Protohistoric and Historic Native American Sites Within the North Fork Eel River Watershed, Trinity County, California

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Thomas S. Keter
SolarArch
Three Rivers, California
www.solararch.org

Introduction

This overview of three Native American sites dating from the historic era is one in a series of studies conducted by the author over the last three decades on the environmental and cultural history of the North Fork Eel River watershed located in southwestern Trinity County, California. The historical portion of this research focuses on the period from the mid-1850s to the mid-1940s. The history of this region has been divided into five distinct periods; although these periods overlap somewhat, each era had an overriding theme and dominant land-use activity.

1854-1864	Conflict and Historic Settlement Period
1865-1904	Ranching Period
1905-1945	Homesteading Period
1946-1970	Post World War II Period—Development and Resource Extraction
1971-	Modern Era (back-to-the-land movement)

In addition to historical overviews, a "Base Map" of the North Fork Eel River watershed was created using DCAD software. Essentially, a USGS 7.5' map encompassing the entire North Fork basin (actually six USGS maps combined into one jpg image file) was used to plot as individual layers: cultural features, historic trails, Indian allotments, and tracts of public domain and national forest lands patented under the 1862 Homestead Act and the 1906 National Forest Homestead Act.

Discussed in this paper are three very different Native American sites dating from about the beginning of the contact period in the 1850s or early 1860s to about the late 1800s or possibly the first decade of the 20th century.

F31a	Indian Allotment (1900 or earlier)
F31b	Possible Refuge Site (1860s)
F31c	Dancehouse feature (c1895-1900)

The locations of sites F31a and F31c are not provided due to their cultural sensitivity. Authorized individuals should refer to the original site records for their locations. All of the maps and material referenced in this paper can be found in the archives of the Trinity County Historical Society in Weaverville (Keter 2017). The References Cited section has links to pdf files at www.solararch.org for a number of environmental studies and ethnographic and historical overviews of the North Fork Eel River watershed.

Many thanks to brothers Tracy and John Elgin of the Lassic Band of Wylacki-Wintoon, Family Group Inc. for their comments and insights, as well as sharing their extensive knowledge with me on the history of the North Fork Eel River region. They are descendants of James St. Claire Willburn who settled in Hettenshaw Valley in 1856; his Wintoon wife Mary was from the head of Cottonwood Creek near what is today the Harrison Gulch Ranger Station and is buried in the S.R.F.M. (Solid Rock Foundation Ministry) Cemetery in Hettenshaw. John Elgin is the Tribal Archaeologist and Tribal Historian for the Lassic Band of Wylacki-Wintoon Family Group, Inc.

Feature F31a: Rock Alignment/Foundation and Associated Artifacts

Feature F31a is located on or possibly adjacent to (given problems with the original Government Land Office surveys in this area; see Keter 2017: Appendix 2) the 160 acre Tusen Homestead entry claim (Keter 2017: HF14). The site (FS# 05-10-54-201) was recorded in September of 1981, by Mary L. Williams Maniery and James G. Maniery.

The site has two distinct loci. Locus one is labeled as "Feature A" on the site map and was recorded as a "collapsed structure" with a "rock alignment, boards, and historic and prehistoric artifacts"--this is the location of Feature F31a. Feature B--located about 50 meters to the north of Feature A--was recorded as: "...a moderate lithic scatter. Artifacts included two small grey chert projectile point fragments, one green chert pressure flake, one chert tool, and chert flakes of red, green, and gray."

The site record noted the following artifacts were associated with Feature A.

> Historic artifacts consist of three white ceramic fragments 1/8 inch thick, undecorated plainware, one 9" cast-iron pan buried upside-down, one square nail three inches in length...four bottle fragments, boards, four inch diameter hole-in-the-top can and solder seamed cans, a stirrup with brass rivets, a pail 10½inches in diameter and eleven inches in length with solder seams, a large lard bucket with solder seams...The area around Feature A contained groundstone...Included...were one mano, two metates, one mortar, and two groundstone fragments...one metate was found on top of a mortar fragment.

In the fall of 1989 the author, along with Six Rivers National Forest Mad River Ranger District archaeologist Catherine Young, removed all of the duff and leaf litter from the surface of the site. It was then photographed and mapped. There should be numerous photographs (mostly B&W 35mm prints and negatives) with the site record. The section below is based on the information contained in the 1990 report.

The site was situated near a well-defined east/west trending ridge. A spring was not evident in the vicinity of the site, but given the drying up of many of the springs (due to the loss of oak woodlands and increase in the extent of Doulas fir forests) over the last 150 years this is no longer unusual on many of the abandoned homesteads in the North Fork Region (Keter 1995, Keter 2017; Appendix 6: #I448). Trail HTNF-20 (Keter 2017: A1: Base Map 4) generally follows the ridgeline and likely dates to the prehistoric era (Keter 1990, 2017). This supposition is supported by site Feature B—the flake scatter is located just to the north of the ridgeline. The ridgeline forms the divide between Gilman Creek to the north and Dutchman Creek to the south. In the early 20th century this area would have been oak woodland with an understory of grasses and forbs along with a few scattered mature incense cedar, ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir (those that survived frequent fires). There is a ponderosa pine stump approximately 20 meters northwest of the site with evidence that it was cut by an axe.

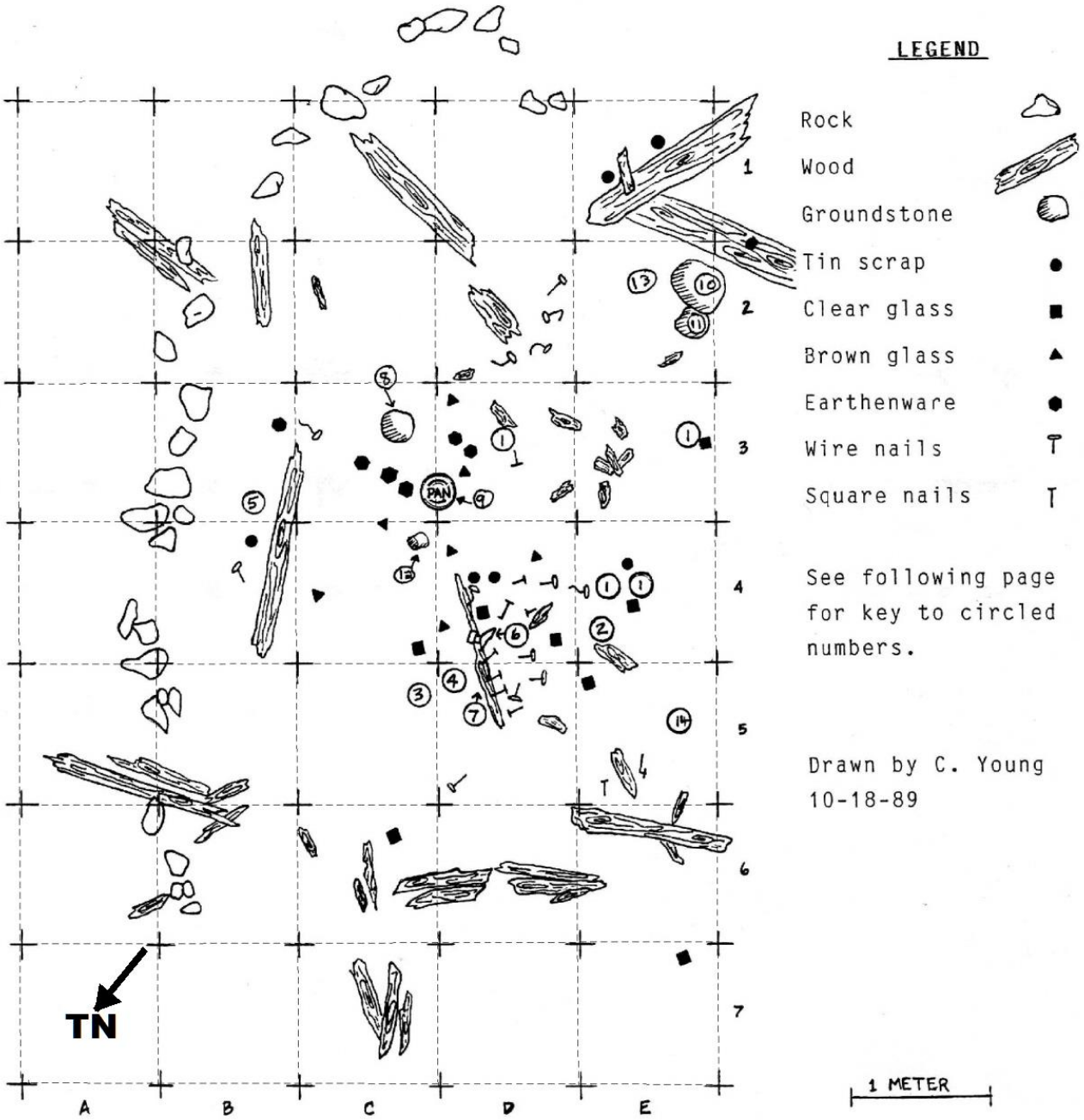
The mature Douglas firs growing on the terrace provided the seeds for the young trees that today are invading the area where the site is located (Image F31a: 04). In the 1980s many of these trees were saplings (under 6' to 10' in height) or pole-size trees (6"-12" in diameter and less than 20' to 30' in height). It is clear that these trees had invaded the site in the last 10 to 30 years. There was no evidence of a wildfire since the place was abandoned as none of the surrounding mature Douglas firs and pines had fire scars.

The remains (possibly of ponderosa pine) of some of the boards from the original structure were evident. The rock alignment (structure foundation) is somewhat irregular along the southern end, but it is roughly "L" or "J" shaped (F31a: Site Feature Sketch Map 1). There are a number of cut and wire nails within the feature and they are the same sizes as those from F31c—the large pit feature discussed below. The nails at both locations may have been taken from abandoned buildings on the Thomas Raglin and Susan Hoaglin homestead (Keter 2017: B01). It is worth noting that the location of the nails is not random, but rather, they were nearly all located on an axis parallel to the north/south rock alignment and about 2-3 meters away.

A Peters 38-55 cartridge casing was located within the feature. This cartridge was introduced in 1884 by the Ballard Gun Company. Winchester was the last to drop that caliber in 1940 (personal communication Rollin Kehlet, Clearwater National Forest). From the location and context from which the casing was recovered it appears to have been directly associated with the site and belonged to the inhabitants.

Other artifacts of note were a frying pan, sardine can, square meat can, hole-in-cap cans, and glass fragments from what appears to be a liquor bottle (see F31a Table 1). Groundstone artifacts were located both within the feature and in the area directly to the west included; one mano, two metates, one mortar, and two groundstone fragments (see F31a: Image 5).

Although the remains of only a few scraps of boards from the structure were visible, as was noted on the site record, many of them showed evidence of having been burned. Prior to the passage of CRM legislation in the 1970s, the Forest Service in this region implemented a policy to burn down older cabins on national forest lands (they were considered to be trespassing). It is quite possible, therefore, that the cabin was burned by the Forest Service—possibly sometime in the 1950s or 1960s.



F31a: Site Feature Sketch Map 1
In 1989 the duff layer was removed from the surface of the site.
It was then divided into 1 meter squares and inventoried.

F31a: Table 1

Key to circled numbers on F31a: Site Feature Sketch Map 1

1 Hole in Cap cans. Some of these have soldered ends.
2. Possible square meat can.
3. Possible sardine can.
4. Center-fired rifle shell; Peters .38-55 caliber.
5. Intact bottle of amethyst-colored glass.
6. Lip and neck of brown glass bottle.
7. Board with nails in it.
8. Circular metate 20.2 cm by 21.5 cm.
9. Nine inch circular cast iron pan (no handle).
10. Circular metate 28.0 cm in diameter, 7.6 cm in thickness with scratch marks on one surface.
11. Metate/mortar fragment 21.5 cm by 17.3 cm and 6.35 cm thick found partially under artifact #10.
12. Groundstone fragment 12.7 square.
13. Hole in cap can 4" in diameter and 4 3/4" in length next to artifacts #10 and #11.
14. Square tin can (possibly lard) with a 10" square base, 14" tall. All seams are soldered and the can has a handle (no wooden grip) attached.

(Not showing on diagram-- Mano fragment 9.5 cm long and 6.8 cm wide. The mano is broken at one end and has one ground surface.)

General notes on artifacts

--All the brown glass fragments appear to be from one bottle; an embossed whiskey flask from a San Francisco distillery.
--All clear glass fragments appear to be from a single bottle; no embossing is evident.
--All earthenware fragments appear to be from one dish, or from several with a plain white design.
--Wire nails are more common than square nails (6:5 ratio). Wire nails are more often bent than the square ones.
--Boards are hand hewn, probably ponderosa pine.

Conclusions

It appears this site was occupied by at least one individual or, more likely, a man and woman, most likely a Wailaki (or part-Wailaki) husband and wife, around the end of the 19th century or the first few years of the 20th century. This can be surmised from information contained in the Tusen homestead entry record, the kinds of prehistoric artifacts (groundstone tools) associated with the site, and from interviews with consultants.

The following remarks were included in the 1909 homestead entry inspection report for the Tusen homestead entry filed under the National Forest Homestead Act of June 11, 1906 (Keter 2017: HF14, file #H-54-106). The Trinity National Forest Mad River Ranger District ranger inspected the homestead in 1909. He noted in his report that: "the only improvement on the claim are an old Indian hut, probably 10' x 12' made of split boards and occupied by an Indian prior to 1904." The dimensions of the "Indian hut" described by the ranger in his report are roughly the same as those of the rock alignment feature on the site.

In 1991 consultants living in Hettenshaw Valley provided me with the following information concerning this site (Keter 2017: Appendix 6: I#448). Lee Stapp, 74 years old at that time, was raised in Hettenshaw Valley. He indicated that the remains were probably located on the "Dobey Indian Allotment." His wife, Irene Willburn Stapp, was the great granddaughter of James S. Willburn. As noted earlier, Willburn was the first homesteader to settle in Hettenshaw Valley in about 1856. It appears that Irene Stapp was somehow related to Nancy Dobey through her great grandmother Mary Willburn.

Lee Stapp and Irene Stapp indicated that (summarized from the original interview in 1991):

> Nancy Dobey lived there at one time. Irene is an apparent heir and somehow is related to her [the connection is via her great grandmother]. The subject of this Indian Allotment came up in the 1960's in relation to a timber company [Twin Harbors] trying to buy land in the area. It appears that under Indian Allotments--unlike homesteads--the title can revert to the Government in the case of no heirs. In the 1950's the Government investigated a number of Indian Allotments in the area and those with no heirs reverted back to the government.
>
> When Irene was a child [living in Coveleo in the 1930s] Nancy Dobey was very old perhaps 100.

No records concerning the Indian Allotment were located, but the tract would most likely have been applied for under the 1887 Dawes Act (General Allotment Act). The relationship between Nancy Dobey and Tusen who filed for the homestead entry claim is not clear (neither name shows up in the Long Ridge census records for 1900 and 1910). Given the lack of locational data, further research on the ownership of this tract of land will be necessary to confirm that this is the definitive location for the Dobey place.

John Elgin, the grandson of Lee and Irene Stapp, in a conversation regarding the disposition of this tract of land, said that Nancy Dobey was married, but that the couple had never had children (personal communication 2017). This supports the likelihood that sometime in the 1950s, with the couple having no direct heirs, the title to the land reverted to the government under a provision of the Dawes Act.

It appears that Dobey lived or at least spent part of her time in the Round Valley area. Ethnographer Frank Essene spent 11 weeks there during the summer of 1938 doing fieldwork as a student of Alfred Kroeber's. In 1942, Essene published his findings: *Cultural Element Distributions XXI: Round Valley*. He indicated in his introduction that "Nancy Dobey, age about 70, born at Island Mountain, was the principal [Wailaki] informant." Since Essene did not work in the North Fork Eel River region, it is likely that he interviewed her in Round Valley. This gives support to the possibility that after abandoning their Indian Allotment she moved to Round Valley sometime by the1930s. See Keter 2009 for more information on Essene's work in Round Valley.

F31a Images: T. Keter 1989

Image F31a: 01
View to NW--rock foundation alignment.

Image F31a: 02
Same view to SE--note young Douglas fir.

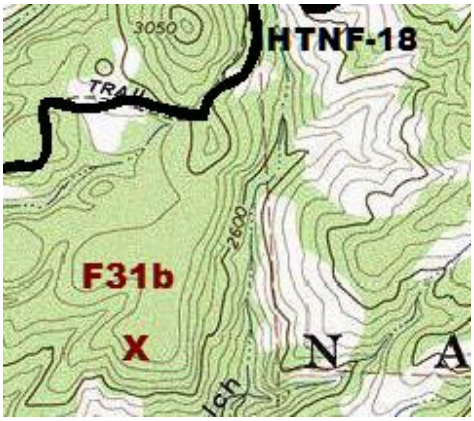
Image F31a: 03
Close up of rock alignment and boards.

Image F31a: 04
View east to the general area of structure.
Note the young Douglas fir invading the site and the old manzanita.

Image F31a: 05
Frying pan and groundstone artifact.

F31b: Pit Feature--Possible Refuge Site

This small compact site--consisting of a single pit feature and associated artifacts--was situated along the edge of a large flat. The exact location of this site is plotted on Map1 due to its destruction during a timber sale through the negligence of a timber operator and the U.S. Forest Service Timber Sale Contract Administrator. Despite my having flagged this site to protect it, it was adjacent to a timber sale unit and during logging operations the area was bladed, leveled, and then used as a landing. This took place in about 1990 during the Yellowjacket Timber Sale. The SHPO was notified at the time. [Not that anything happened to the contractor or the responsible Forest Service Timber Sale Contract Administrator. Refer to the Yellowjacket Timber Sale Cultural Resources Inventory Report and the site record for more information on this site and what happened.]



Map 1
Location of feature F31b and the Raglan trail (HTNF-18).
Base Map Layer 9: USGS 7.5' Shannon Butte 1967 (Keter 2017: A1)

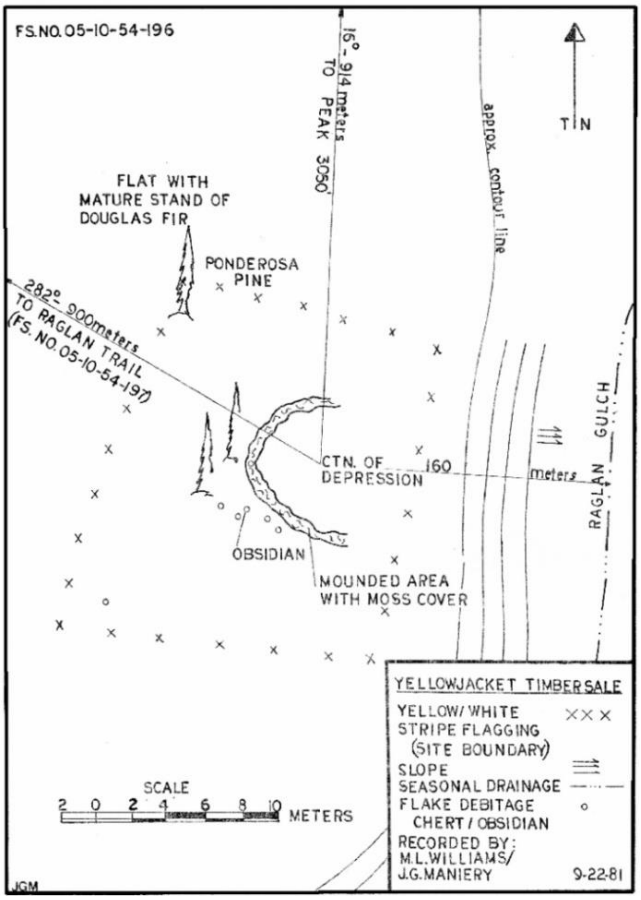
Prior to the early 1980s, when the first timber harvest units and logging roads were laid out, this entire region of the North Fork Eel River watershed had remained essentially roadless. In 1989, nearly all of the larger (merchantable) Douglas-firs on the approximately 12 acre flat where the site was located were within the boundary of a timber harvest clear-cut unit. At that time, the average age of the timber stand was about 110-130 years old (Forest Service silvicultural timber stand age data Yellowjacket Timber Sale). This was clearly an even-aged stand of Douglas-fir invading what was once oak woodland. There were also numerous younger pole-size Douglas fir (about 6" to 12" in diameter and 20' to 30' high) crowding out the few surviving oaks.

[For a discussion of the significant loss of oak woodlands in this region and a corresponding increase in the areal extent of Douglas fir since the beginning of the historic era due to the lack of anthropogenic wildfires see Keter 1995, and 1997a.]

Site Description

The site was recorded in 1981 by Mary L. Williams Maniery and James Gary Maniery (site record FS# 05-10-54-196). Associated with the pit feature, they also recorded six chert

flakes and one obsidian flake (F31b: Site Sketch Map 1). The flakes were all located adjacent to the southwest side of the pit feature. They noted that the pit feature measured 5.3 meters N/S by 6.2 meters E/W and was 68 centimeters deep, and that: "the southern slope is mounded and moss covered. It is possible that the soil was piled into the bank during excavation of the pit."



F31b: Site Sketch Map 1
The site map is provided since nothing remains of this site.

During the fall of 1989, prior to road construction and timber harvesting in this area, I hiked in to the site from Mad River Ridge on the Raglan Trail (trail HTNF-18; see Keter 1997c, 2017: Historic Trails) and conducted an intensive surface examination and inventory of the features and artifacts on the site. A copy of this report (Keter 1990a) is on file in the Heritage Resources office at Six Rivers National Forest. At that time, the pit feature was still visible and relatively well-defined. After all the duff was removed from the pit feature and the surrounding area, it was carefully inspected. Five of the chert flakes and the obsidian flake mentioned on the site record were noted in or just below the duff layer. In addition, a core was taken from a Douglas-fir growing along the edge of the pit. At the time it was cored the tree was about 110 years old.

Feature F31b was located in very rough deep-cut canyon country on the edge of an ancient alluvial terrace about 75 meters up a steep slope and 200 meters from the nearest water

source, Raglan Creek, a seasonal stream is a marginal water supply at best; although it appears some pools of water may remain as late as early August in some years (personal observation). This is a very isolated location over 400 meters south of the Raglan Trail that descends from Mad River Ridge to the North Fork Eel River. This trail, named after Thomas Raglin, is erroneously labeled "Raglan" on Forest Service and USGS maps (Keter 2017: B01). Given the local topography, this trail (or more accurately "trail way"; see Keter 2017: Historic Trails) probably dates to the prehistoric era and would have been a direct link between the North Fork Eel River and Mad River country to the east. On numerous hikes into this area isolated chert flakes were noted along the trail and at least two prehistoric sites were recorded along this trail; one by the Manierys and one by the author.

Given the timber stand data cited above, the chance the pit feature dated much earlier than the 1850s to 1860s is highly unlikely. Visible pit features--given the dead fall and invasion of conifers into the oak woodlands (see F31b: Images 1-4) -- do not last very long in this area. Moreover, pit features are rare in the North Fork of the Eel River basin. The only well-defined pit features recorded to date have been at village sites situated along the North Fork Eel River. For example, all of the relatively large housepits located on the first five village sites to the north of Hulls Creek along the North Fork Eel River that Goddard (1924) visited in 1922 still remained visible in the mid 1990s (Keter 1996). Unlike the pit feature, however, these sites still remained for the most part in relatively open areas (on river terraces) where Douglas fir had not yet invaded the site or, at least, had not yet over-topped the oaks. For this reason, there was little dead fall littering the ground. Furthermore, the paucity of cultural materials associated with pit feature F31b and their limited spatial distribution is also suggestive of short term occupation (perhaps one season).

Defining and Identifying a Refuge Site

It is possible that this site dates to what has been termed the "refuge period." Thomas Jackson (1974: 148) defined the refuge period as that time when: "the last aboriginal inhabitants of the region fled to the hinterland in an effort to escape the total destruction of life and culture." Jackson (1976:148) hypothesized that refuge sites might be located: "in areas of the most illogical sort, perhaps located away from easily obtained water or adjacent to the most minute springs in the deepest and densest vegetation." He also predicted that some of the older habitation sites might have been reoccupied.

Sonia Tamez (1978: 25: 26) listed a number of characteristics which might help to identify refuge sites.

--Sites may reflect a wide range of activities in a hinterland location when more favorable sites are available.
--Sites cannot easily be seen from the outside.
--Sites may be easily vacated if necessary.
--Sites will not reflect long term occupation.

From 1860 to late 1864, the U.S. Army, as well as bands of local ranchers and homesteaders, combed the hills looking for the few remaining Wailaki who had managed to avoid being killed or captured by hiding out in the remote North Fork/Yolla Bolly region. For example, Captain Hull (USWD 1897a: 259), while operating in the North Fork region, wrote:

> ...discovered Indian fires situated on a high bluff of rock that seemed impossible to approach, and it was so to strangers at night-time; hence I was compelled to defer attack until daylight but those wary savages discovered us and fled.

In the summer of 1864, Captain John Simpson, commanding Company E of the First California Battalion of Mountaineers, was charged with gathering the remaining Indians still living in the North Fork Eel River region. The following report (USWD 1897b: 963) by Captain Simpson to his commanding officer at Fort Humboldt provides some insight into where the Wailaki were hiding out at that time.

> ....arrived in the Indian's country on the 12th day of August...My camp is about twenty-five miles northeast of Round Valley [at Lake Mountain], near the Yallo Bailey Mountains, which is very rough, being one continuation of mountains and ravines, interspersed with dense thickets of timber and brush, which afford excellent hiding for Indians and render it almost inaccessible to white men....

The last military operation by the army in northwestern California took place in the late summer and early fall of 1864 in southwestern Trinity County. It was centered on the North Fork Eel River watershed. Military records indicate that:

> On September 24 Captain Simpson left for Round Valley. Upon his arrival he turned over 161 Indians to Austin Wiley Superintendent of Indian Affairs. This expedition returned to Camp Grant on September 30 after having spent "two months twelve days in the field." (USWD 1897a:391).

A. J. Bledsoe (1885: 209) in his openly racist diatribe against not only Indians but other minorities as well, *Indian Wars of the Northwest* , writes: "In January 1865 Lieutenant Middleton, Company C, arrived at the Peninsula [Humboldt Bay] with a large number of prisoners, compromising the last of the hostilities in Trinity County." [See Keter 1990 for more on the subject of military activity in the North Fork Eel River watershed.]

Conclusions

It appears that within the North Fork region for the years 1854-1859, it is likely that a transition was taking place in which native cultures were struggling to maintain their traditions, independence, and control of their territories. Due to the remoteness of the region during this time many groups could have survived relatively unscathed by simply avoiding the areas occupied by ranchers and settlers who were then few in number.

By about 1860 and until 1865, however, the pressure would have increased due to homesteaders moving into the area, overgrazing of the grasslands and oak woodlands by large herds of sheep, ceaseless military operations, the presence of feral pigs, and the negative impact to the deer population from hide hunters (Keter 1990).

In effect, the refuge period in the North Fork region--as defined by Tamez and Jackson-would have only lasted for a period of about five to six years. During this period, to avoid being killed or captured, the surviving bands of Wailaki would have needed to be even more mobile than usual. Material possessions would have been meager or non-existent.

It appears that feature F31b conforms quite well to Tamez's and Jackson's predictive models for refuge sites. The site is located in a rather isolated spot away from the main east/west trending ridge in very rough deep cut canyon country on the edge of an ancient alluvial terrace--well away from the nearest water source. Given the tenuous connections cited above linking this site to the refuge period, however, it is apparent that it will be difficult to identify with any certainty refuge sites from the archaeological record and they are likely to remain an enigma due to their ephemeral nature.

All Images T. Keter 1989

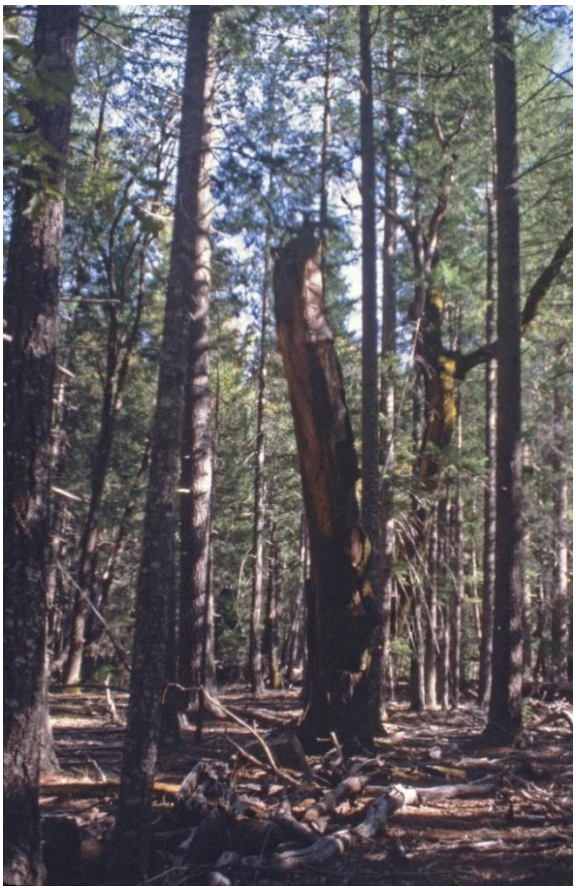


Image F31b: 1
View west from pit feature. Note the large dead oak (center), the deadfall, and how close together the even-aged Douglas fir are growing.

Image F31b: 2
View from edge of pit area after the duff was removed.
The larger Douglas fir on the left is about 110 years old.

Image F31b: 3
View west to shallow pit feature cleared of duff.

Image F31b: 4
View to east pit feature cleared of duff.

F31C: Dancehouse Pit Feature

Feature F31c was recorded by the author in November of 1984. The exact location and the site number are not provided; qualified individuals can contact the Six Rivers National Forest Heritage Resources Department or the Northwest Information Center for a copy of the site record. The following discussion regarding the pit feature is summarized from information gathered over the last few decades.

Unfortunately, over the years, a number of artifacts have been stolen from this and other sites in the vicinity--in some cases shovels have been used to dig into the ground looking for artifacts. This includes the theft of both prehistoric and historic artifacts. For example, a cast iron pot (Image F31c: 01) was noted in the original sit record just to the south and west of the pit feature. This artifact was stolen from the site sometime between October 22 and November 5, 1984, by a hunter who was seen by a Forest Service employee leaving the area carrying it (personal communication Bill Wilkerson, Forester, Mad River Ranger District). For more on the theft of artifacts from sites in this area, including photographs, refer to the Thomas Raglin and Sally Hoaglin homestead entry (Keter 2017: B01).

Image F31c: 01
A Cast iron pot was stolen from the site sometime in the fall of 1984.
(T. Keter October, 1984)

The eastern portion of this site contains a prehistoric flake and groundstone scatter (not shown on Site Detail Map F31c: 1), and the western portion contains the remains of a possible dancehouse and associated features and artifacts dating to the late 19th or early 20th century.

The site was visited in 2002 with a Wailaki elder; Coyote Fred Downey. He is a descendant of Mary Major; one of ethnographer Frank Essene's consultants (see ethnographic section below). There is a dancehouse in Hulls Valley (Hulls Creek is a major tributary of the North

Fork Eel River) on Coyote's place that was constructed by Wailaki Tom. Wailaki Tom was the brother of Ellen Tom who was Lucy Young's cousin. Lucy Young, who lived to be over 100 years old, was one Essene and C. H. Merriam's principal Wailaki/Lassik consultants (Young 1941, Keter 2009). Coyote agreed that the pit feature was likely an important ceremonial site. We were also accompanied on the visit by Ernie Merrifield, a member of the Round Valley Indian Reservation Tribal Council, who is also of Wailaki descent. He too considered this to be a significant site.

Environment

The lack of anthropogenic fire has played an important part in changing the vegetation patterns in this area since the beginning of the historic era. Today, the general vicinity is a mosaic of open grasslands (savanna), with scattered stands of gray pine and brush species on poor soils, and oak woodlands of Oregon oak (*Quercus garryana*) and black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*) interspersed with scattered ponderosa pines and incense cedars and a few mature Douglas Firs. A significant portion of the oak woodlands in the area have been invaded and are now over-grown by dense even-aged stands of Douglas fir (Keter 1995, 1997a). Manzanita is often found along the edges of openings or mixed-in with gray pines growing on some of the slopes with poor soils.

Image F31c: 02
Before vegetation removal--note the young fir invading the opening and growing in the pit feature. The surrounding flat is dense with pole-size Douglas fir. (T. Keter 1984)

Image F31c: 03
View west to pit feature and young Douglas firs invading the opening.
(T. Keter 1984)

Image F31c: 04
View south to Douglas fir saplings growing on the berm of the pit feature.
The oak tree on the berm (center right) was cored.
It was approximately 85 (+/- 5) years old in 1984.
(T. Keter 1984)

The pit feature is situated in a small opening that had almost disappeared by 1984 (Images F31c: 02-04). At the time it was recorded, some Douglas fir saplings were growing within the pit feature along with a few forbs and grasses--all but the largest Douglas fir (one about 5" in diameter) were later removed when the pit feature was inventoried.

The flat where the pit feature is located was in earlier times much more open. Growing on the flat were several widely dispersed mature Douglas-firs with lower radial branches; evidence of growth in the open with little competition. These were the trees that produced the seeds for the saplings and pole-size trees growing on the flat. Also, present around the site were some dead and dying manzanita that the Douglas firs had overtopped and crowded out—including one growing at the entrance to the pit feature (Image F31c: 05).

Image F31c: 05
Note the large Douglas fir (top center) with its radial lower branches now dead and dying. It was probably one of the seed trees for the Douglas fir saplings growing on the site. The nearly dead manzanita (lower left) located at the entrance to the pit feature was removed. (T. Keter 1989)

The stand of timber on the flat was composed mainly of pole-size Douglas-fir with some larger trees. The Douglas fir stand growing about 75 meters to the north of the site was part of a timber harvest unit that was logged in the late1980s. By the mid-1980s, the Douglas firs had already crowded out many of the oak trees growing on the flat and they were either dying, dead but still standing, or in many cases had already fallen to the ground and were decaying (Image F31c: 06).

Image F31c: 06
Note the dead fall/ground litter, dead oak (center), and the even-aged pole-size stand of Douglas fir that are invading the flat and over-topping the oaks.
(T. Keter 1989)

Surface Inventory of the Pit Feature

This section discussing the features and artifacts found on the site has been deleted in the version of this paper published on the SolarArch web site. Contact the author for details on acquiring this information.

Ethnographic Data Related to the Pit Feature

At time the pit feature was identified—given its size and information provided by local consultants—it was hypothesized that it was a dance house possibly associated with the Big Head cult. The following information related to the Big Head cult was collected at that time.

The Big Head cult was an offshoot of the Ghost Dance. The most in-depth study of the Ghost Dance, the Bole Maru cult, and the closely related Big Head cult, including a description of the dance and regalia, are found in Cora Dubois' study (1946): *The 1870 Ghost Da*nce. Virginia Miller (1976), who relied heavily on the Dubois study, worked in Round Valley in the 1970s and also authored a paper on the Ghost Dance that includes information on the Big Head Dance: *The 1870 Ghost Dance and the Methodists: An Unexpected Turn of Events in Round Valley*.

The Ghost Dance originated among the Paviotso Paiute of Walker Lake, Nevada, in 1870. Within a short time, a version of this dance had spread throughout much of northwestern California. Dubois, in discussions with elderly Yuki, Pomo, and Wailaki consultants, concluded that two separate manifestations of the Ghost Dance cult had passed through Round Valley; the Bole Maru cult and the Big Head cult. Also, the related Earth Lodge cult had made its way to the reservation by the spring of 1872 (Miller 1976: 68). The Pomo living on the reservation adopted the Bole Maru cult in about 1872 (it had been carried to Round Valley from Pomo territory) while the Wailaki gravitated towards the Big Head Cult. The Yuki living on the reservation, however, never embraced either of these cults (Dubois 1946:119).

The Big Head cult appears to have entered Round Valley via the Kato of Long Valley. Although no specific date could be established, it was in 1873 or 1874; shortly after introduction of the Earth Lodge Cult and Bole Maru Cult that took place in 1872 (Miller 1976: 72). Miller (1976: 69) wrote that:

> ..the Big Head Cult took hold most strongly among the Wailaki Indians who, although formally registered at Round Valley Agency, in reality shunned the reservation as much as possible and stayed in the mountains north of the valley, where they had lived before the whites came to the area...If the cult did catch hold most strongly among the Wailaki, then Round Valley agents may never have seen a Big Head Dance and so had no opportunity to comment on it.

At first, the dancing and actions of the Indians were somewhat tolerated by the Round Valley Indian agent Hugh Gibson, a retired Methodist minister appointed under President Grant's Peace Policy (Miller 1976: 68). In October of 1873, however, Gibson was replaced by another Methodist minister John L. Burchard. As the dances continued unabated into 1874, Burchard implemented a much more forceful policy to discourage nativistic religious practices and banned dancehouses from the reservation. Traditional dances, and possibly

some form of the Big Head Cult and Bole Maru Cult dances, however, still took place on some of the local ranches in the valley, as well as in more remote regions north of Round Valley; for example at Charlie Fenton's ranch on the Eel River near Island Mountain. The dancehouse located in Hulls Valley constructed by Wailaki Tom, mentioned earlier, appears to have been related to the Bole Maru cult (personal communication Ben Schill).

Dubois (1946:144) noted that there was some question as to the reliability of some of the information provided by her consultants on the subject of the Big Head cult—Bill Ray an elderly Kato man, and John Tip, a Wailaki, who was living in Round Valley at the time. They were, however, the only ones who had any significant information directly related to the spread of the Big Head cult to the region immediately to the north of Round Valley. Bill Ray told Dubois (1946: 117) that:

> The Big Head Dance was sold from Willits to Sherwood [Rancheria], to the Kato and to the Wailaki on the North Fork Eel River; Captain Jim bought it for the Wailaki. This Big Head was Nagaitco's [the devils]. It was a devil dance. They dressed just like the Nagaitco. This happened when I was still in the cradle [ca. 1874].

Ray (Dubois 1946:119) also provided a description of the Big Head dance that took place in Sherwood Valley at that time and indicated that from there:

> After four days the Sherwood people who weren't good walkers went home, but the stronger ones some Kato took the Big Head on to the Wailaki on the North Fork of the Eel River.

The most complete account of the spread of the Big Head cult into Wailaki territory came from John Tip (Dubois 1946: 119).

> The Big Head [*siten tcal*] started at Point Arena. From there it was taken to Sherwood [Rancheria] and then to the Laytonville people (Kato). They brought it to Round Valley, where they wanted to sell the feathers, but the Round Valley people had them already so they didn't buy them.

Dubois (1946: 119) makes clear at this point in the interview that John Tip is referring to the Yuki. Ralph Moore, of Yuki descent, told Dubois that the reason that the Yuki did not buy the feathers was because:

> The Yuki had their god, Taikomol, who had a big feather horn, and they didn't like to represent him in that way. It was like mocking Taikomol."

John Tip told Dubois that when the feathers arrived in Round Valley, unlike the Yuki:

> The Wailaki in the old days never had Big Head feathers. All these feathers were new so they bought the feathers for white man's money. I don't know

> how much was paid. Everyone joined in and bought them piecemeal. They told Captain Jim [Kiltcindha] who bought them if he did not build a sweat house and keep the feathers in there, he would die.

Dubois (1946: 120) wrote that:

> After Captain Jim bought the feathers he began to travel northward with them. Word was sent ahead to the rancheria. The host rancheria was not required to build a dancehouse to receive the guest regalia. The itinerary, as given by John Tip, indicated that:
>
> > They took the feathers to Horse Ranch [at that time owned by Pierce and Frank Asbill, today it is part of the Lone Pine Dean Witter Ranch—see Keter 2017] across from Island Mountain [Wailaki territory] on the Eel River, where they stayed about one week. Then they moved to Fenton, [Charlie Fenton's ranch] which [at that time] was Captain Jim's home (Wailaki). There is some doubt of how long the feathers remained there. The informant said they were there for a year then later on he said they went after a week's stay.

Dubois (1946: 119) indicated that the feathers then traveled throughout Wailaki territory. This included Garberville; in what has been referred to as Sinkyone territory: "where they only stayed one night" and Blocksburg for about 10 days. Captain Jim and some of the "new owners" there took the feathers to Hayfork, then to "Weaver" (Weaverville), and finally to Lewiston. Dubois noted that "This was as far north as Captain Jim went with the regalia."

Although the exact time frame is uncertain Dubois (1946: 119-120) wrote that:

> The informant was not consistent in the time consumed traveling from Round Valley to Hayfork. In one instance he indicated that it only took one summer. If this was the case, it was a remarkable journey, particularly over the rough terrain of this section. John Tip lent plausibility to his assertion when he said that Captain Jim and his party returned only after the fall rains had begun.

According to Dubois (1946:127) "...the decade from 1875 to 1885 covers the major activities of the Big Head cult diffusion." However, neither Dubois nor Miller provided any definitive date for when the Big Head Dance ended; although Miller (1976:73) noted that some forms of the Bole Maru and Big Head cults persisted into the early twentieth century (Image 31c: 17).

Image 31c: 17
"Dancer with feather headress [sic] and elderberry clappers"
C.H. Merriam Stony Creek, CA. 1923

Consultant Interviews related to the Pit Feature

During the1980s and 1990s several interviews with local residents concerning the pit feature were conducted by the author and Six Rivers National Forest anthropologist Kathy Heffner McClellan.

Dave Alby (Keter 2017: A6: I#378), a local rancher, who had a Forest Service special use permit to run cattle in the area (1985), first learned of the pit feature in the early 1960s. He was told by Lee Duncan (who died about 1964) that it was where the Indians had built some "lodges, sweathouses, and a large ceremonial pit." Lee and his brother Glen Duncan (who died in about 1980) were from the remote Long Ridge country. Alby thought (correctly—see Keter 2017: HF17 Ben Duncan) that they were the sons of Ben Duncan. Ben Duncan's father John Duncan and mother Poly Duncan, who was Indian—most likely of Wailaki descent--were among the first homesteaders to settle on Long Ridge in the early 1870s (for a biography of the extended Duncan family see Keter 2017: B06).

In 1991, I discussed the pit feature with Lee Stapp who, as noted earlier, was raised in Hettenshaw Valley (Keter 2017: A6: I#448). He said the pit feature had been described to him by George Duncan who had died several years earlier. George had told him that the "earthwork" [pit feature] was the remains of an Indian ceremonial site (he was also a member of the extended Duncan family).

Lee Stapp (Keter 2017: #I448) recalled that in about 1930, when he visited the site, the structure covering the pit feature was still standing. It had a peaked roof which came together in the middle and was made of shakes. Also, in the immediate area, just to the north and slightly to the east of the pit feature, he noted that there were some graves. There were no headstones, but he could see, by the indentations in the ground, that they were possible graves; there was also some broken pottery in the area.

He remembered that at that time there was almost no vegetation near the pit except for a small oak tree on the edge of the berm that was about 6 feet high at the time. This is the oak tree, discussed earlier, that was approximately 85 (+/-5) years old in 1984 (Image F31c: 04). The height of the tree in 1930 (along with the core sample) adds to the probablity that it sprouted sometime around 1900.

Although the Stapps did not know of any direct link between the pit feature and the Big Head cult, when I mentioned the Big Head dance, Lee's wife Irene (who as noted earlier was part Wailaki), remembered hearing from her mother, Francis Willburn (Keter 2017: HF06, HF07, B05) that at an earlier time--possibly the 1870's--a medicine man had told the people living at Blocksburg that the end of the world was coming. She said that a number of people then traveled to Forest Glenn to hide out in some limestone caves. She was not sure how long they stayed there. When I mentioned the date of the pit feature as being used between about 1895 and 1905 both of them thought this this was a reasonable guess.

In 1985, a 96 year old Wailaki man (Keter 2017: A6 I#378) was interviewed by Six Rivers anthropologist Kathy Heffner McClellan at his home in southern Trinity County to discuss Indian dancehouses and in particular the pit feature. The following information is quoted directly from that interview.

> North Fork Eel? Well some Indians, our kind, live out that way. We all use to go there and dam up the North Fork Eel and catch our fish at night with flares. Nobody bother us, not even white man bother us, Of course there was no game warden like today then so nobody care there was plenty of fish.

The consultant indicated the Wailaki built "round houses" on ranches owned by the whites if a lot of Indians lived on the ranch. Charlie Fenton's place is where his family lived along with other Wailaki (see Keter 2017 for information on Charles Fenton):

> They had three dance houses on this ranch. They lived there because the men worked for Charlie Fenton, they herded his sheep, took them to summer on

> South Fork Mountain and brought them back in the fall. Indians would not build a dance house on white men's ranches unless they worked and lived there and that there was more than 1 or 2 Indians.

The Indian men knew the back country well and made excellent sheepherders. Often the men's wives would serve as domestic help in the ranch house. It was also common for Indian women to travel with the herders in the summer to cook at the sheep camps located on South Fork Mountain and high in the Yolla Bolly Mountains (Keter 1994: 25).

The following information (summarized and unedited from the interview) was provided by the consultant regarding dance houses, the pit feature, and the Wailaki who were living in the North Fork Eel River region in the early 20th century.

> [The dancehouse] Could have been before my time. There was no dancehouse there that we went to in my time...we had dances any chance we could get, even on white man's holidays like 4th of July and Christmas. The one everyone liked best was in the spring it was a coming out dance. And of course when the medicine man called one, we always danced.
>
> [Heffner-McClellan at this point in the interview writes: By looking at the photo, he could not tell if it looked like a dance house or not.]
>
> All of us Indians danced together, our best friends were the Yuki but we liked to dance with the Nomlaki too because all our dances and songs and dance outfits were almost the same.
>
> Our dancehouse always were big, real big, not like the Yuki's. Ours was always big because we had lots of Indians at Charlie Fentons and our dances everybody come to. They always have center posts and most always had lots of center posts. Because if it big, it needs those center post to hold everything up.
>
> When everyone from all around come to these dances, they all camp around there for days. A dance, even a doctor dance, has to have lots of people at it.

The 1880 census lists approximately 27 Indians—including a number of families with children—living on or in the vicinity of Long Ridge (Keter 2017: A3: 1880-3). The census also lists 36 Indians living at the Fenton ranch (Keter 2017: A3: 1880-4). Unfortunately, the 1890 census records for this area were destroyed in a fire. By the 1900 census almost no Wailaki were listed on the Long Ridge census except for a few members of extended families consisting of white men who had married Indian women--all of the children from these marriages were listed on the census as "Indian."

Conclusion

After further research and discussions with members of the extended Willburn family and Ben Shill (a local avocational linguist and historian), it seems unlikely, given the remote location--about six miles by trail from the nearest wagon road--that the pit feature was related to the Big Head cult. The types of features and artifacts found on the site, as well as the ethnographic data, and consultant interviews, however, indicate that some kind of collective social and/or religious activities took place at this location. Significantly, the entrance to the pit feature is facing east and the fire pit is located between the entrance and the center posts (it appears there were two). This configuration fits the general description of a Wailaki *yit tcho* or "big house."

Epilog

For more recent information that has been acquired related to past Native American cultural activities on this site please contact the author.

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