

ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNTS OF THE MILLERTON AREA

COLLECTED BY FRANK F. LATTA

Bill Wilson

Bill Wilson, or Pahmit, was over ninety years old when he was interviewed by Anna Gayton and by Frank F. Latta in the 1920's. Most of their information on the Dumna people comes from Wilson. He was among the Indians conscripted to build Fort Miller and gave this statement to Latta (1977: 657-666) in 1928:

Dumna Life

I born Kuyu (koo-you) Illik, long time' go (1831). Kuyu Illik (sulphur water) Indian village bank river white man call San Joaquin. Village at place white man call Fort ~iller where soldiers march.

My people belong Dumna (Doom-nah) Tribe Indian. I don't know how much old me. White man say I more than hundred. I know how when soldiers, Major Savage come Kuyu Illik made Indian sign paper (1851), I young man 'bout twenty-one, twenty-two years old.

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My people live happy 'till soldiers come. We have plenty eat. We have nice dry houses live in. We don't fight. Lots our people live along river above Kuyu Illik. Lots antelope, lots elk, lots wild horses come river, drink below Kuyu Illik where Friant now.

My grandpa, Tom-kit, chief all Indian tribe 'round Kuyu Illik. We want meat; he send two, three Indian; good shot with bow, arrow, get it. They hide in rocks by river, wait antelope, elk. Antelope come. They shoot six, eight nice fat ones. They shoot one each house Kuyu Illik. They let rest run 'way. We have all meat we want. When white man come, he shoot, shoot, shoot. Kill all antelope. Kill all elk. Then he bring cattle, make Indian buy beef.

When Indian get hungry, he go with gun shoot some quail, maybe cottontail, maybe dove. White man 'rest him, put in jail. Now my people no keep gun. They no have rifle; they no have shotgun in house. When my people shoot, white man 'rest him.

Now white man at Washington pay me seven dollar haf, live one month. I can't do that. My people work; my boy work; all my grand-children work all summer; pick grapes; pick peaches; shear sheep. They no make 'nuf live all winter. 'fore Major Savage come, we eat plenty.

Miners Come

First white man I see come mine gold in fiver. They cut tree; split log; make long box; make dam in river. We watch 'em. We don't know what they do. Then river come high; wash' em all 'way. Pretty soon two white men come make boat on river take white man across water. Then lots white man come mine gold.

After 'wile soldiers come, make big wood house for fight. They all got gun. They catch lots Indian. Some Indian get 'way. Makes (women), children run 'way, sleep in mountain under rock, brush. My grandpa, Tomkit, tell soldiers, "Put away gun; my people come in; they no like gun."

Soldiers catch lots Indian man, boy. They make Indian man, boy stay place where they make wood house for fight. Soldier don't make wood house. Indian make' em. Soldier make Indian cut trees, chop logs; give 'em axe; make 'em chop, chop, chop; build big wood house for fight. White soldier call big wood house Camp Barbour. Sometimes Indian don't want work. Soldiers make 'em work. Soldiers take long black snake mules' whip. They whip Indian on back. They whip, whip, whip. Two, three Indian die - - whip 'em too much.

Major Savage Comes

After big wood house done, soldier come with big man from Washington, sign paper with Indians. One time before Indian sign paper with white man, Major Savage come Kuyu Illik. He come horse back. He have blue clothes. He have six, seven men.

They all have blue clothes. They all got gun; they all soldier. Major Savage he talk my grandpa, Tomkit. He tell him big father at Washington send him see Indians. He say we haf bring all Indian chief here talk big man from Washington. He say we haf bring all Choinumne Indian Chief; we haf bring all Nutunutu Indian Chief; we haf bring all Chauchele Indian Chief; we haf bring all Indian chief; fifty, sixty chief, Kuyu Illik, talk big man from Washington. Major Savage say Indian talk little bit. We know what he say all right. My grandpa, Tomkit, talk rest our chief. They think that's bad business.

Then Tomkit talk Major Savage. He tell him, lilt's summer now; it's hot; it's long way Kuyu Illik, Kings River, where Choinumne live; it long way Nutunutu Indian; long way Chauchele Indian; long way Kahwatchwah Indian. Take long time see all them Indian I think maybe take my men three four weeks see 'em. They run long way; they sweat lots. Why you want us do this? What they gonna do that paper we got sign?"

I hear all this. Tomkit say, "You be next chief, Pahmit. You hear what white man say."

Then Major Savage he tell Tomkit. Major Savage, he say, "I big medicine man with big father at Washington. You haf do what I say. I hurt you if I want to. I make all your people die. I make all fish go out river. I make all antelope, all elk go 'way. I make dark. You do what I say, nothing hurt you. But you no hurt me. You shoot me with bow, arrow, I live. I do all thing I tell you 'bout. *Yau* shoot me with pistal, you no hurt me."

Major Savage have nice six shooter. My people never see six shooter before. They see rifle; they see pistol. One, two my people know how shoot' em.

Target Practice

Major Savage put white handkerchief side oak tree. He load six shaoter one, two, three, six bullet. He put powder; he put paper; he put bullet; he stand close tree. He shoot handkerchief, one, two, three, six time. Every time he make hole in handkerchief.

My people all stand 'round close, see. Major Savage load six shooter 'gen. We see him put powder, paper, bullet. Then he give our man. "Now, you shoot me. You shoot me; you no hurt me. You no kill me. Don' you 'fraid. You go 'head, shoot; you no kill me." Then he stand close our man. Our man shoot, bang! Then Major Savage he grab in air with his hand. He don't fall down. Our people look each other. They say he big medicine man. Then our man shoot' gen. He shoot six time. Major Savage, he grab in air six time. Our people all come close, look. Then Major Savage hold out hand, open it. We see six bullet our man shaot. Major Savage catch' em all his hand.

My grandpa, Tomkit, he see that. He b'lieve 'em. I see that. I b'lieve 'em, too. All my people see that. They all think Major Savage big medicine man. They all think they better do what he say.

Treaty of 1851

Then Major Savage he talk. He tell us, "Now you do what I say. You bring chief all Indian tribe here. You bring 'em here ten days now. You bring two Indian each tribe. You bring one chief; you bring ane moke for me. I want one wife each Indian tribe."

My grandpa, Tomkit, he send men bring all Indian chief; tell all Indian chief bring Indian wife Major Savage. Indian chief all come Kuyu Illik. They bring Indian wife Major Savage. I think they bring seventeen. I think some run 'way. I think seven stay work far Major Savage.

After all chief come Kuyu Illik, one, maybe two days; big man from Washington come with paper. Lots' em come. I think they fifteen, maybe twenty horse-back soldier. They three soldier on four horses wagon. They stop wagon Kuyu Illik on big open place south my grandpa's house. All Indian crowd 'round, look. All chief set 'round on ground.

Some soldier take three big box out wagon. They put 'em in open place, each one up top. Then Indian get on top, way up high. He talk our people. That Indian belong our people long time' go. When he little boy, Spanish preacher take him Mission at San Juan. At San Juan he learn read, write, talk like white man. Big white chief call him Charlie. Our people call him Yo-ho. White chief talk him. Then Yoho talk us long time. He talk, 'n talk, *in* talk. He turn 'round, 'n 'round, 'n 'round on box. My people all hear him. He say we got give big Father at Washington all our land. We got go down valley, live. He say big white Father at Washington send us clothes; send us flour, send us blanket, send us horse. He say big white Father send us teacher, so our people go school like white man.

Our people no like that. They think all right send things. They no like go down valley. No acarns there; too many Indian there. They think have fight with Indian there. My grandpa, Tomkit, tell Yoho. Yoho talk long time big white chief.

Then Major Savage he go wagon. He bring whiskey; he bring tobacco. He tell all Indian set dawn, they gonna smoke. Major Savage fill tobacco pipe. He make one puff, he give pipe Indian. All Indian make one puff. All white chief make one puff.

Treaty Signed

Then Major Savage give 'em lots whisky. Then Yoho talk long time 'gen. Our chief all set 'round, listen. Then they make sign mark on piece paper. Co-toom-se, Chief with Chuck-shan-se. He sign 'em. My father, Dawk-taw, he Chief with Dumna Tribe Indian. Some people call him Tap-pah. He sign' em. My uncle, To-mas, he Chief Kit-cha-ye Tribe. He sign' em. Lots Indian sign 'em. Take long time. Then white chief go 'way.

Major Savage go 'way. He go Kings River. White man there shoot Major Savage like our man shoot' em. Major Savage he die. Ha! Ha! Why he na catch' em bullet?

Then white man come; they mine gold in river. They shoot Indian. Saldier put Indian in jail; they whip Indian. They run all Indian 'way from village Kuyu Illik. They bum all Indian house.

They smooth ground where Indian house burn. They play music there. Blue clothes soldier march, march, march there. They make Indian dig dirt, mix mud; make adobe brick, make white soldier big house. White men call big house Fort Miller. They take Indian by tree over river. They hang 'em there; they cut rope and dead Indian fall in river. My grandpa, Tomkit, he tell white soldier, "*Yau* better look out." He tell white miner, "You better look out. Indian spirits no like you do this. Pretty soon bad things happen you." .

Then high water come wash 'way all white man store; wash 'way lots white man house; wash 'way lots, lots Chinaman. Then pretty soon white soldiers all go away. My people think Indian spirit make 'em go. They glad. They dance. They sing. Not many Indian left. Lots Indian die whisky; lots Indian die bad white man sickness. Just few Indian left. Indian live Kuyu Illik 'gen. White miner still whip Indian; still shoot Indian.

The Civil War

Then by 'n by, white man all talk fight. They say long way off, white man shoot white man. Lots white man go lang way *aff*, fight. Then white soldier come back Fort Miller. This time white soldier pretty gaod man; they na shoot Indian, they no whip soldier too much. Some Indian work for white soldier; white soldier give 'em flour, give 'em tobacco, but Indian pretty near all gone. White soldier stay this time maybe three, maybe four years. Then all go 'way. I never see no more white soldier.

My father, Dawtaw - - gone. My grandpa, Tomkit - - gone. My uncle Tomas - - gone. I big Chief now, but no got Indian tribe. Just me; just my sister left. My sister got one boy, got one girl. I blind; I no see. I no see maybe ten, fifteen year. I got one boy; he got three, four, baby. We work hard, we don't have 'nough eat. Big Father at Washington no send flour; no send horse; no send clothes; no send blanket like white chief say when Indian sign paper at Kuyu Illik.

My people no drink whisky, I think be lots Indian yet. I drink just once. I work for white man. He put me in wagon. He take me home. He tell me, "Pahmit, whisky no good. Whisky kill white man~Whisky kill Indian. You no drink 'em. White man good my friend. I live long time. Pretty soon I go. Then white man no haf pay me seven dolrar haf, live one month.

. **The End**

Addendum:

Charlie the Indian translator may have ties to the North Fork Mono. The North Fork Mono are only a few miles upstream on the San Joaquin River from the Dumna. Clifford Bethel who was one of the North Fork Mono tribal leaders in the 1970's and 1980's named his dog Yoho. When asked where he got the name from he replied that his great grand father was named Charlie Bethel and his Indian name was Yoho.