

Anderson Historical Society Newsletter
August 2018



Isolated grave of Leonard Noble off Zogg Mine Road and Horse
Canyon Way



Tom Edmunds cabin on the Shasta-Trinity County line associated with the Log Cabin, Little Lion and Black Rock Mines



Richland Baptist Church on Church Street in Ono.

There are three articles for the month of July 2018: 1) Notes from an interview with Vollie Bisnett, 2) J. P. W. Davis, and 3) Prairie Diggings found.

Notes from an Interview with Vollie Bisnett

Vollie Vern Bisnett was born in 1930 in Nebraska. Vollie was the son of Roy Bisnett (1904 Nebraska-1997 Texas) and Virginia Jane Mitchell (1908 Nebraska-2005 Texas). Vollie moved to Cottonwood in 1935 and was for years the State Trapper in Shasta County as well as a cowboy/care taker of the MacAulliffe Ranch near Gas Point. In 1954 he married Denie Bates in Shasta County. He was the brother of Barbara Clevenger. Vollie was interviewed in 2009 as part of a project to find missing graves in southwest Shasta County and it was intended do another interview after he recovered his trapping log

from storage but Vollie died in 2015 with the project unfinished. He was asked about his name and said Vollie was a Native American name from the Great Plains.

Vollie was first asked about the Milsaps' Gravesite near Fiddler's Creek. Mr. Bisnett stated that the current site was initially vandalized and the headstones stolen. Mr. Bisnett and other ranchers reconstructed the site that was composed of two graves. Mr. Bisnett was shown pictures of the site taken before the interview and stated one of the headstones is missing. It was his belief that there were two Milsaps girls drowned in Roaring River during a flood about 1887. Mr. Bisnett believes he might have the name of the second girl in his diary. He said if any one knows the sister of Howard Marx she might have details on the graves. (Note: there are no Milsaps children listed in the Coroner's Inquest Index. The Cemetery Index states there are four graves near Elsie Nora Milsaps who died in 1887 at age two, but lists them as "scattered graves.")



Milsap Cemetery

When asked why steal headstones, Mr. Bisnett responded that there was just some bad people and in the depression recovered marble was sold. Rough sandstone and broken stones were often left which is why a Cameron headstone was left at the Bland Cemetery near the Milsaps' graves.

When asked about the Bland Cemetery, Mr. Bisnett said it was long and thin. The cemetery was just south of the home site but the newer road is on the other side of the gulch making it isolated. Per Mr. Bisnett the site used to be beautiful with numerous marble headstones. He remembered one in particular, an angel with her hands raised and a dove on each hand. He stated that this was the single grave standing alone behind the long line of graves and belonged to the wife of Albert Diehle. He believed he knew who took the headstones but could not prove it. He stated the Sheriff Deputies used to be scared to come out where the big ranches were. Mr. Bisnett had a picture taken long after the destruction that showed the broken Cameron headstone along with a wooden unmarked headstone that has since been lost. (Note: the cemetery has three markers remaining: a triangular stone believed to mark a Wintu grave, a blank sandstone headstone and the broken headstone of D. E. Cameron died 1885 and believed to be half Wintu. The site is listed as containing Crissie, Gussie, and Millie Bland, D. E. Cameron, unknown Lockhart, unknown Raymond and five or six full blood Wintu.)



Bland Cemetery

Mr. Bisnett believed that there were two Cameron brothers buried in the Bland Cemetery and that the five or six full-blooded Wintu buried there also used the name Cameron. According to Mr. Bisnett the Camerons were very attached to the Bland family and worked all of their lives on the ranch. He stated that the two brothers had headstones (one remains) but the other Camerons may have had native rock markers.

Native American sites were discussed but we explained the group does not address them in articles in an attempt to preserve Native American graves. He understood and said he chased hundreds of artifact hunters off during his career. He told us some didn't even wait for death. He stated there was a racetrack on the MacAuliffe Ranch where folks both White and Wintu used to camp, picnic, and hold races. Many of the Wintu used to camp year after year on a knoll overlooking the site. As they were comfortable with the ranchers they left many of their items on the knoll for later use. Before long there were trespassers taking everything off the knoll but there was not much you could do but run them off.

Mr. Bisnett mentioned that many of the Native American grave sites along Cottonwood Creek were not destroyed by looters but by flooding. He used for an example the Marion Pierson homestead at the end of Bland Road where it hits Cottonwood Creek. He saw two graves opened by the flood. He said some of the burials were on the low benches along the creek and stated there were two types of graves. He stated, "common people were buried in a knee flexed sitting position but the chiefs were buried laying down." He stated that a number of ranchers along the creek reported similar conditions. When asked what happened to the skeletal remains he stated some ranchers moved the graves higher on the bank and covered them with cap stones while a few let nature take its course.

Mr. Bisnett in talking about Cottonwood Creek stated that he would always let some of the Wintu families know when the suckers and other fish were running. He particularly remembered a fishing trip with Juanita Shelton. After being told of the fish, Juanita grabbed a couple of burlap bags and was ready to go fishing. Upon arriving at Cottonwood Creek she looked for a deep hole in a quiet part of the creek. She placed one burlap bag on the bank where she could easily reach it, then opened a second bag and took out a hairy looking plant. Juanita dipped the plant in the water then rubbed and crushed it with her hands to create a whitish film. After a waiting awhile some of the fish would float up or Juanita would reach down into the pool to pull out the stunned fish. When she had enough fish in the bag, fishing was done. The fish were taken home to eat or dry. (The plant is called soaproot commonly or *Chlorogalum pomeridianum* and is edible as well as being used for soap, medicine and glue. The soapy substance is toxic to gill breathers but passes right through the human digestive system.)

Mr. Bisnett said some graves just disappeared over time. He said there used to be a grave near the first locked gate on Bland Road. He said there was a draw running off to the left that ran to a house and a windmill and below the house was a small miner's shack with a sunken grave. Mr. Bisnett believed the grave was on the Kenny Elwood property and feared the site might be plowed under.

When asked about the Lockmiller site on the Taylor Ranch, Mr. Bisnett stated there were concentric piles of rocks like graves. He knew the Chinese worked the area heavily but never speculated on a cemetery. The piles of rock were separated rather than piled row upon row like tailings. Mr. Bisnett volunteered that there was another Chinese burial site above Gas Point on Peltier's property. He describes the site as before starting up the steep hill there is a wide gate to the left that ran up to the Chinese settlement with graves.

Mr. Bisnett described how the Chinese mastered the gradient for the water flow in the ditches. He stated they had two 16-foot long boards and a water glass. The glass had the gradient etched on the side. After the depth requirement was met they would lay out the boards and place the glass on top. They would then adjust the floor until the water in the jar matched the etched line. They would then move to the next section and start all over again.

Mr. Bisnett reported that there was single grave at the Howard Marx House and two by the old sheep cabin on the King and Barry operation (near a big 30,000 gallon water tank) on the McAuliffe Ranch. As to the Williams' Ranch graves, Mr. Bisnett stated they were probably down near the Whiteman Adobe. He said that after leaving Whiteman's going towards the William's homestead there were two graves in a draw. When asked about the Whiteman Massacre, he said, he had been told about it by "Bud" Hickman. He believed it happened from the number of white ranchers and Wintu that mentioned the incident. Reportedly a small band of Wintu were killed except for two or three younger girls who jumped in the creek. He did not remember if Mrs. Diehl had been one of those survivors. Changing subjects he did mention that the old Hickman Ranch at Willow Springs was one of the most beautiful places to see when the wild flowers were blooming.

Mr. Bisnett said he could never prove the fact but he believed there was a man buried behind the Bland Homestead. He reported that the Bland site consisted of a cabin raised on a rock foundation and a blacksmith shop beside it to the south. Behind the house there is a knoll and someone had taken a "Fresno" (earth moving equipment) to the very top and partially buried it. It was Mr. Bisnett's belief that this that this was the grave of a man killed by Floyd Bland.

When asked about the graves at the old Gas Point School, he stated that there was a cemetery with a fence that was decorated on one side. He believed the graves were on the Hendrix property but were initially from the Drew family. James S. Drew had seven or eight children and he guessed there were five or six graves in the cemetery. He said a few of the Drew family were in the Tuttle Gulch Cemetery.

At the Sylvester Homestead there was a grave on the creek but he believed it was plowed under. He stated most of the isolated graves had wooden markers at best. As the years went by and the property changed hands the graves were unremarkable and were destroyed by farming and ranching. He stated cattle were particularly hard on unfenced sites. He thought there had been a cemetery at Begum from the Wolcott family but he never saw any graves.

During Mr. Bisnett's talk he mentioned a few local geographical names . One on the Hickman Ranch was Dinosaur Gulch named for a large fossil found there. He stated that Aiken Gulch was named for Fred Aiken and runs from King Flat. Mr. Bisnett stated that what many ranchers called Aiken Gulch is different from what is shown on modern maps. Mr. Bisnett brought up another name we had heard before: Andersonville. He stated that the old ranchers called the flat containing foundations and chimneys above the Roy Graves' Ranch on Duncan Creek the town of Andersonville. He said he never knew why (it was named for John Anderson who was living there with his family in 1882). He said not all the names were not known extensively and some by a very few. One is a gulch just past a foundation on Crow Flat that is called Missum Gulch. He said a hunting party shot at a large buck and failed to hit him forever after it was Missum Gulch.

Mr. Bisnett reported that a number of times he had problems with the University of California.: He states that they were hunting for Chinese artifacts on the Thommason place without permission and had to be ordered off. He said the moved off McAuliffe land but spent a few weeks on other land digging. He heard they dug the Smith graves on Platina Road and had to be ordered off by Dennis Sheridan. (The Sheridan family said someone had dug up the old Smith site and had been run off but weren't sure they were really related to the university.)

In speaking of the McAuliffe Ranch, Mr. Bisnett stated he used to drive cattle for the Trinity Land and Cattle Company. He stated the cattle were driven from the Bald Hills and held at Gas Point until ready to move. The route was over Muletown Road then to Whiskeytown and over the divide into Trinity County. The drives continued into the early 1940s. He said they never worried about strays as all the cowboys had dogs that would round up the "break-aways." He said once ten cows broke away in the steep canyon along Muletown Road and rather than endanger the cowboys a couple of dogs were sent after them. The main herd moved on to French Gulch where camp was made. About two hours later, along came all ten strays with the dogs behind.

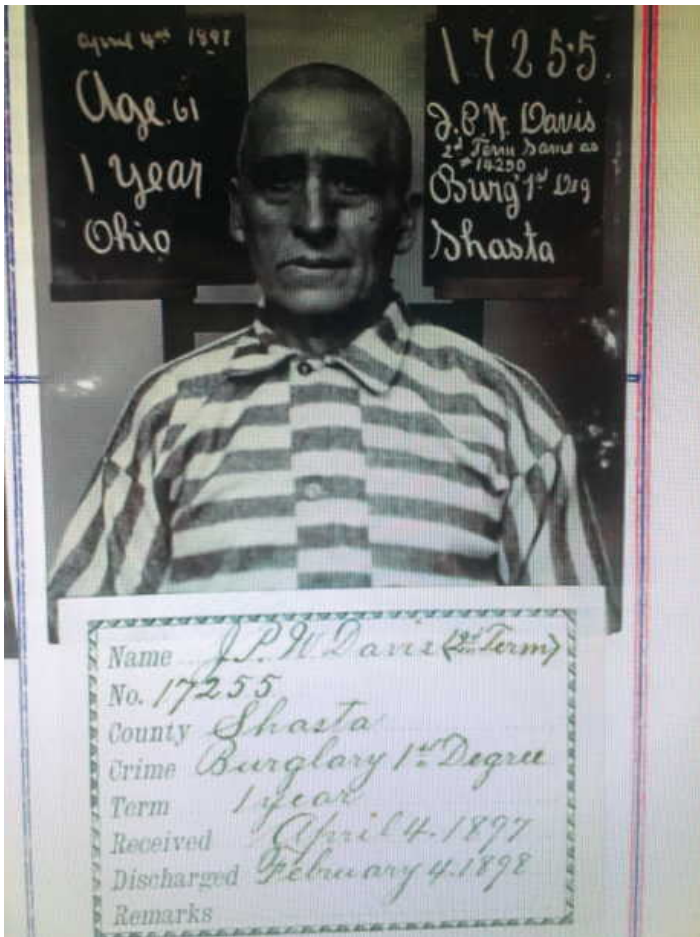
J. P. W. Davis

"History is not a science," is a fairly well known expression but some of our local "history" isn't history either. The case in point is the Shasta County Biography for Joseph P. W. Davis 1832-1924. The biography describes him as a member of the Eagle Creek Baptist Church, a loving family man and "the old guard of Shasta County." The only problem is his name is Josiah Patrick William Davis, he was kicked out of the Eagle Creek Baptist Church for unchristian conduct, and the "old guard" often

had a guard as he was a three-time felon.

The real biography should read Josiah Patrick William Davis: born about 1836 in Ohio. In 1860 while living in Howard County, Indiana he reportedly was being beaten by his father, P. P. Davis and struck back killing his father. He was reportedly sentenced to two years in prison. In 1863 he married Mary Emeline Buchanan (born 1844 in Kentucky; the daughter of Rev. F. C. Buchanan). After the birth of their daughter Carolista (1864 Indiana) the family crossed the Great Plains and through Donner Pass to Sonoma County. Josiah was by trade a printer. In 1867 he registered in Mendocino County as a printer but by 1868 he was back at Healdsburg in Sonoma County. In 1868 he was listed as the ex-editor of the Democratic Standard newspaper and was noted as being shot in the face by the new editor who was the husband of one of his children. For the U.S. Census of 1870 Josiah was listed as a printer in Sonoma County. In 1870 Josiah was also registered as a printer in San Francisco and in 1873 as a printer at Eagle Creek. According to a Shasta Courier article in April 1864 he discovered a rich gold strike at what was to become Sunny Hill. In the 1880 U.S. Census he was listed as a miner and known to be living at Sunny Hill. In 1881 both Josiah and Mary had joined the Richland Baptist Church in Ono and although Mary was well respected, "the hand of fellowship was withdrawn" from Josiah in November 1882 for disorderly and unchristian conduct. In 1884, 1886 and again in 1888 Josiah was registered as a printer in Alameda County. In 1885 he was listed as farming 158 acres in Ono. From 1890 to 1892 Josiah did a term at San Quentin for what appears to be petty larceny. In 1892 Josiah was listed as a miner at Sunny Hill and in 1896 a miner in Ono. From April 1897 to February 1898 Josiah served a term at San Quentin Prison for burglary. In 1910 Josiah was living alone as a gold miner at Stella. Mary died in 1886 and was buried in the Ono Cemetery and Josiah died in 1923 after a stay in the Shasta County Hospital and is buried in the Old Shasta County Hospital Cemetery. Josiah and Mary had six children: Carolista 1864 Indiana (listed as Carrie in 1870), Mary E. about 1866 in California (listed as Etta in 1870), Charles Olive about 1868 in California (listed as Oliver in 1870), Annie L. about 1870 in California, Ella May about 1874 in California, and Ida E. A. about 1878 in California. One of Josiah and Mary's children was buried at Sunny Hill but Josiah is not listed on the Government Land Office records so the location is unknown.

Per the Shasta County Biographies Joseph P. W. Davis "owned and operated the Anderson Enterprise." The newspaper was started in 1885 but no connection to Josiah Davis was found.



San Quentin mug shot for J. P. W. Davis 1897

Prairie Digging Found

The modern history of the Ono area starts in 1849 as miners from the Clear Creek Diggings start to follow the placer gold up the gulches to the plateau at modern Igo and discovered rich gold deposits in the ancient river channels. Due to resistance from the local Wintu initial progress was slow but in the hopes of new gold discoveries prospectors continued to try and open up new gold fields. One of the men who spurred that desire was an Oregon miner named Engles who reported rich finds to a group he met at Cottonwood. Engles told a tale of being driven off by Indians after only a few hours of digging. After equipping Engles the party started off up Cottonwood Creek but after a few miles Engles either slipped away or was "lost," never to be seen again locally. The party returned to Cottonwood then to their original destination of Clear Creek. The rumor grew that Engles had slipped away and was working his bounteous find. Parties were organized to prospect in the Cottonwood area but each met fierce resistance at the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek.

In early 1850 a group of twelve well-armed miners from Clear Creek led by Abraham Cunningham set off on foot to search for the Engles' diggings. The party contained members who were good hunters and woodsmen as well as one who had lived with the Crow Indians on the Great Plains. The party crossed Eagle Creek about where Platina Road enters modern Ono then fell trees to cross North Fork of Cottonwood Creek near the mouth of Hoover Creek. Once on the western bank the Wintu began to show themselves in force. The party found gold near what would become Watson Gulch but threatened by the Wintu and running short of food the party built a brush "fort" on the ridge for protection from arrows. Rather than using force the party decided to talk to the Wintu and using broken Spanish and hand signs came to an agreement to respect the Wintu food resources and people. In return the Wintu showed the Cunningham party the rich gold area in the Arbuckle Basin.

With the confirmation of gold at Watson Gulch and rich diggings in the Arbuckle Basin little could be done to stop the trickle, then flood of miners into southwestern Shasta County. Small placer mining settlements were quickly established at the junction of Eagle Creek and the North Fork of Cottonwood known as Junction and a settlement near the junction of Huling Creek and the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek known as Prairie Diggings. Junction quickly became known as Eagle Creek. As placer deposits declined many of the miners drifted off to other local camps near Bald Hills, Roaring River, or the Middle Fork of Cottonwood Creek. Some moved to the diggings in Trinity County or tried their luck at Arbuckle or the new discoveries at Nigger Hill near Watson Gulch. As placer gold deposits began to pay less and less the area around Ono and the Bald Hills began to transition into a more balanced economy with ranchers and farmers.

By 1857 Priarie Diggings had sufficient surrounding population to be organized into a voting precinct but by the advent of the 1860-61 tax assessment little was left but the farms of W. V. Murphy and Edward Sheridan. Eagle Creek was holding on with the farms of W. L. Jamison, George Ball, and C. G. Wayne as well as the Stockton & Andrews sawmill. On the tax assessment roll there was a new entry: Hubbard's. Samuel Hubbard had come to Shasta County with the specific intent to farm

and settled on the east side of Eagle Creek. His farm quickly became a stopping place for those traveling between Horsetown and Piety Hill and the western mines.

1860 brought a change that effected all three locations. Shasta County took over the Stockton & Andrews road from Piety Hill to their sawmill at Eagle Creek making it a public road. The public road was extended to the town of Bald Hills where there were connecting trails to Ludwig's Bridge on Cottonwood Creek and Watson Gulch and Arbuckle further west. The problem with the new public road was that it bypassed Prairie Diggings and Eagle Creek making Hubbard's the stage stop for both communities. Neither town was far from the stage stop but far enough away not to promote commerce. Within a short period stores, blacksmith shops, saloons and hotels relocated along what was then known as Stage Road taking the name of Eagle Creek with them. The only exception to the name seemed to be W. A. Baker's Shasta and Red Bluff Express that continued to call the stop Eagle Rock.

As the population of Prairie Diggings transitioned into stock ranching and became more spread out the exact location of the mining community disappeared. Locals basically said it is over by Junkins Road but were not sure if it was where Huling Creek joined the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek or closer to Platina Road where there are a number of old tailing piles. The Dutch Gulch Lake Intensive Cultural Resources Survey solved the problem. The survey noted archaeology sites CA-Sha-1212 and CA-Sha-1227 (the John Silver Homestead and the William Shepard Adkins Homestead) as being the location of Prairie Diggings. According to Government land office records William Shepard Adkins owned the north half of the southwest quarter of section 8 in Township 30 North Range 6 West and John Silver owned the south half of the northeast quarter, the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter and the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter all in section 8 in Township 30 North Range 6 West. Prairie Diggings was thus located about one mile above the junction of Huling Creek and the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek and about three miles east of current Ono.

