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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

## Y O S E M I T E N A T U R E N O T E S

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Yosemite Nature Guide Service

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This is one of a series of bulletins issued from time to time for the information of those interested in the natural history and scientific features of the park and the educational opportunities the park affords for the study of these subjects.

Utilization of these bulletins by those receiving them to the end that the information contained therein might be as extensively distributed as possible will be appreciated.

W. B. Lewis, Superintendent

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### YOSEMITE MUSEUM CORNERSTONE LAID

The new home of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service is under construction.

On November 16, 1924 the Yosemite Village was formally dedicated and the Yosemite Museum cornerstone laid. Ninety invited guests of the National Park Service and the American Association of Museums were present to witness the advent of the new Yosemite. Director Stephen T. Mather and Superintendent W. B. Lewis in dedication addresses opened the ceremonies before the completed Administration Building. The crowd then moved to the nearby site of the museum, where Director Mather introduced Chief Naturalist Ansel F. Hall, who with fitting speech laid the cornerstone.

Mr. Hall, who is executive agent for the American Association of Museums, welcomed the guests in the name of the association and expressed his regret that the honor of laying the cornerstone of the first national park museum could not fall upon one of the directors of the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial, since it was they who made possible the rapid development of educational work in the parks. He told how the Yosemite Museum had its beginning several years ago and how it was developed through the enthusiastic cooperation of visitors. It should be said that Mr. Hall himself was the guiding influence which fostered this public interest.

In 1923 it became apparent that the collections of the museum were much too valuable to risk longer in the old wooden structure in which they are displayed. Furthermore, the educational work of the Yosemite Nature Guide Service reached such proportions that added facilities were essential to adequate service to the public. A large fireproof structure was necessary.

Aid from the Government was out of the question, so tentative plans for such a permanent structure were drafted, and with these as a basis a campaign for funds was launched. Substantial donations were received from Mr. and Mrs. Harry French Knight, Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Oviatt, Mr. Hal. Everts, the Yosemite National Park Company, and others. Then came the recognition from the American Association of Museums. Mr. Chauncey J. Hamlin, president of the Association, brought the urgent need for national parks museums before the National Recreation Conference, the National Park Service, and the Board of Trustees of the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial. This last named body of men saw fit to grant \$75,000 for the purpose of constructing the Yosemite Museum to be erected under the direction of the American Association of Museums. To this generosity the National Park Service and the thousands of visitors who come in ever increasing numbers to marvel at and enjoy Yosemite's wonders are indebted. The true message of the Great National Park may now be delivered to all of the hundreds of thousands who will resort to the natural wonder of the Sierras.

The new museum should be ready for occupancy May 1, 1925.

#### RARE BAT TAKEN IN YOSEMITE

On November 12 Mr. William Reymann found a huge bat hanging from a low limb of a tree near the Merced River in Yosemite Valley. The animal was stiff in death and had apparently succumbed to the cold. At the Yosemite Museum the specimen was identified as the California Mastiff Bat, *Eumops californicus*.

The species was first found at Alhambra, Los Angeles County, California and described by C. Hart Merriam in 1890. Apparently, it is a rare form, found in California in winter only. To the writer's knowledge no record of this bat's occurrence at a point farther north than Yosemite has been made. A flying mammal with a twenty-inch spread of wings is a remarkable creature, and only its rarity can account for its being noted so seldom.

#### A UNIQUE FOOD FROM MONO

While we consider the attractions and commodities that induced the Yosemite Indians and the Monos to open avenues of trade between their opposed territories so naturally separated by the great ridge of the Sierras, we must not slight the entomological delicacy Ka-cha-vee. This added article of ancient commerce came from the saline waters of Mono Lake in the form of a peculiar insect pupa. A species of fly breeds in Mono Lake in great numbers. Any late summer visitor at the lake must be impressed with the great dark ridges along the shore, made up of millions of bodies of the undeveloped insects, which have hatched in the lake and been cast in windrows upon the sands by the waves.

Early explorers in the Great Basin country noticed the abundance of the unusual creatures in the several salty lakes east of the Sierras and, in some instances, chronicled their observations in their journals. General J. C. Fremont

in his "Report of the Second Exploring Expedition to Oregon and Northern California", 1843-1844, remarks on the abundance of the insects and the shore birds that congregate to feed upon them. He gives this further information:

"When traveling - - - in company with Mr. Joseph Walker, an old hunter, I was informed by him that, wandering with a party of men in a mountain country east of the great California range, he surprised a party of several Indian families encamped near a small salt lake, who abandoned their lodges at his approach, leaving everything behind them. Being in a starving condition, they were delighted to find in the abandoned lodges a number of skin bags containing a quantity of what appeared to be fish, dried and pounded. On this they made a hearty supper and were gathering around an abundant breakfast the next morning when Mr. Walker discovered that it was with these, or a similar worm, that the bags had been filled. The stomachs of the stout trappers were not proof against their prejudices, and the repulsive food was suddenly rejected."

Galen Clark, who began studying the local Indians in 1857, knew of the Indian trade that was carried on across the summit of the Sierra and records Kacha'-vee, Mono Lake "Worms", as one of the articles of trade. According to Clark the insects formed an important dish at every feast.

In 1862 Samuel Clemens disengaged himself from his Nevada mining enterprises long enough to journey to the weird Mono Lake region to view for himself the uncanny phenomena described by the Comstockers who had visited the place. In "Roughing It" he sketches our subject in a style nearly as accurate as it is humorous:

"There are no fish in Mono Lake, no frogs, no snakes, no polliwogs, nothing, in fact, that goes to make life desirable. Millions of wild ducks and sea gulls swim about the surface, but no living thing exists under the surface except a white, feathery sort of worm one-half inch long, which looks like a bit of white thread frayed at the sides. If you dip up a gallon of water, you will get about 15,000 of these. They give to the water a sort of grayish white appearance. Then, there is a fly which looks something like our house fly. These settle on the beach to eat the worms that wash ashore, and any time you can see there a billion of flies an inch deep and six feet wide, and this belt extends clear around the lake, a belt of flies one hundred miles long. If you throw a stone among them, they swarm up so thick that they look dense like a cloud. You can hold them under water as long as you please. They do not mind it; they are only proud of it. When you let them go they pop up to the surface as dry as a patent office report and walk off as unconcernedly as if they had been educated especially with a view to afford an instructive entertainment to man in that particular way. Providence leaves nothing to go by chance. All things have their uses and their part and proper place in Nature's economy. The ducks eat the flies, the flies eat the worms, and Indians eat all three."

The old files of newspapers of that once important city Bodie, California can be depended upon to yield accounts of any early day activities of Mono Lake. The August 7, 1880 number of the Bodie Daily Free Press contains an account of Piute squaws harvesting "grubs" at Mono. The wave washed pupae were scooped into large piles with baskets, and the smelly mass allowed to dry thoroughly. When dry, they were rubbed, which procedure removed heads, tails, legs,

etc. After further drying, they were packed for winter use. White miners of the Mono region sometimes made use of them, grinding the tiny bolies with flour and frying the cakes so formed.

Mrs. Fannie Crippen Jones, once of the famed Barnard's Yosemite Hotel, described to the writer a trip she made in 1882 with a lady guest at Barnard's Hotel to Mono for the express purpose of witnessing the Mono Indians harvesting this strange crop of the lake. The journey was made in the saddle via the old Mono Trail. At the lake numerous Mono squaws were busy with basket scoops, transferring the white foam of the shoreline and its contained "larvae" to platforms built of strips of bark. On these platforms drying was accomplished, preliminary to further preparation.

At the present time Yosemite visitors hear of this strange food through nature guides and the Yosemite Museum. The Yosemite tribe no longer exists to import the finished article and but few of the Mono Indians now prepare it. Like many other primitive foods, Ka-cha'-vee is replaced by canned goods of the white man, and even the automobile road to Mono does not make accessible the sight of Indians gathering "worms".

#### BOTANIC NOTES

The month started off as though a heavy winter had begun. Rain and snow fell on the fourth and fifth and again on the eighth and ninth. Yosemite Falls sprang into life once more, and the Merced River rose a foot. After it all cleared away, there were many golden leaves in the oaks and cottonwoods, and many days of fair weather. It seemed that there might remain a show of autumn color at the end of the month. Then one of those rare winds from the north swept down Tenaya Canyon, and the golden leaves along with the green leaves of the Alder were shaken to the earth. Even the pines, and on the higher levels the firs, covered the forest floor with crisp brown needles. At the end of the month all deciduous trees were leafless save for a few in sheltered situations; to these a few leaves still clung.

Encouraged by the rain and warm sunshine sweet wild grasses spread a fairy carpet under the oaks on the north side of the Valley. There, too, millions of annuals have heard the false whisper of spring and are putting forth second leaves.

Annuals and perennials on the great walls surrounding the Valley are showing fresh green leaves.

To the leafless Alder boughs delicate catkins are hung. Birds, bear, and deer still gather from the earth the remains of the bountiful acorn harvest. The pine trees have opened their cones, and the winged seed have found the earth where Nuthatches, Chickadees, Purple Finches, and Douglas Squirrels search for them.-- Enid Michael.



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Dan Anderson