rocks.

The mush was cooked in a larger cooking basket, using the proportion of two quarts of newly leached acorn meal to six or seven quarts of boiling water. Heat was provided for both boiling the water and cooking the mush by gently lowering hot stones into a large cooking basket by means of wooden tongs. When the mush was done, the stones were removed with the tongs and dropped into cold water, so that the mush adhering to them might congeal and when cool be peeled off and eaten.

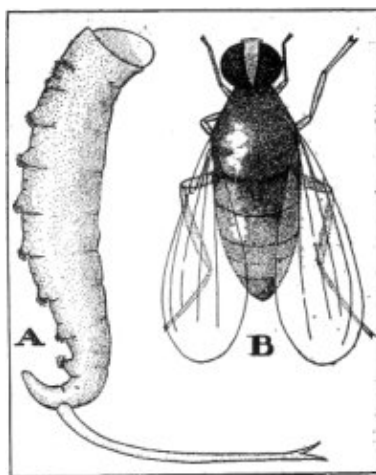
r r

r Insectsr

r r

r One of the most important articlesr of trade between the Monos and ther Yosemite was the insect delicacyr Ka-cha'-vee, which came from ther saline waters of Mono Lake in ther form of a peculiar insect pupae,r breeding there in countless numbers.r The waves cast on the shore greatr windrows, composed of millions ofr bodies of these undeveloped speciesr of fly. The squaws scooped up ther pupae into large baskets, and whenr the smelly mass was thoroughly dry,r they were rubbed to remove skins.r After further drying, they werer packed for winter use. The finalr product had a flavor similar tor shrimp, but was not nearly so strong.r

r r r



r r
r r *Ka-cha'-vee, an insect food (x7)*
r (a) *Pupa, used by the Indians*
r (b) *The Adult Fly (Ephydra hians)* r r

r r r

r r Another prized commercial foodr product which the Monos tradedr with the Yosemite was the caterpillarsr of the Pandora moth, betterr known in the Indian tongue as Peaggi.r These were collected in ther Jeffrey Pine forests just east ofr Yosemite National Park. At a certainr time known to the Monos, the caterpillarsr left the trees to enter ther ground to form pupal cases, andr were trapped in shallow trenchestr dug in loose soil around the trees.r The squaws visited these trenchestr atr intervals and collected the caterpillarsr that had accumulated there.r They were then dried and storedr r r r away for cooking into stew. Grasshoppersr and larvae of yellow jacketsr were also used as food, and werer roasted in an earthen oven.r

r r

r Greensr

r r

r Miner's Lettuce was eaten raw.r Sometimes red ants were allowed tor run over the leaves to flavor themr with formic acid, which gave anr r r



Miner's Lettuce

added sour taste. This was a substitute for the modern use of vinegar. Fern shoots of the Brake Fern, which commonly grows in moist, shaded regions over the valley floor and side canyon walls, were cut when in the uncurling stage, and after removing the hairs by scraping, were eaten raw or cooked. Clover was eaten raw when the plants were young and tender prior to their flowering stage. To prevent indigestion California Bay nut was munched with clover. Lupinus bi-color, as well as other species of lupines made good greens, especially when moistened with manzanita cider.

Bulbs

Bulbs were so important a part of the diet of the Yosemite Indians that they were one of a group of tribes described as "Digger" Indians by early California settlers.

Bulbs that made good eating were: Squaw Root, the various brodiaeas, especially bulbs of their Harvest Brodiaea, and Camass. Bulbs were baked in an earthen oven in the ground. First a small pit was dug. A layer of hot stones were placed in the bottom of it, and covered with leaves. A layer of bulbs came next, then alternate layers of leaves, stones, leaves and bulbs until the pit was filled. Over the top, a layer of earth sealed the oven, and a fire was built over it. The bulbs were allowed to bake all night, or for a period of about twelve hours.

Fish and Game

Fresh meat was usually cooked by broiling on hot coals, roasted before the fire, or in the earthen oven. For winter use meat was dried in long, thin strips by either hanging it on trees or bushes to expose to the air and sunlight, or by curing on a rack about eighteen inches above a small fire. Squirrels, rabbits and fish were roasted directly on coals, or in hot ashes, either whole or drawn. In the latter case, animal, bird or fish were stuffed with hot coals to make cooking more rapid.

Greens

r r

r Mushrooms

r r

r Mushrooms were in season duringr April or May. Shredded and driedr they were boiled and eaten with r r r
r mineral salt, or ground in a mortarr and cooked as soup.r

r r

r Berries

r r

r Manzanita berries, which arer smooth-skinned and of an agreeabler acid flavor, were eaten raw, or mader
into cider for drinking and mixingr with other food preparations. Inr making cider, the berries werer crushed
with a rock in a basket intor a coarse pulp through which a smallr quantity of water was allowed tor seep and
drip into a watertightr basket beneath. As the water seepedr through the pulp, it extracted somer of the berry
flavor.r

r r

r Other common berries used asr food were wild raspberries, thimblerr berries, wild strawberries, currants,r
gooseberries, squaw berries, andr wild cherries.r

r r

r EATINGr

r r

r At meal time the family gatheredr around the basket of acorn mush orr other viands, and using the tworr front
fingers for a spoon, all dippedr into the same basket. Sometimes ar single finger was twisted aroundr and
around in the mush, in the samer manner that Pacific Islanders eatr poi, and piloted to the mouth.r

r r

r Manzanita cider, which served asr an appetizer, was enjoyed by dippingr into the beverage a small stickr
with several short feathers fastenedr to one end, and then sucking ther drink off the feathers. A small,r
tightly-woven basket, known as ar “dipper,” was also used for drinkingr water or manzanita cider.r Game was
torn limb from limbr from the roasted animal, and dividedr among members of the family.r

r r

r BASKETRYr

r r

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r Willow, squaw bush, red-bud, r tule-root, red strips of bark fromr Creek Dogwood, maiden-hair fern, r brake fern, wire bunch grass, andr other native plants served the Indianr woman as material for the many basketsr needed to properly perform herr domestic tasks. She knew the namesr of all the basket material plants, r their locations, and the proper timer for gathering them as well as anyr botanist.r

r r

r After gathering the materials, ar further knowledge of how to preparer them for weaving was necessary.r They had to be peeled, trimmed tor correct width, fineness and length, r soaked in cold water, boiled or buriedr in mud, according to her knowledger of the treatment required.r

r r

r In size, shape, and weave eachr basket was designed to serve a specialr purpose. A large conicalr shaped basket was required for carryinr heavy burdens, such asr acorns, and was known as the burdenr basket. Such baskets were supportedr on the back from a strapr passing over the wearer's forehead.r There was a large, deep familyr mushbowl basket around which ther family gathered to dip in the acornr mush; a small, closely-woven basketr for use in serving food; a tightllyr woven disc-shaped basket for winnowinr wild oats and other seedr plants; a seed beater for use in beatinr r r r seeds into a carryinr basket; ar dipper basket, which was small andr tightly woven for drinking water orr manzanita cider; a cradle or openworkr basketry — sometimes coveredr with deer skin for carryinr the papoose; r special baskets for use inr wedding and dance ceremonies, andr basket weirs for catching fish.r

r r

r The twining and coiling methodsr were used chiefly by Yosemite Indianr women in weaving baskets. Inr the twined basket, the heavy foundationr is vertical from the center tor the rim, and the woof is of lighterr material. In the coiled basket, ther heavy foundation is laid in horizontalr coils around the basket with ther filling running spirally around heavyr twigs. Throughout the whole Miwokr tribes, practically the only twinedr baskets made were the burden basket, r the triangular scoop-shapedr basket for winnowing, the ellipticalr seed beater, and the baby carrierr (hickey). An application of soaproot, r which hardens in a thin, brittle sheet, was used to make the burdenr baskets seed-tight. A scrubbingr brush for cleaning the cooking basketr was also made of fibers from ther dry, outer layers of the soaproot. Inr weaving the coiled basket, an awl, r made chiefly from the bone of ar deer, was employed.r

r r

r Roots of the brake fern were boiledr in order to obtain the black materialr used in designs; red-bud was employedr for the red color.r

r r

r Considering that the Indian womanr worked entirely without writtentr rules, the design, color, and ther mathematical accuracy of her basketsr in entirety represent a work ofr art. Before commencing a basketr she had to know exactly where tor r r r



r I

r r *Ta-bu-ce (Maggie Howard) and baskets. Boysen photor* r

r r r r r r r r



r r Ta-bu-ce (Maggie Howard) gathering acorns during Autumn r

r r r r r place the first stitch of each figure of the design, and as the bowl of their basket continued to flare, the size of each figure had to be correspondingly increased. r r

r WEAPONSr

r r

r The bow and arrow was the principal weapon for both hunting and warfare. The weapon in the hand of a good marksman was dangerous at two hundred yards and fatal at fifty yards. r

r r

r In constructing his bow and arrow, the Indian brave displayed as great skill as did the Indian woman in the weaving of her baskets. Incense Cedar and California Nutmeg furnished the wood for the bow. If the

r WEAPONSr

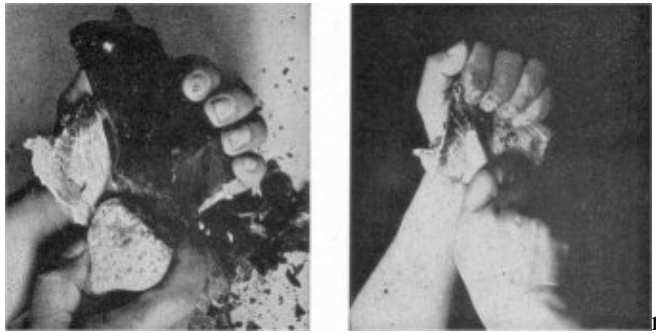
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formerr was used, it was necessary to treat itr several days with deer marrow tor prevent brittleness when dry. Ther bow was three or four feet long, sinewr backed, and had recurved ends.r Glue used for applying the sinewr to the back of the bow was mader by boiling deer and horse bones andr combining the product with pitch.r

r r

r Arrows for large game were in twor parts. The detachable foreshaft remainedr in the wound-preventing itr from closing and thus hastening ther animal's death from loss of blood.r Arrow shafts were made of syringar or wild rose bush by removing ther bark, stripping and trimming ther pieces to an even thickness, andr then straightening them with stoner tools. Finally, the shafts were polishedr with scouring rush. Feathersr and obsidian arrows were then attachedr to the shaft, each featherr split down the middle, and fourr half feathers attached to each shafr with wrapping. Obsidian arrow heads were fitted into a slot in ther end of the shaft, and held in placerr by sinew wrapping and pitch.r

r r r r



r r Arrow points were fashioned from obsidian (volcanic glass) by first striking large piece with r hammerstone (left) to obtain section of suitable size. This was then shaped with a tool made from a deer antlerr r (right).r r

r r r r r r r



r r Arrow point was attached to shaft by user r of sinewr r

r r r r r

r The plain bow without sinew backingr sufficed for hunting small gamerr at relatively close range. The bestrr bow strings were made of twistedr sinew.r

r r

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Obsidian (volcanic glass) for their arrow heads was obtained from quarries in the Mono or Owens Valley region. It was a valuable trade article of the Mono Piutes, who periodically visited the Yosemite Valley. The Yosemite Indians themselves occasionally made journeys across the Sierra for obsidian. Pieces of obsidian suitable for working into tools were picked up or broken from larger masses of obsidian with crude stone hammers. These pieces were then carried over the mountains to Yosemite in deer skin sacks.

r r

Small pieces suitable for working into arrow points were broken from a large rock of obsidian by striking it sharply and adroitly with a hammerstone. The obsidian block was held in the left hand, and the hammerstone in the right hand.

r r

The small pieces were roughly shaped with an antler tool and finished with a small antler implement. With the obsidian grasped in the palm of the left hand, which was protected by a buckskin pad, pressure was exerted on it with the sharp end of the antler tool.

r r

r FISHING AND HUNTINGr

r r

Deer were stalked by hunters disguised in deer skins. By mimicking the actions of the deer, a hunter could approach near enough to make a successful shot. When many deer were desired, they were driven past ambushed Indians, or into traps or nets.

r r r r



r r *Fish spearr* r

r r

Fish were speared with a wooden shaft fitted with a bone point. One end of a small cord was attached to the point and the other held in the fisherman's hand. The struggles of the impaled fish freed the point from the shaft, and the fish was landed by pulling the cord.

r r

Fish were also caught with weirs traps made of long willow sprouts woven together and closed at their pointed lower end. These were ingeniously placed in an especially constructed dam, and elevated

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above the surface of the water below the dam, so that in going down stream the fish ran into this trap and found themselves at the lower end of it, and out of the water.

r r

r When the water was low in summer, the Indians stupefied the fish with pulverized soap-root, mixed with soil and water. This was rubbed on rocks out in the stream which roiled the water, and made it foamy. The effect on the fish was a form of strangulation, which caused them to rise to the surface where they could be easily captured by the Indians in their scoop baskets.

r r

r BONE AND ANTLER IMPLEMENTS

r r

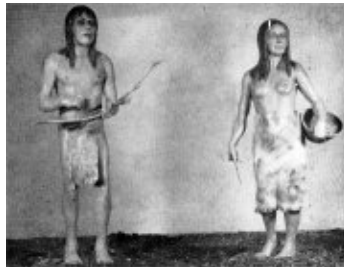
r Bones and antlers were used by the Indians in making various tools and implements. From certain bones of the deer, the awl was made for weaving of coiled basketry; limb bones of the Jackrabbit and Sierran Grouse served for fashioning whistles for the ceremonial dances; points of antler were used for the shaping of flint and obsidian points and blades; an antler implement was used for extracting acorns stored by woodpeckers; split deer leg bone afforded scrapers for use in working down a bow, or in removing hair from deer hide, etc.

r r

r CLOTHING

r r

r Skin from wild animals furnished the only available means of clothing. In summer the Indian man wore nothing but a loin cloth of buckskin; the Indian woman a buckskin skirt, reaching from waist to knees. Children went unclothed in warm weather until about ten years old.



r r Typical summer clothing

r (photo from models in Yosemite museum)

r r r r Blankets made from dressed skins of deer, bear, mountain lion, coyote, and other skins were wrapped about the body in cold weather by both sexes. The most popular blanket was made by weaving narrow strips of rabbit skins into a loose, but very warm covering, using plain cord as the wool. The same blankets worn as clothing were used as bedclothes.

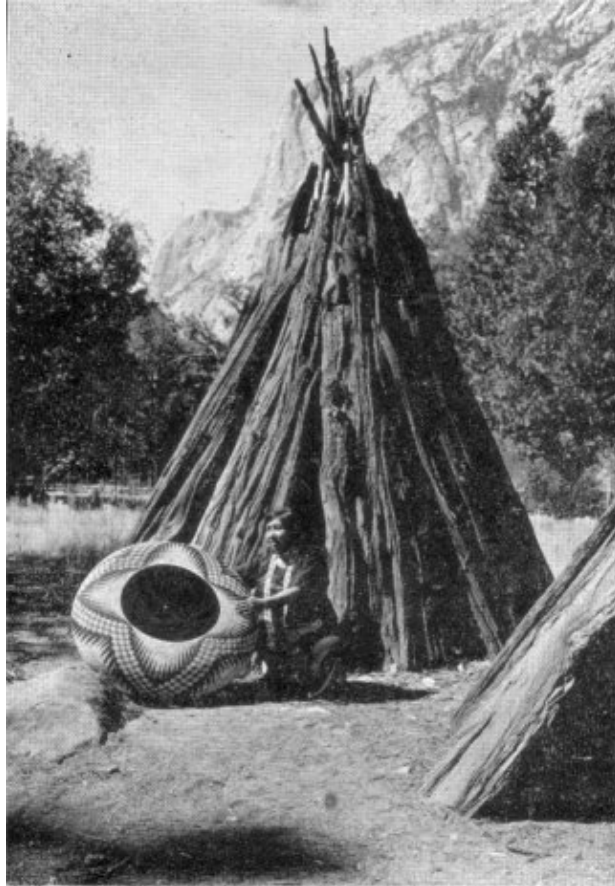
r The moccasin, of course, was the only style of footwear, and this was only worn in cold weather, or for rough-country trips. Made of buckskin, it was fashioned in one piece, and lined with shredded cedar bark. It

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was seamed up the heel and ther front, using milkweed fiber thread.r Over-lapping pieces were boundr around the ankles.r

r r

r At the mourning and dance ceremonials,r the Indian man wore ar head-dress made of magpie feathersr and bound with sinews; with thisr was worn a head-band made of tailr feathers from the red-shafted flicker.r r r r



r r Typical dwelling or u-ma-cha. Mrs. Lucy Telles with large storage basket in foregroundr r
r r r [Editor's note:r Lucy Telles, aka Pa-ma-has—DEA]r r r

r r r r r Straps of eagle down draped obliquelyr over one shoulder and ther chest, and tied around the waist,r along with a wild-cat skin kilt,r completed the costume.r r r

r HAIRr

r r

r Adults wore the hair long, oftenr to the waist, either flowing loosely,r or caught at the back of the neckr with a feather rope or boa. Hair wasr only cut as a symbol of mourning andr this was accomplished by whackingr it off with an obsidian knife. In ther care of the hair, the soaproot wasr used for a shampoo, and was supposedr to promote luxuriant growth.r The fibers of this same plant sufficedr for a hair brush. In the absencer of the modern barber and safetyr razor, the Indian man permitted hisr heavy beard to grow to a fair size,r or plucked it. Flowers and feathersr were worn in the hair as ornaments.r

r r

r CLOTHINGr

r SHELTERr

r r

r The typical Yosemite dwelling was the conical u-ma-cha. This was constructed by placing a few poles ten or twelve feet long in the ground around an area twelve feet in diameter with the tops of the poles inclined together. Over this framework slabs of Incense Cedar bark were piled. The u-ma-cha was easily built, fairly waterproof, and readily kept warm. The entrance on the south could be easily closed with a portable door. There was also an opening at the top to allow smoke to escape from a fire kindled in the middle of the dwelling. A single one of these could house a family of six, with all their worldly possessions, including the dog.

r r

r In the summer season the Indians lived outside in brush arbors, and the u-ma-cha was then used as a storehouse. Other Yosemite structures were large, earth-covered round houses for ceremonies, and some small, earth-covered sweat houses for cleanliness and curative uses.

r r r r

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r [Next: Ceremonies & Customs](#) • [Contents](#) • [Previous: History](#)

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r http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians/life.html

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r [Yosemite](#) > [Library](#) > [Yosemite Indians](#) > Ceremonies and Customs >

r r

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Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

r [Next: Legends](#) • r [Contents](#) • r [Previous: Life](#)

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Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

r r r r

r r

r CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMS

r r

r The more than thirty individual villages and camp sites on the floor of Yosemite Valley were sharply divided into two classes in respect to the river, in accordance with the Miwok principle of totematic division; i.e., the Indians classified everything in nature as belonging to either the land or to the water side. The Grizzly Bear was the head of the land side; the Coyote the head of the water side. This division included not only the Indians themselves, but all other objects including even the stars. It was the custom of the man to always marry into the opposite division. In this manner in-breeding was kept to a minimum. Thus members of the Grizzly Bear moiety were assigned to the north side of the Merced River, and members of the Coyote moiety to the south side.

r r

r As stated previously, it is believed by some authorities that the name "Yosemite" which means "full-grown Grizzly Bear," later came to be applied by outsiders to all of Tenaya's people rather than to only the Grizzly Bear moiety on the north side of the river.

r r r r r

r MEDICINE MEN

r r

r When an Indian fell ill, a shaman or medicine man was called to treat him. This Indian doctor, who was believed to have the powers of a clairvoyant, would dance, sing, and manipulate the patient. He then proceeded to suck the part of the body afflicted with pain, as a means of removing some religious taboo, or to dislodge a foreign object that had been placed there by a witch or wizard. Upon completion of this treatment, he would show the patient and relatives concerned a few hairs, a dead insect, or other foreign object to prove that he had been successful in removing the trouble. The psychological effect upon the patient when shown that the cause of his agony had been removed was most effective, and the relatives were satisfied that in a few days the patient would be well.

r r

r The Indians had great faith in their medicine man, but if he was unlucky enough to lose several patients, it behooved him to be concerned about his own life. The relatives of the deceased patients laid in wait for him in ambush, and unless he was able to escape to another locality, he was eventually murdered.

r r

r DEATH AND MOURNINGr

r r

r Cremation among the Indians was a common practice to liberate their spirit of the dead. To burn all of their belongings of the deceased at their cremation, excepting a few that were reserved for the annual mourning anniversary, was the usual procedure. All the mourners while dancing or crying around the cremation fire, threw some gift into the flames as their offering of respect. When the body was consumed, the remains were gathered up and buried.

r r

r A widow cut her hair short with an obsidian knife, or burned it off. As a further symbol of grief, she smeared her face over with a weird ointment made of pitch and some of the ashes of her departed husband. Other near female relatives were also expected to do so and anoint themselves. This hideous mixture would sometimes cling to the face and clothing for six months, or even throughout the whole year of mourning, since it was disrespectful to wash it off.

r r

r In the late summer or autumn of each year, the Indians remembered their dead with a mourning ceremony. For several nights there were weeping, wailing, and singing around a campfire. At dawn on the last day of the ceremony, the mourners threw food into the fire for their spirits of their dead. Those who had lost loved ones during the year, fed the fire with the remainder of their deceased's belongings, which had been saved from the cremation ceremony. As a symbol that the period of grief and its restrictions were over, the mourners cleansed themselves with water.

r r

r CEREMONY OF THANKSGIVINGr

r r

r The Indians also celebrated their own Thanksgiving—an acorn celebration as a symbol of gratitude to the “Coyote Man,” an important deity of Miwok Indian mythology. r r r r



Lee-mee (Chris Brown) wearing ceremonial dance costume

For three days and three nights the dancers performed the acorn dance and fasted. On the fourth day selected squaws prepared the acorn mush and other food for a feast. When the food was ready, all those expecting to participate in the feast joined in a dance, moving slowly around the fire in a large circle, chanting and shaking their rattles vigorously over the flames. To terminate the dance, one of the squaws spread acorn gruel in four successive circles around the edge of the fire so that it might burn and be carried into the air in four directions to be eaten by the spirits of the dead. No one dared eat of the new acorn crop until the spirits had thus been satisfied. After the feast, dancing continued far into the night—a fire dancer as a tribute to the fire that heated the cooking stones; a stone dancer in appreciation of the stones that when heated cooked the acorn mush, and a basket dance to the basket which held the mush.

YOSEMITE INDIANS TODAY

So far as is known, there are no full-blood Yosemite Indians alive today. The Indians living in Yosemite are of mixed blood through inter-marriage with other tribes and races, mainly white and Mexican. Their mode of living is very similar to that of the whites in that they drive their own automobiles, have washing machines, radios, sewing machines, and most of the modern comforts and conveniences of civilized life.



r r Indian acorn-food r

r r r r

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r [Next: Legends](#) • r [Contents](#) • r [Previous: Lifer](#)

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r http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians/customs.html r

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r [Yosemite](#) > [Library](#) > r [Yosemite Indians](#) > r Indian Legends > r

r r

r

r r r

r [Next: References](#) • r [Contents](#) • r [Previous: Ceremonies & Customs](#) r

r r r

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

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r r r

INDIAN LEGENDS

r r r

r Living close to nature as did the Indians, in constant close relationship with animals, plants, and other natural features, it is easy to understand how their religion, their superstitions, and their legends should center around their great cliffs and spires, the waterfalls, animals, and even the winds which they knew in their daily existence. As is characteristic of primitive peoples without a written alphabet, the legends of the Yosemite Indians were handed down by word of mouth, from generation to generation. It is reasonable to assume that elaborations developed with the passing of time. The three legends which follow tell of the origin of several of the most beautiful features of Yosemite Valley—El Capitan, the massive cliff at the lower end of the valley; the Lost Arrow, a spectacular shaft of rock jutting out from the cliff just to the east of Yosemite Falls; and Half Dome, Royal Arches, Washington Column, and Basket Dome at the upper end of the valley.

r r



r r

r LEGEND OF EL CAPITANr

r r

r Long, long ago there lived in the Valley of Ah-wahnee two cub bears. One hot day they slipped away from their mother and went down to the river for a swim. When they came out of the water, they were so tired that they lay down to rest on an immense, flat boulder, and fell fast asleep. While they slumbered, the huge rock began to slowly rise until at length it towered into the blue sky far above the tree-tops, and woolly, white clouds fell over the sleeping cubs like fleecy coverlets.

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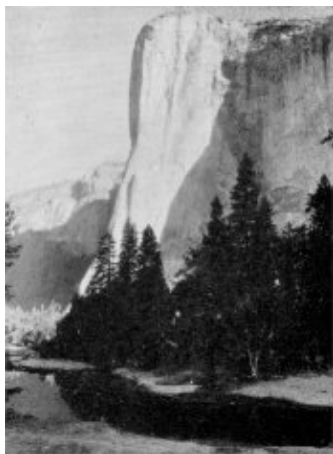
r In vain did the distracted mother bear search for her two cubs, and although she questioned every animal in the valley, not one could give her a clue as to what had happened to them. At last To-tah-kan, the sharp-eyed crane, discovered them still asleep on top of the great rock. Then the mother bear became more anxious than ever lest her cubs should awaken, and feel so frightened upon finding themselves up near the blue sky that they would jump off and be killed.

r r

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r All the other animals in the valley felt very sorry for the mother bear and promised to help rescue the cubs. Gathering together, each attempted

r r r r r r



r r El Capitan r

r r r r r r

r to climb the great rock, but it was as slippery as glass, and their feet would not hold. Little field mouse climbed two feet, and became frightened; the rat fell backward and lost hold after three feet; the fox went a bit higher, but it was no use. The larger animals could not do much better, although they tried so hard that to this day one can see the dark scratches of their feet at the base of the rock

r r

r When all had given up, along came the tiny measuring worm.

r r

r "I believe I can climb up to the top and bring down the cubs," it courageously announced.

r r

r Of course, the other animals all sneered and made sport of this boast from one of the most insignificant of their number, but the measuring worm paid no attention to their insults and immediately began the perilous ascent. "Too-tack, too-tack, To-to-kon-oo-lah," it chanted, and surely enough its feet clung even to that polished surface. Higher and higher it went, until the animals below began to realize that the measuring worm was not so stupid after all. Midway the great rock flared, and the measuring worm clung at a dizzy height only by its front feet.

r r

r Continuing to chant its song, the frightened measuring worm managed to twist its body and to take a zig-zag course, which made the climb a great deal longer, but much safer. Weak and exhausted it at last reached the top of the great rock, and in some miraculous manner awakened the cubs and guided them safely down to their grief-stricken mother. Of course, the whole animal kingdom was delighted and overjoyed with the return of the cubs and the praises of the measuring worm were loudly sung by all. As a token of honor the animals decided to name the great rock "To-to-kon-lah" in honor of the measuring

r LEGEND OF EL CAPITAN

worm.r

r r



r r

r LEGEND OF THE LOST ARROWr

r r r

r [Editor's note:r this "legend" "is almost certainly fictitious"r according to NPS Ethnologist Craig D. Bates.r It was first printed in Hutchingsr *In the Heart of the Sierras* (1888)r —dea.]r

r r

r Tee-hee-neh, a beautiful Indianr maid, was betrothed to Kos-soo-kah,r a young brave, who was fearlessr and bold with his spear and bow.r At dawn on the day before theirr marriage, Kos-soo-kah made readyr with other strong braver to go forthr into the mountains to hunt bear,r deer, rabbit and grouse for the weddingr feast. Before leaving, he slippedr away from the other hunters to meetr Tee-hee-neh, his bride, who wasr waiting nearby.r

r r

r As they parted Kos-soo-kah said,r "We go to hunt now, but at the endr of the day, I will shoot an arrowr from the cliff between Cho-look, ther high fall, and Le-hamite, the Canyonr of the Arrow-wood, and by the numberr of feathers you will know whatr kill has been made."r

r r

r Tee-hee-neh happily assisted ther Indian women in preparing acornr bread and other food for the marriager celebration until the appointedr time when she was to wait at ther foot of the high fall for the arrowr message from Kos-soo-kah. Hourr after hour she waited until graduallyr the joy she had known was replacedr r r r r



r r *Lost Arrow* r

r r r with fear and concern for her lover'sr safety. At last, unable to bear herr anguish longer, she decided to

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climber the rugged and difficult trail that led to the top of the cliff.

"Kos-soo-kah," she called again and again, but the only answer was the faint echoing of her own voice. Breathless, frightened, and her heart heavy with a dreaded fear that Kossoo-kahr had met with harm, she at last reached the summit. Seeing footprints in the direction of the cliff, she moved toward the edge in bewildered alarm, not for her own safety, but for what she might behold. As she leaned over and looked down, she gave a piercing cry of despair, for in the starlight she beheld the still form of her loved one lying on a ledge below with his spent bow in his hand. She now remembered that at the hour of sunset while she stood waiting for Kos-soo-kah's arrow to fall she had heard the distant, thunder-like rumble of a rock slide. Her despair was almost overwhelming as she realized that while her faithful Kos-soo-kah stood on the edge of the cliff to draw his bow, he had been caught in the unexpected slide of earth that had hurled him to his doom.

r r

A faint hope stirred in Tee-hee-neh's heart. Perhaps Kos-soo-kahr was still alive. To summon assistance as quickly as possible, she frantically collected cones and dead limbs to light a signal fire for urgent help. Although numbed with grief, she kept the fire bright and high for several hours before men from the valley and other braves who were returning from the hunt in the high country were able to reach her. Quickly, the braves made a pole from lengths of tamarack and fastened them securely with thongs of hide from the deer that had been killed for the marriage feast. Although exhausted, Tee-hee-neh was the first to descend to the ledge where Kos-soo-kah lay. As she knelt beside him and listened for breath, her own heartbeat almost stopped, for the brave Kos-soo-kah was cold and still. Without a murmur, she motioned for the men above to lift her.

r r

Tee-hee-neh's wedding day had dawned when the braves were at last successful in raising the body of Kos-soo-kah to the top of the cliff where the others waited. As his lifeless form was placed gently on the ground, Tee-hee-neh knelt beside him, and with tears streaming down her cheeks she repeated his name over and over, as though by doing so she could call him back to her. Suddenly she fell forward on her dear one's breast, and her spirit too departed to join that of Kos-soo-kahr in the land that knows no partings.

r r

With great wailing and mourning the two lovers and all their belongings were placed for cremation on the funeral pyre in accordance with the burial custom. In Kos-soo-kah's hand was the fatal bow, but the arrow had been lost forever. In its stead the spirits lodged a pointed column of rock in the cliff between Cho-look, the high fall, and Le-ham-ite, the canyon of Arrow-wood in memory of the faithful Kos-soo-kahr who met his death in keeping a promise to Tee-hee-neh. Ever since this rock has been known as Hum-moo, the Lost Arrow.

r r

r r

r LEGEND OF HALF DOME

r r

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r Many, many generations ago,r long before the Gods had completedr the fashioning of the magnificentr cliffs in the Valley of Ahwahnee,r there dwelt far off in arid plains anr Indian woman by the name of Tis-sa-ackr and her husband Nangas.r Learning from other Indians of ther beautiful and fertile Valley of Ahwahnee,r they decided to go therer and make it their dwelling place.r Their journey led them over ruggedr terrain, steep canyons and throughr dense forests. Tis-sa-ack carried onr her back a heavy burden basketr containing acorns and other articles,r as well as a papoose carrier, orr hickey. Nangas followed at a shortr distance carrying his bow, arrowr and a rude staff.r

r r

r After days and days of wearyr traveling, they at last entered ther beautiful Valley of Ahwahnee. Nangasr being tired, hungry and veryr thirsty, lost his temper, and withoutr good reason he struck Tis-sa-ack ar sharp blow across the shoulders withr his staff. Since it was contrary tor custom for an Indian to mistreat hisr wife, Tis-sa-ack became terrified andr ran eastward from her husband.r

r r

r As she went, the Gods lookingr down, caused the path she took tor become the course of a stream, andr the acorns that dropped from herr burden basket to spring up into stalwartr oaks. At length Tis-sa-ackr reached Mirror Lake, and so greatr was her thirst that she drank everyr drop of the cool, quiet water.r

r r

r When Nangas caught up withr Tis-sa-ack, and saw that there was nor water left to quench his thirst, hisr anger knew no bounds, and againr he struck her with his staff. Tis-sa-ackr again ran from him, but he pursuedr her and continued to beat her.r Looking down on them, the Godsr were sorely displeased.r

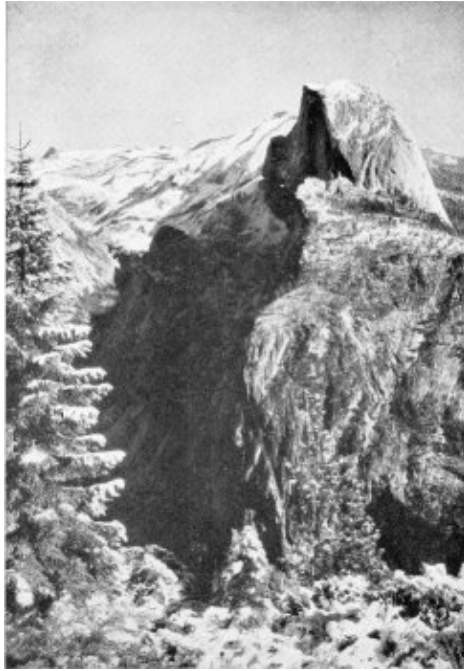
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r “Tis-sa-ack and Nangas haver broken the spell of peace,” theyr said. “Let us transform them intor cliffs of granite that face each other,r so that they will be forever parted.”r

r r r r r

r Tis-sa-ack as she fled tossed asider the heavy burden basket to enabler her to run faster, and landing upsider down it immediately becamer Basket Dome; next she threw the papooser r carrier, or hickey, to the northr wall of the canyon, and it becamer Royal Arches. Nangas was thenr changed into Washington Column,r and Tis-sa-ack into Half Dome. Ther dark streaks that still mar the facer of this stupendous cliff represent ther tears that Tis-sa-ack shed as she ranr from her angry husband.r

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r r *Half Dome from Glacier Point* r r

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r r

r [Next: References](#) • r [Contents](#) • r [Previous: Ceremonies & Customs](#)

r r r

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r r

r

r r

r http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians/legends.html

r r r r r r r r r r r r r r r r

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r r

r [Yosemite](#) > [Library](#) > r [Yosemite Indians](#) > r Selected References > r

r r

r

r r r

r [Contents](#) • r [Previous: Legends](#)

r r r

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

r r r r r

r r r

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r For those who wish to pursue this subject farther the following selected references, most of which contain additional bibliographical material, will be found to be of considerable assistance.

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r Contents r • r Previous: Legends r

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r http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians/references.html r

r r r r r r r

r r r r r r r

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r r

r Yosemite > Library >r Yosemite Indians >r

r r r

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r r r

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***Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941)* by Elizabeth H. Godfrey**

r r r

- r
- [History](#)

- r
- [Life](#)

- r
- [Ceremonies and Customs](#)

- r
- [Indian Legends](#)

- r
- [Selected References](#)

rr r r

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About the Author

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r Elizabeth H. “Babs” Godfrey, r a student and writer of Yosemite history. r Her husband was William C. Godfrey. r He wrote and illustratedr “Among the Big Trees in the Mariposa Grove”r forr *Yosemite Nature Notes*, in 1929. r He transferred to Crater Lake National Park, where her died of exposure Nov. 1929. r She moved back to Yosemite after his death andr worked as secretary for the Yosemite Museum. r Elizabeth Godfrey collected historical material on Yosemite for the Museumr and wrote articles forr *Yosemite Nature Notes*. r She was transferred to ther National Park Service Region Four Headquarters (San Francisco) in 1945. r She later married a Mr. Baker. r

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r r Library of Congress call number E99.Y8 G6 1941. r Originally Published inr *Yosemite Nature Notes*, 20(7) (1941), pp. 49-72. r Subsequent revisions in 1951 and 1973 were made by othersr (not included here). r

Yosemite Indians; Yesterday and Today (1941) by Elizabeth H. Godfrey

Revisions in printings before 1951 were trivial (removal of foreword, mention of Ta-bu-ce death). The 1951 and later editions were major rewrites.

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