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**Ethnographic History and Historical Overview
of Smalley Cove (Tsobatebau)
at Kerckhoff Lake on the San Joaquin River**

Anthropology

The Indian tribal group recorded on the 1851-52 Unratified Treaties of California for the Smalley Cove area was identified as Toltichi or Tallinchee. In the Nium (Mono) language the suffix chi or chee means small, spring or special. Chi is of the Crane Valley dialect and chee is San Joaquin River dialect. Crane Valley and San Joaquin River are references to the directional movement of the Nium into the North Fork area (Goode, 1998; Lee, 1999).

The native name for the Smalley Cove area is Tsobatebau (Goode, 1998), which means "river crossing." Tso is a prefix given to the language by the "Crane Valley Nim". The San Joaquin River Nium use a prefix of cho. "The River Nium" would say "chobatebau" (Lee, 2006). Early researchers identified the spelling as "tsopatebau" (Gifford, 1932; Kroeber, 1974). This text all depended on who the consultant was and how well they spoke the language. The changing of the "p" to "b" could also indicate singular or plural. However, the definition as "River Crossing" remains the same for all three pronunciations. Later on this also became the stagecoach crossing.

The North Fork Mono language has had about five movement integrations over the past three hundred years. The Nium language is a living language and is subject to a continuum of change (Goode, 1998).

Tsobatebau/Chopatebau is of the Nium language. Kroeber made references that the Toltichi/Tallinchee was a group of a Northern Yokotch group either related to the Chukchansi from over the Fish Creek Mountain or the Dumna downstream from what is Friant and Millerton Lake today (Kroeber, 1974).

Ethnography

Putting the anthropology aside and looking at the ethnography and oral history, has the North Fork Mono in the Smalley Cove-Kerckhoff-Tsobatebau area dating back to the early 1800's and the 1700's. A cemetery exist a half mile north of the Smalley Cove Recreational site located on the west side of Road 222. The Tulley's and Sherman's are the prominent family members interred there. This noted information dates the cemetery back to the early 1800's. However, other native ancestral burials existed there prior to the ethnographic burials.

Some of the families who bordered the Smalley Cove area include the Sherman's who lived on both sides of the drainage emptying out at the small bridge. Dan Harris ran cattle and lived above the current Smalley Cove P G & E Campground. Bob Kitchell, nephew to Dan Harris also lived there. Elmer Sherman lived across from Dan Harris on an Indian Allotment. Johnny Sherman lived a 1/2 mile up stream east of the drainage at the base of the western slope of what is Corrine Lake today. Across the drainage on the west ridge and up north of Dan Harris was Gene Tulley. West of Gene Tulley was Ciatana Creek and Fish Creek Mountain. On the back side of Fish Creek Mountain lived Mike Walker.

North of Gene Tulley was Mike Reilly and east of him was Ed Polkenhorn. Ed's property included the south slope of Hi-a-me Mountain. On the west slope of Hi-a-me facing Fish Creek Mountain was Harrison Jackson.

Southeast of Smalley Cove and Kerckhoff Lake lays the historic Horseshoe Bend Trail circling what is known as Long Ridge. On the west side of Long Ridge where Horseshoe Bend Trail begins is Southern California Edison's Big Creek Powerhouse #4 hydroelectric facility. South but located on the south side of the River was the Isabel Mine. Southeast of SCE's Powerhouse #4, west of Redinger Dam on the north side of the River and along the Horseshoe Bend Trail was John Hensley's place and mine. Still on the east side of Long Ridge along the Trail and north of Hensley's place, south of Sam Daniel's Place (aka tasineu) was another miner's cabin.

Mono Trail Network

The Horseshoe Bend trail follows along the old Mono Trail and was used and maintained by North Fork Mono cowboys. There are some eight to twelve Mono ancestral sites along the Trail. The east side trail head starts at a major North Fork Mono ethnographic/historic site, known historically as the Sam Daniels site and ethnographically as Tasineu, place of the stars.

There exist another part of the trail from the Power House that comes out at Thompson Flat and continues by the Dandy Allotment Ranch on over to the confluence of Whiskey Creek and Willow Creek. The Nium Network trail continues on up Willow Creek towards North Fork. There are many ancestral prehistoric archaeological sites and ethnographic homesteads along the Creek and trail. The trail system ties into other trails along the way and continues on through North Fork to Bass Lake (Crane Valley), from Brown's Ditch heads northeast over Shuteye Peak toward Globe Rock heading on back toward Granite Creek and on to Reds Meadow. The San Joaquin River aspect of the Mono Trail intersects at Granite Creek and proceeds downstream through Rock Creek, Kinsman Flat, along Sagineu Creek toward Redinger Lake, on over to Willow Creek and back up to Tasineu. There are many old villages, ethnographic sites, creation sites, smoke signals and cultural resource gathering areas along the way.

There are other trails that break off and eventually return back or cross the River trail. Such as the one from Logan Meadow, down to Mammoth Lake, over to Chawanakee Flats, on toward Jose Basin and down to Redinger Lake. A grapevine was once used to cross the river from below Hooker's Cove to Chawanakee Flats.

The Mono Trail connects to the Horseshoe Bend Trail and proceeds around Kerckhoff Lake on the north side through Tsoobatebau and Smalley Cove on down along the San Joaquin River and the table tops to the San Joaquin Valley. The Mono Trail interconnected the Niium with the Dumna, Kechaye, Pitcachie, and Hoyima, and proceeded on toward the Coast Range. The Mono Trail is a very vast "network" of trails north and south interconnecting to the main stem which followed the north side of the San Joaquin from its inception at Mammoth Mountain to the Coast (Goode, 2007).

Interview by Ron W. Goode Ulysses Goode, May 29, 2006

Uly grew up in North Fork. He was born May 29, 1927, to Andrew Goode and Daisy Tex. He met Lena Kinsman-Walker in 1949, who lived on the Harrison Jackson property off Road 222, and is the father to Ron Goode.

Uly speared suckers in the Smalley Cove - San Joaquin River tributaries before he moved to live on the North Fork-Auberry Road, known as Road 222. He speared suckers in this area for ten years from 1949 to 1959.

He made his own spears out of pitch fork prongs and wired them on with hay bale wire. The spears were approximately the length of a car, 15-16 feet long. He not only speared in the Smalley Cove creek feeders such as Fish Creek, Ciatana Creek and the "little bridge creek," but also on Cottonwood Creek which fed into the San Joaquin River above the Millerton Dam. Cottonwood is west of Fish Creek Mountain at the bottom of the table top and west of Fine Gold Creek.

While the Smalley Cove creeks only went about a 1/2 mile before the suckers had to stop, there they spawned, but the Cottonwood went several miles past the four corners of Roads 210 and 211, past the hot spring, up the west fork to the McDougald Ranch.

Uly remembered when he would go to the unemployment office in Madera, before the logging season would start, he would hide his spears under the car. He would tie them up so they could not be seen and on his way back from Madera he would stop to spear suckers.

Uly pointed out that during the 1950's there was 20 to 30 suckers in the spawning pools of Cottonwood. While in comparison there was only 7 to 10 suckers in the pools on the Smalley Cove tributaries. Uly commented the spearing of suckers began to fade out in the 1960's. Due to the diminishing of the fish and the carrying on of the tradition in the next generation.

. . . . Uly told of the different families who speared suckers during his time and made some interesting comments about them. He also talked about the Hoo-ya (caterpillar), the mussels and clams, and the gold searching by the Chinese. He attributed the loss of fish, clams, mussels, hooya, and the deer hunting to the time of when Mammoth Pool Dam was erected.

Uly stated, "When the Dam went in, that put into a change and a chain of effects that was never rectified nor did the whiteman ever admit to it. This change affected the Indians way of life and their culture to this day."

. . . . Uly spoke of the Sherman family who speared suckers. He spoke of ol' man Johnny Sherman, young Johnny Sherman and Leo "the Lion" Sherman, saying:

"The Sherman's would have suckers for breakfast. The suckers had so many bones, but the Sherman boys cleaned the meat off the bones from the head to the tail when eating the fish and never choked on a bone, unlike the rest of us."

Uly Goode also spoke about the Hoo-ya. He said the Hoo-ya once traveled through the River drainage on both sides of the San Joaquin River. This was back in the 1950's.

When asked about gold panning and or dredging, Uly spoke about the evidence the Chinese left behind as they went through each of "our" creek drainage's such as the "small bridge" creek, Fish Creek, Ciatana Creek, the old Burns Hole Creek, and Willow Creek. All these drainage's were searched for gold by the Chinese. Small piles of "river rock/creek rock" can still be found along those creek drainage's.

**Interview by Ron W. Goode
North Fork Mono Tribal Council
Tribal Council Meeting, July 15, 2006**

Discussion on who lived on the Indian Allotment off Road 222 across from the P G & E Smalley Cove Campground. An archaeological site exist that was used by the ethnographic residences. It was said that Elmer Sherman lived at the residence. Others included: Mary and Wally Lewis and their children, Hiram Chenot, Dennis Lewis, Wally "Lo Ball" Lewis -

- The Allotment was thought to be under Elmer Sherman.

The Sherman family was pretty prominent in the Kerckhoff Lake-Smalley Cove area. Living at the P G & E housing was the William Sherman family. William's family included his wife Leona, and three sons, Bill, Doug and Steve.

William Sherman worked some 30 years for P G & E. While living at the Wishon Powerhouse housing William started and coached the Little League team known as the Wishon Tigers. In 1957 William graded the ball field that still exist today at the Smalley Cove Campground.

- New information indicates the Elmer Sherman land as a “live” application under the United States Forest Service. The land was applied for in 1955 and recommended for approval in 1958. The Lewis/Chenot family was asked to leave the land in 1958 and did leave in the early 1960's. The application has never been resolved and is considered “active.” It remains a current unresolved issue.

Author's Note:

I played in the first year in 1957 when I was six years old. The starting age was seven, and I turned seven at the end of the summer season. I played Little League for six years and my last year we won the league championship against Friant. Our practice field was the make shift baseball diamond at Smalley Cove. We were known as the Wishon Tigers. Our players mostly came from the P G & E Wishon Powerhouse housing, Powerhouse #4 SCE housing, North Fork's Road 222, Auberry's Powerhouse Road, New Auberry, Auberry and Table Mountain Rancheria.

Interview by Ron W. Goode Melvin Carmen, August 2006

Melvin's family did some gold planning and clamming off the Gegundy property on the south side of the San Joaquin River, south of the SCE Powerhouse #4 hydroelectric plant. Melvin still does a little dredging on Willow Creek and on Finegold Creek.

Melvin knows where the Chinese once gold mined on the south side of the San Joaquin River. His reference is to the pile of rocks left where the Chinese mined or planned for gold.

Melvin also relates, during the building of the Redinger Lake Dam as well as the construction of Mammoth Pool Dam that hundreds of deer died because they became confused with the lost of their trails and crossings. The dams on the river totally changed the way of life for the animals, their habitat, the environment and thereby changed the Mono way of life. The hydro system also destroyed the mussel population and eventually the fish and sucker habitat as well. And of course no fish, no eagles.

**Interview by Ron W. Goode
Naomi Carmen, August 2006**

Naomi was raised with her mother in the early 1920's/1930's. Prior to the building of Millerton Dam and Kerckhoff Reservoir. Naomi remembers going down to the San Joaquin River, above (south) of Tsobatebau, to gather and spear salmon. The North Fork Mono would get the salmon in the "sand bar" just south of the "old" bridge crossing the San Joaquin River from Auberry to North Fork. The "sand bar" is north of the current SCE Big Creek Powerhouse #4.

Naomi and Melvin's mother, Mrs. Ida Carmen was born the day they celebrated the opening of the Wishon Power House. Mrs. Carmen's mother was Susie Walker.

**Interview by Ron W. Goode
Doug Sherman, August 2006
Doug grew up in the P G & E housing at Wishon Powerhouse**

Doug and his family grew up living in the Wishon Powerhouse housing. His father William was an employee of P G & E. They lived in the house next to the garage on the knoll across and east of the Powerhouse.

Doug remembers the road being upgraded from the big bridge to the little bridge. During this time numerous artifacts were uncovered, exposed and found in the dirt under the pavement. [There are numerous sites all along the River's edge both under water and at the edge, from the Powerhouse well passed the little bridge.]

Doug spoke of the trail from his place to the "old" SCE housing for Powerhouse #4. He and his brothers went all over the surrounding hillside. Several rock caves exist all the way up to Corrine Lake [a hydro holding pond for the Wishon Powerhouse generation]. One shelter between their place and north toward Frank Sherman's place has ancient drawings and artifacts [off of old historic road west of and running north along little bridge creek drainage].

Doug had an extensive recall of the Smalley Cove baseball field and the Little League team known as the Wishon Tigers. Doug's father William Sherman cleared the field with P G & E equipment. The Wishon Tigers practiced there for one full summer, and off and on for the following two to three years.

Around 1960 the North Fork Boosters (or someone other than the Sherman family) built a wood back stop which remained up for the next 40 years.

The road with "sites" is west of the seasonal stream. Historical evidence is still there.

Personal Account by Ron W. Goode
Ron Goode, Mono Historian
Born 1950, Raised Traditional

From a very young age I remember my dad and brothers coming home with game and fish. I remember my dad making spears and the big fish called "kaboage" that they always instructed me on how to eat because it had so many bones. My mom would always put the heads in a pot and boil them. She would throw in the tails as well and the eye balls would pop out and float on the surface when the pot boiled. My brothers and sisters would tease me saying it was a witches stew.

I remember driving around to the various creeks along the River and my dad getting out to go check a creek. It wasn't until my high school days when my brother Tom "Cat" Kinsman would go down to the River at Smalley Cove and check the creeks at Ciatana and the little bridge creek for suckers. We wouldn't take spears, as he would reach his arm under water along the banks, especially where roots grew, checking for where suckers were hiding. He would count the ones in each of the pools and creeks. A day or two later we would go with 100 lb. gunny sacks and string to tie each sack with. Sometimes he would allow me to take a spear, but always complained that it got in the way.

Spearing wasn't easy, it took a lot of practice. The fish move when the spear enters the water, and the water deflects the spear. The deeper the water the more difficult it was to spear, so it was best to spear in shallow water. That was a problem because the suckers did not go as often to the shallow waters. Plus the water was cold, especially in March. My brother Tom showed me techniques to spear and once or twice I would actually spear two or three fish. Meanwhile, he would be over on the shore line pulling out suckers enough to fill two sacks.

After a while I stopped spearing and bringing my spear, because, even though I was a very strong trying to carry 100 pounds of wiggly wet slimy big fish in a sack up over steep terrain for a half mile was not easy. So I would bring extra sacks and split my load, then I could carry them like buckets at my side.

I even did my share of searching under the roots for the suckers as well. At least for about as long as I did spearing. In order to pull the sucker out of the hole you must feel the fish and grab it by the gills with your fingers and drag it out. This was no easy task as you would soon find out that the sucker had teeth and their fins were sharp and both would cut your fingers. On top of that there was always other fish in the holes who moved very fast. Then, of course, there was the long skinny water snake who also lived in these holes. In order to get to the end of these holes you had to get to the edge of the bank, reach as far as you could with your arm into the hole, that left you feeling pretty venerable. But it was exciting and I couldn't wait for the next spring and the first warm rains.

I remember going to gather mussels and clams with my mother along the River, in particular on the south side of the River near Gegundy's across from Hensely mine. She always panned for gold at the same time. She said because the gold and clams all gather on the south side where the River turns and there are more pot holes, protruding rock banks, and sand areas. Like the suckers, mussels, and acorn, gunny sacks were the choice of gathering and hauling of the resource.

Back in the 1960's the mussels were still plentiful but not like the decades before. My mom would say, before we would find them on the sand banks and on edges of the big rocks. By the 1960's we would have to dive under the big rocks and bring them back by two's and three's. My mother was always concerned about the swift water and holes under the big rocks that might suck us under. The current was swift and it took strong swimmers to get under the big rocks and back again. My mother usually boiled the mussels maybe because that's how she normally prepared things.

My mother loved to pan gold and went out to check each creek around Smalley Cove and Kerckhoff. The River on the south side was the best. Willow Creek supplied good flake and color, Ciatana, Fish Creek, and the little bridge creek were light. Burns Hole creek however had its pockets, we spent many a summer there with her friends, panning, telling stories and having lunch.

The River was our backyard, where we played, hunted, fished, speared, swam, panned, gathered, socialized and held ceremonies and events. My people and family have been coming to Smalley Cove for hundreds of years. Here the resources are rich and abundant. The grapes and grapevines, blackberries, sourberries, onions, watercress, milkweed, acorn, wormwood, salt clover, brodiaea, oak shoots, chaparral, redbud, sedge root, deer, rabbits, quail, doves, pigeons, gray squirrels, trout, steelhead, suckers, salmon, mussels, clams, and hooya.

I remember swimming with my friends, brothers and sisters. My brother Tom Cat used to tell me stories about how he would swim in the coldest waters all over the mountains on a cold day in the winter. Sort of a "rite of passage" showing your manliness. He said swimming in the San Joaquin River with the snow run off and the Wishon generation plant going was the coldest he had found. So on his birthday, March 1st, he took his older uncle Ned Tulley down to the river and stripped off and dove in "Indian" style. He had to have a witness. So later on, on March 1st, my girlfriends' birthday, I attempted to top that by swimming in Hume Lake with ice on the lake, "Indian" style with my soon to be wife as my witness. He thought that was pretty good. Hume Lake was cold, but swimming in a Lake is not like swimming in a reservoir with swift under current. I've swam in Kerckhoff in early May, and when you get out in the middle of the river, your heart almost slows to a stop. My sister Robena said she used to swim across the river to the other side where the river crossing was and back again.

Leona Chepo recently told us of a rattlesnake story when she and her family and friends would swim in the river. She said they were all swimming when a rattler was crossing the river with its head and tail up out of the water coming right at them. They waited for it and killed it. I too have a rattlesnake story when we were doing the archaeological dig at the Smalley Cove Campground. . . .

When I was training for martial arts competition, I would run down from my house, 3 1/2 miles barefoot on the pavement and dive in the water, cool down, eat some blackberries or sourberries and run back home. In the summer time I would run in the afternoon or late evening, on the way back up the hill I would always see small rattlesnakes curled up in the pot holes in the road.

I consider Smalley Cove/Kerckhoff Lake - Tsobatebau, my home, my home land, it is where I grew up and still return today to play, socialize, and hold events so I can visit with my elders, relatives, friends and pass on the history and traditions of Chopatebau.