

Crane Valley



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Madera County

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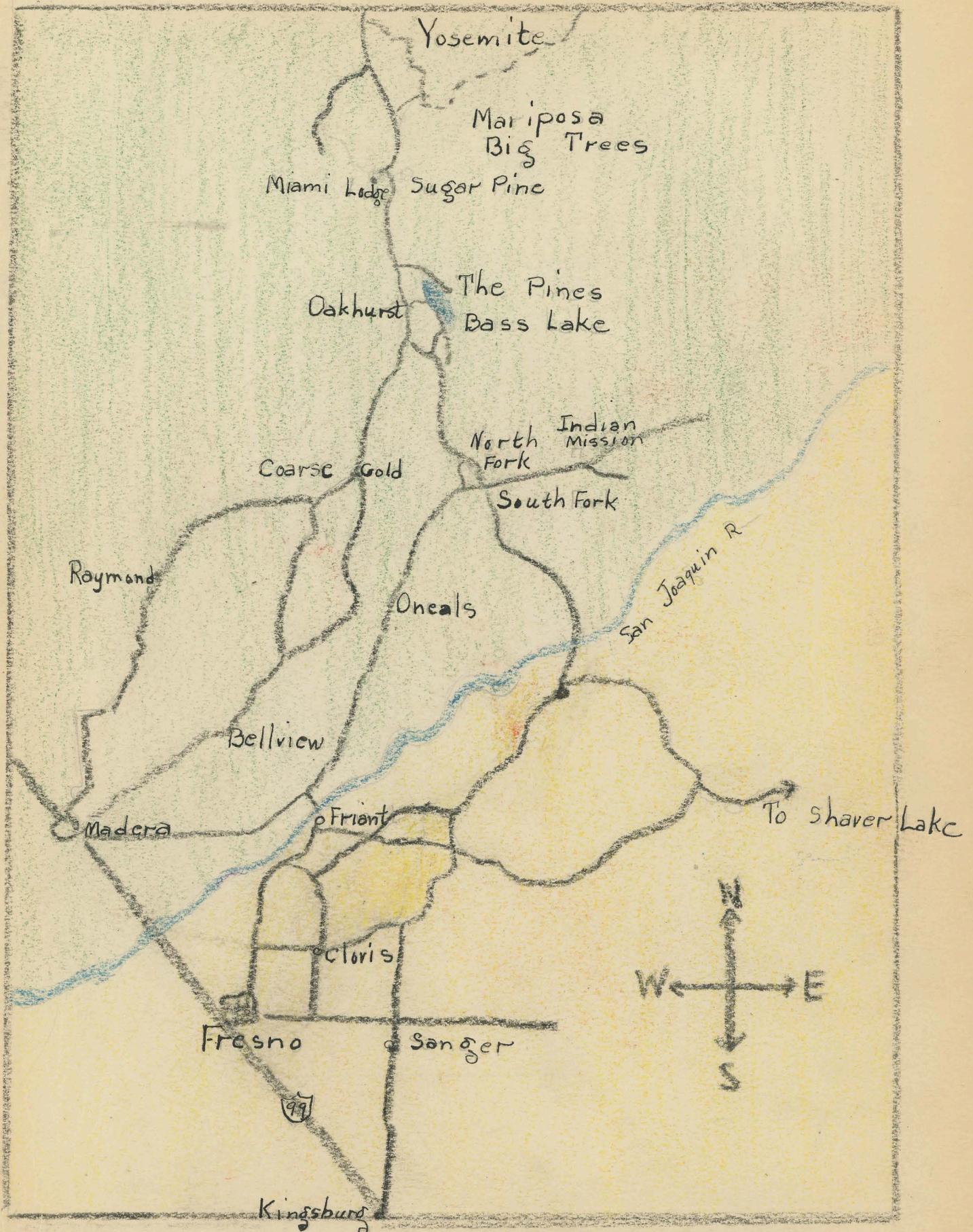
THE STORY
of
CRANE VALLEY

✓ Map. 1

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DEDICATED TO--
MRS. GEORGE TEAFORD
TO WHOM WE ARE
INDEBTED FOR
THE HISTORY OF
CRANE VALLEY



C R A N E V A L L E Y

Mono Indians



Crane Valley

Great flocks of Sandhill cranes nested in the tall grass of the valley where Bass Lake is now. Indians hunting for duck eggs often scared up huge bands of cranes. Now only the name of these beautiful birds remains.

The Eagle clan of the Mono tribe of Indians lived in Crane Valley. Hunting, fishing, and frequently warring with neighboring clans they lived here many decades.

Their homes were teepees made of cedar bark. A hole at the top allowed the smoke to escape. When it rained the hole was covered up with a piece of bark and the fire was covered too. Fire was a precious thing to these natives. The making of fire was a rite performed by certain men of the tribe only. They made it with white flint. Striking the white flint against a rock the spark caught powdered Slippery Elm branches. The Indians went many miles "over the mountains" for their flint.

Before the white men came to Crane Valley the Indians were contented to live off of nature. Nature provided plenty. There were wild ducks all year round providing meat and eggs. The Indian children hunted for duck eggs. One egg was broken to test the freshness of the eggs and then part of them were gathered. They always left some eggs to be hatched. They didn't eat the Crane's eggs. Geese migrated through the valley in the spring and fall and occasionally these birds brought

down with arrows and later with bullets provided food for the people. Deer were plentiful and using a large arrow the early Indians killed them for food. But the foods nature provided most generously were wild grains, berries, and nuts gathered in the woods. Large acreages were burned over twice to kill the brush. The first time the brush was burned in the spring; the second time it was burned in the fall. The following spring, the grass, berries, and wild barley came up. The people went out gathering manzanita berries from young bushes, elderberries, gooseberries, ~~loganberries~~ and sourberries and strawberries. They gathered wild barley, and many nuts. Acorns were gathered in the fall and used to make bread and mush. The manzanita berries made cider and the sourberry made vinegar for the Indians. The holes in which the women ground up grains are still to^{be} found in many flat rocks.

As time went on more white men came to the valley marrying Indian women. They then began to till the soil. Some of the crops which they raised were barley, buckwheat, oats, timothy, and corn. Every family had a garden growing potatoes, turnips, cabbage, and many other vegetables. They traded their surplus for cloth and other things they needed. They made long trips to Stockton in crude wagons drawn by oxen. Stockton was the trading center until a store was opened at Coarsegold and later Oakhurst.

Many times they had very little to trade because

crops in the valley were often frozen. After an early frost one year which killed a large crop of buckwheat and barley, most of the Indians left the valley. The stench of the decaying barley was unbearable.

Moving to Mariposa some of them saw their first Chinese people who swarmed these hills panning for gold. More important however, they saw cattle, and the children had milk to drink. Coming back to their valley they brought cows and so added to their food supply. They each had a herd of hogs too. Obstinate hogs had one eye sewed shut to keep them with the herd.

The fields were plowed with crude shovel plows fashioned out of oak logs and plow share.

Many white men took up homesteads. Dick Dunlap homesteaded behind Goat Mountain and planted the first apple and pear trees in this region about fifty years ago. The trees are still bearing fruit. The ranch is now owned by George Teaford.

The origin of the name of Goat Mountain is interesting. A man living near Northfork brought in a herd of goats. He turned them loose on Goat Mt. where they ran wild. Since then the mountain has been called Goat Mountain. In the early days the Indians used Goat Mt. for a lookout in times of war. Seated on top the mountain the warriors could detect the slightest movement in the valley.

More and more white people were coming into the valley. The Indians were now living a more settled life.

Many had married white men. The children of these marriages were different from the older Indians. They wanted education and things the white people had.

The only school in this region about sixty years ago was about ~~six~~^{three} miles from The Forks. The little half-breed children and Indian children trudged happily to school one morning. But these children weren't to receive the benefits of education yet. They were not allowed to attend school. Bitterly disappointed they turned their backs on school forever. Much of the bitterness still exists in the people who were excluded. A few years later a school was started at Cascadel, but only a few Indian children attended. It wasn't until the mission at Northfork was established that all Indian children were educated.

So the children received no formal education, but they were taught many useful things necessary for their simple life. They had to learn to make teepees, fish, hunt, and to make baskets.

The women ground the corn with a heavy stone mortar. This mortar, as well as all other possessions, was buried with the woman. This was an ancient custom among the Indians. Whenever a member of the family died, all possessions were buried with the dead Indian and the family left that camping ground. They mourned for two years.

The Mono Indians made beautiful baskets. The designs were typical Indian designs. Different materials were used for these baskets. Fern roots made particularly fine baskets

which could be used to cook mush. Other baskets were fashioned to gather berries in. A skillful berry gatherer could turn the basket in such a way that separated the berries from the sand and gravel. A very fine water jug was braided from fern roots with a sagebrush stopper and covered with fir pitch. This jug kept water icy cold for many hours. Many baskets were made of red bud. The California Indians were the only Indians that used red bud because the red bud grows only in California. However, these red bud baskets weren't waterproof. The hazelnut made a very fine basket too. Soapstone utensils were carved out of soapstone and used for cooking. There was an abundance of natural clay, but the Mono Indians didn't make pottery.

The children had very little to amuse themselves with. They rode pintos. They learned to ride young and had great fun racing up and down the valley. In groups they played a game of hide-the-black-stick. Seated in two circles one circle guessed who had the black stick in the other circle. The game they enjoyed most was lacrosse.

Sickness in the early days was healed by potions brewed from herbs found in this region.

The Catholic Church had tried to Christianize the Indians, but white settlers chased off the priest who was charging a dollar apiece for services.

The discovery of gold in California left it's mark among the Indians. They too panned for gold in the waters

of Crane Valley Creek. Mrs. George Teaford had a mining claim now covered by Bass Lake.

Although Crane Valley Creek contained gold it had no fish. George Teaford, in about 1885, brought trout in buckets from Whiskey creek and planted them in the valley creek.

BASS LAKE

Power



Map. 1



The Spillway



Crane Valley Power House



Crane Valley Power House

Power

In 1895 and 1896 a hydroelectric system was started which developed into the present San Joaquin Light and Power system. It was started by the San Joaquin Electric Co. in the vicinity of Fresno.

The success of the Southern California plants seemed assured so John S. Eastwood, a practicing civil engineer of Fresno investigated various power sites. The sight most feasible was along the north fork of the San Joaquin River. Tentative plans for the development were completed during the last part of 1894, and on April 2, 1895, the San Joaquin Electric Co. was organized. The new concern was headed by Mr. John J. Seymour and Mr. Eastwood. The company was capitalized at \$800,000.

These people owned and operated the Fresno City Water Works and were bitterly opposed by the Fresno Gas Works who then controlled the lighting system of Fresno City. It was the days before cooking with gas and it looked like they'd be put out of business. Late Fulton G. Berry, looked upon as the plutocrat, was the principle figure in the gas works and proprietor of the Grand Central Hotel. He Conceived the idea of buying riparian land on the South Fork Canyon, above the intake of the power company, and diverting all the water and using it to irrigate chaparral. This took

all the water out of the stream. It did the deadly work of causing the power plant to go into hands of receivers.

The receiver, San Joaquin Light and Power Co., issued certificates and financed the building of a small reservoir that held 2,650 acre feet adjacent to the present dam of Crane Valley. Now, it holds 50,000 acre feet.

In about 1875 the Quartz Mountain Mining Company built a ditch from the present site of the dam, location occupied by the No. 3 ditch, and expected to take the water to Quartz Mountain for the purpose of operating a gold mill to furnish water for the plates. This company built a beautiful residence on top of Quartz Mountain with a beautiful view of the country around it. There were 8 or 10 bedrooms, plenty to drink, and there they waited for the completion of the ditch in comfort. After the ditch was completed, they started a sawmill to cut the lumber for flumes on their ditch line and were so indiscreet as to cut down Government timber. The United States Marshall arrested them and they were released on \$10,000 cash bail. They forfeited their bail bond and haven't been heard of since, although it is said that some people of this community are descendants from some of the company.

Mr. A. G. Wishon tells an interesting story of the San Joaquin Electric. "They had many accidents to their plant that were costly. When ready to start the hydro power house, the expert selected for that arduous duty was a

raw German electrical engineer, who could hardly speak our language. He forgot to put the nozzles on the pressure pipe, permitting a deluge of water to flood the power house floor. In the excitement, he touched the trigger of a quick acting valve and shut off the water instantaneously. This burst the pipe line, about 400 feet above the power house, and the rapid flow of water through the break collapsed the balance of the line to the top of the hill. After his error, the German engineer walked down the road without hat or coat, made his way over the hill roads at night and took the morning train out of Madera to San Francisco where he drew his money out of the old German Bank. He was next heard from in Germany.

"It required four months for them to get into operation again, using the water company's foreman to install the pipe."

The Crane Valley Dam is an enlargement of an old structure now built into its upstream side. It is an earth and rock fill with a concrete wall.

The original dam was put into service in 1901. The initial capacity was 2,650 acre feet. The present dam has a crest elevation of 3,380 feet above sea level. The area of water surface at 3,375 feet, the normal maximum,

is 1,157 acres, and the capacity of the reservoir at that elevation is 45,336 acre feet. In 1921 the Sugar Pine Lumber Company added earth and rock making the dam its present width for the construction of their tracks.

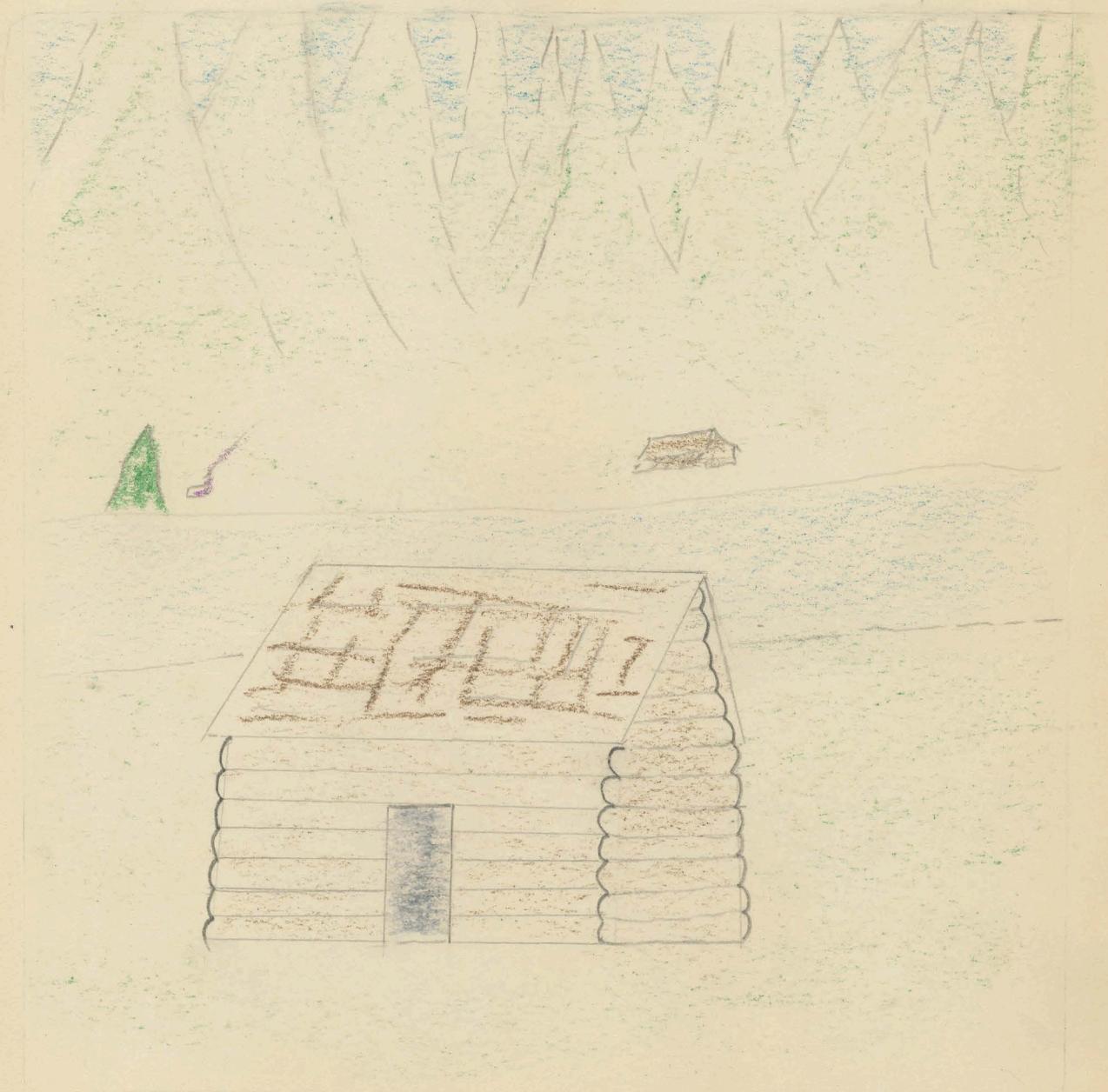
Water is admitted through a gate tower to a tunnel outlet passing under the dam.

In addition to the tunnel outlet the reservoir is provided with a spillway at the east end of the dam. The upper part of the spillway is paved, but the lower part is cut in native granite.

The area of the reservoir at the 5,376 foot level is 1,172 acres and its capacity is 46,500 acre feet.

BASS LAKE

Resorts



Resorts

Taking roads once built for the transportation of machinery and equipment for the construction of power houses, dams, and long transmission lines, thousands of people may find their way to Bass Lake.

It is one of the most popular spots in this region. It is easily accessible. Thousands of vacationists spend the summer here. Wishon Cove, a summer camp for employees of the San Joaquin Light and Power Corporation, is one of the very fine recreational grounds for employees of one company.

There are numerous public camp grounds situated on the lovely lake.

The oldest resort on the lake is The Pines started by Mr. Day. The next resort to be started was The Falls owned by Claude Williams. McDougald's Lakeview Resort was the next resort to be started. It is about twenty years old. Mr. Spenhoff proprietor of The Forks has had his resort 13 years.

The elevation is nearly four thousand feet. The lake is long and meandering. Many streams flow into the lake. Fishing is excellent. One may fish for bass, crappie, and trout.

Nearby major attractions are as follows:
Yosemite Valley; Mariposa Grove of Big Trees ; Beasore
Meadows; Chiquita Creek; Jackass Meadows; The Minarets;
The Basin of the San Joaquine River.

Stream fishing is easily accomplished for
there are a large number of suitable streams near.

Bass Lake is indeed an ideal spot for summer
vactioning.



The Forks Store

The Pines Store



The Falls Store



Lakeview Store



The Falls Creek



A Portion of
Bass Lake

