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A Chronicle of Murphys Rancheria (*Mol-Pee-So*): An Historic Central Sierra Miwok Village

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MURPHYS Rancheria was located about one mile from the town of Murphys, California, within the territory of the Central Sierra Miwok (Fig. 1). Situated on an exposed ridgetop that received gusty, southwest winds, the site was not an ideal Miwok village setting as described in the ethnographic literature. There was no economically viable water source until 1853 when the North Ditch mining canal was constructed to provide water for the Ora Plata and other mines in the region. It is probable that this Miwok rancheria would never have existed at its recorded location had not whites and other Euroamericans established themselves in the territory in 1848. As it is, occupation at the settlement was brief, probably lasting only fifty years (ca. 1870-1920). By the time the residents began building their houses at this location they apparently had been on the move for several decades and were then well adapted to Euroamerican technology and lifeways.

This article summarizes the fragmentary notes, unpublished and published literature (including numerous photographs taken of the village during the 1900s), and the most recent studies involving ethnography, archival research, and archaeology at the village (Maniery 1982a). The main goals are to place Murphys in a cultural-historical setting, con-

vey contemporary values and concerns expressed by non-Indians and native Americans over the disposition of the village (site), and to illuminate the importance of concurrently using archaeological, historical, and ethnographic methods to present a more complete picture on the subject.

METHODOLOGY

Research at Murphys Rancheria was designed along similar lines as work undertaken at another Central Sierra Miwok village known as *Kosoimuno-nu*, and commonly referred to by Miwok consultants as Six Mile Rancheria (Fig. 1).¹ Specifically, the methodology involved documentary research at various California repositories and (through correspondence) an examination of documents and photographs on file at the Smithsonian Institution and the American Museum of Natural History.² This research resulted in the collection of several black-and-white photographs of the rancheria taken over a period of nine years (1898-1906). Another element entailed bringing native American consultants into the field to aid in the identification of archaeological features and also to gather extant information on ethnography and contemporary concerns. Finally, an archaeological survey was conducted and the site was mapped with a transit by a team of archaeologists and volunteers.

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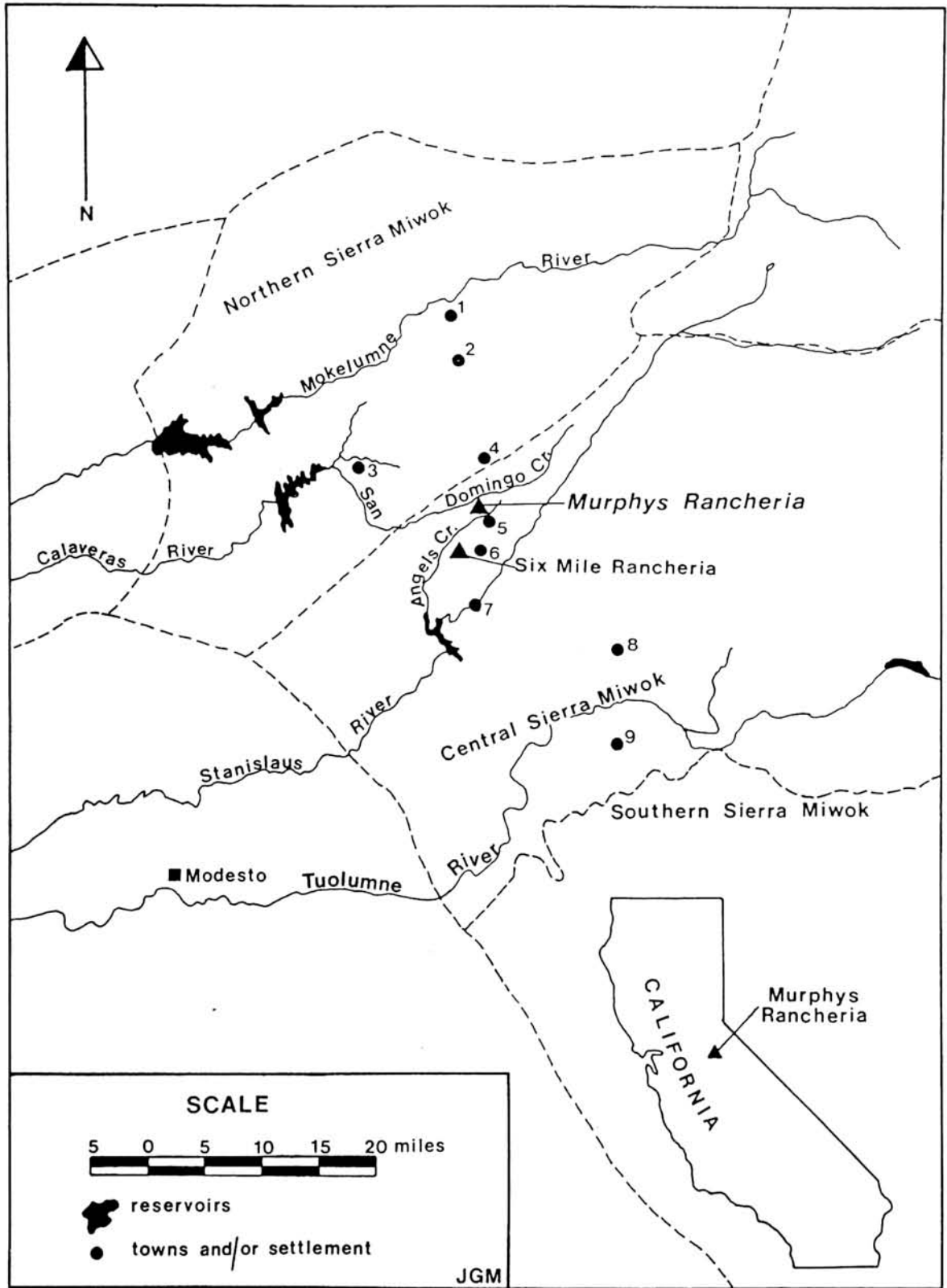


Fig. 1. Location Map. 1—West Point, 2—Railroad Flat, 3—San Andreas, 4—Sheep Ranch, 5—Murphys, 6—Vallecito, 7—Melones, 8—Tuolumne, 9—Groveland.

PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED
ACCOUNTS: 1898-1982

The earliest documented ethnological work on Murphys Rancheria appears to have been conducted by W. H. Holmes (Head Curator, Department of Anthropology, National Museum, Washington D.C.). Holmes, assisted by ethnologist W. J. McGee (also from the National Museum) made a visit to Murphys and several other Miwok villages in the region in 1898. This journey was not specifically oriented toward ethnographic work. Instead, these men were primarily interested in several reports concerning early human finds associated with auriferous gravels in Calaveras County (Holmes 1902: 61).

Holmes and McGee discovered Murphys while traveling from Mercer Cave towards the town of Murphys. They described the physical setting as a "partially wooded ridge" and noted an Indian village comprised of half-dozen dwelling places (Holmes 1902: 172). Holmes (1902: 172) also elaborated upon two houses at the village, as follows:

They are round and upward of 25 feet in diameter. The walls are formed of planks and the roof is covered with clap boards radiating from a conical shingled chimney. The framework is of poles and the construction did not differ essentially from that of the aboriginal roundhouse of many tribes.

In one of the houses was quite a store of basketry, some of the pieces evidently home-made, but others the work of the Paiute and other neighboring tribes. Within the group of houses was an interesting granary—a tall wattle work receptacle resting upon a stem of wood and further supported by four marginal poles. Its purpose was no doubt to place the crop of acorns, corn, or other food material beyond the reach of rats and pigs.

As further described by Holmes (1902: 172), "The men and women [of the village were] busy with domestic affairs, [conducting] work in a large roofed structure, open at the

sides ...". In addition, he observed two women pounding acorns in a conical shelter located on a slope below the village.

C. Hart Merriam was the next investigator to visit and record information on the village at Murphys.³ Twice he came in contact with the Miwok residents; the first contact occurred in 1900 and was followed by another visit in 1902. Apparently there were "eight adults and seven children living at the village in 1900;" however, when he returned two years later only one family resided there (Merriam 1967: 333). As pointed out in unpublished field notes, most of the Indians Merriam encountered during his first visit had died by the time he returned in 1902 (Merriam 1900 - 1930).

Apart from some tenuous population figures for the rancheria, Merriam also recorded the name of the village in 1907, spelling it *Kut-Too-Gah* (1900 - 1930: 345). It has been pointed out in two studies that Merriam's spelling for this village name is practically identical to that used for the site by Kroeber (1925); i.e., *Kutuka* (cf. Hall 1978: 108; McCarthy 1980: 260). In the current research a Miwok consultant suggested that residents of Murphys referred to it by a nickname—*Mol-Pee-So*. He offered no particular reason or explanation for this name, only to say, "That's what people used to call it." More importantly, this consultant did not recall the names listed by Merriam and Kroeber. In 1900, A. M. Tozzer recorded a similar spelling, *Mol pe zió*, which he was told meant "ear plugs" (1900:7). It is this author's conjecture that there may be a correlation between this nickname and the fact that the rancheria was situated on the ridge directly above a stamp mill operated by the Ora Plata Mine.

Merriam also purchased baskets while at Murphys.⁴ On one particular visit, August 24, 1900, he bought a basket from Lizzy Domingo. On this same visit he encountered a

woman approximately ninety years old who sold him a cooking basket used for making acorn mush. Merriam learned that the Stephens brothers (storekeepers at Murphys) had bought many of the baskets made by these Indians. He was able to purchase a "magnificent" large, acorn-cooking basket which the brothers had bought from an old woman at a camp six miles north of Murphys and two miles south of Sheep Ranch (Merriam 1900-1930).

S. A. Barrett and E. W. Gifford also conducted ethnological research in Miwok territory beginning in 1906, and covered different areas in northern, southern, and central parts of the Sierra region. In 1933,

they co-authored what may be considered the most comprehensive reference on the Miwok (*Miwok Material Culture*).

Barrett made at least one known visit to the rancheria in 1906. He took two photographs, one depicting the village layout (Fig. 2), including a roundhouse and dwellings, and the second showing a young boy standing in front of a storage area (Fig. 3).⁵ A Miwok consultant told the present author that he believed the boy in the second photo could either be himself or his brother.

Although it is uncertain if Gifford actually visited the village at Murphys, it is undisputable that he interviewed John Jeff, who was living nearby at Six Mile Rancheria



Fig. 2. Murphys Rancheria in 1906. Photograph taken by S. A. Barrett (courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley).



Fig. 3. Murphys Rancheria in 1906 (storage area). Photograph taken by S. A. Barrett (courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley).

(*Kosoimuno-nu*) in 1917. He used Jeff as an interpreter when speaking with Dr. George, a Miwok doctor who lived in the Murphys area. He learned that various dances and ceremonies were held at Murphys, among them the *tula*, *hiweyi*, *yahuha*, *sulesko*, *luhuyi*, *aletu*, and *kamini*.⁶

C. P. Wilcomb, unlike Gifford, was not interested in the types of dances and ceremonies the Miwok traditionally practiced. Instead, Wilcomb (founder and curator of the Oakland Public Museum) was interested in the preservation of material cultural objects from Murphys and other California Indian villages

(Frye 1979: 64). In 1911, Wilcomb purchased baskets from John Techumseh who was living at the settlement. Wilcomb was later to trade these baskets to the American Museum of Natural History in exchange for natural history objects. These baskets remain with the museum in New York.

A number of published sources have included much less formal presentations—non-anthropologically oriented—than those presented above. Some, in fact, have been anecdotal, harkening back to stories handed down through generations (Burrows 1971; Castro and Castro 1972; Kaler 1953; Morley

1964; Schwoerer 1964; Wood 1948). Other sources, still generalized but addressed more toward the Miwok as a group, have included photographs of the rancheria (Conrotto 1973; Engbeck 1973; Goodrum 1969).

Besides appearing in these publications, Murphys has also been referred to in several unpublished manuscripts. For example, the rancheria and some of its residents of 1900 are mentioned in two large-scale cultural resource management studies undertaken within the vicinity of Central Sierra Miwok territory (McCarthy 1980; Theodoratus et al. 1976). Hall (1978) conducted an ethnohistorical study of the Central Miwok and cited this rancheria as part of a Master of Arts thesis project. Rose (1971) also presented a Master of Arts thesis on the territory of the Miwok which discussed Murphys Rancheria in the context of a later settlement period (post-1900). Theodoratus and Parsons (1980) included Murphys and several other ethnographic villages in their ethnohistoric account of Miwok living in Calaveras County before and after 1850. The most comprehensive study of Murphys was conducted in 1980 and 1981 (Maniery 1982a). This research incorporated ethnographic, historical, and archaeological methods and compared similarities and differences between Murphys and Six Mile Rancheria.

Perhaps on a more technical level, Murphys has also been described in a preliminary excavation report (Napton 1973). Napton selected the site because of its possible destruction by a proposed subdivision and in order to teach a field class in archaeology to students at Columbia and Stanislaus colleges. He specifically tested a roundhouse depression to see (1) whether the floor and other features were indeed present; and (2) to determine whether structural beams, wall remnants, and other material might be present which would enable the investigators to ascertain the dimensions and former appearance of

the buildings as depicted in early photos. The excavation did not reveal intact structural remains as anticipated. Instead, it was hypothesized that rubble resulting from the structure's burning in the late 1920s may have been disturbed in the intervening decades.

From what has been said so far in this paper, it is clear that Murphys attracted the attention of a variety of scholars, beginning with the work of early anthropologists. Since the rancheria was in close proximity to the town of Murphys—a booming mining town of the 1850s—its residents also experienced interaction with the white population. In the following section information summarized above, along with current oral interviews and archaeological data (site survey and mapping), is focused on village cultural geography. Included specifically are the village dwellers, location of houses, ceremonial building, cemetery, non-structural edifices, subsistence practices, and a description of the physical environment.

CURRENT RESEARCH: 1980-1981

Physical Environment

The settlement was confined to a narrow ridgetop above the Ora Plata Mine (Fig. 4) and had an area of approximately three acres (1.2 hectares). The terrain was undulating and, by 1900, there were several trees growing on the rancheria and the brush was kept under control by residents. Today, the site is densely forested with buck brush, manzanita, blue oak, and digger pine.

Angels and San Domingo creeks are the primary water sources. Miwok consultants mentioned a spring situated northeast of the rancheria but this was dry in 1900. The North Ditch, built in 1853 to facilitate mining operations, was the main source of water for the village.

Geologically, the area is composed of



Fig. 4. Ora Plata Mine with Murphys Rancheria on hillside in background, ca. 1901 (courtesy of Milton B. Smith).

metavolcanic schists and limestone outcrops exposed in many areas of the ridge. Metamorphic rocks of the Calaveras Formation (marble and schist) and igneous dikes of quartz diorite, along with quartz veins that run parallel to the dikes (these quartz veins contain gold), characterize the geology of the Murphys Rancheria site (Milton B. Smith, personal communication 1980).

Village Residents

Between 1896 and 1906, Ruren Domingo lived at this settlement with his parents, Sam Casoose and Lizzy Domingo, who may have arrived around 1870 when the rancheria was first occupied. Other families and individuals, such as Jack (Big Boot Jack) and Sally,

Captain Yellowjacket, Lucy, Chuella, Susie, and occasional visitors, lived at Murphys at the turn of the century.

Casoose Family. Shortly after arriving in the Murphys area during 1870, Sam Casoose Domingo (*Ah-chah-Mee-Koh* [Fig. 5]) married Lizzy Yaki. He came from Second Garrottee, by Groveland, and was said to have lived near "Hangman's Tree." Sam, brought up by a Spanish family in Columbia, California, decided to change his name and adopted Domingo. This change occurred in 1914, when the Casoose children enrolled in the Murphys school. Sam Casoose Domingo is remembered to some degree in published articles (Gifford 1955; Kroeber and Heizer 1968; Schworer 1964) and to an even greater degree by local Miwok consultants; foremost

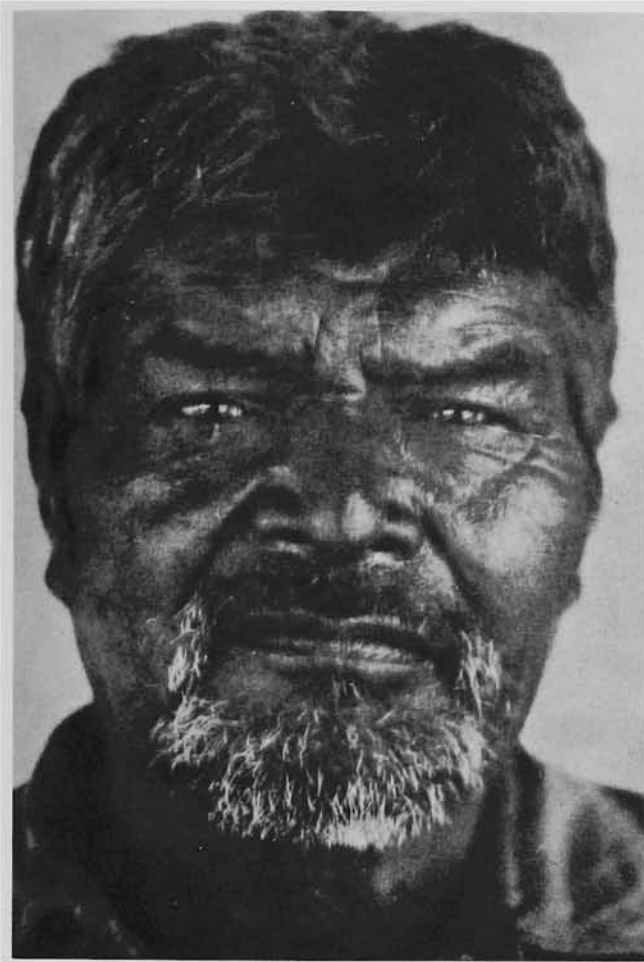


Fig. 5. Sam Casoose Domingo, 1921. Photograph taken by E. W. Gifford (courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley).

are Ruren Domingo's recollections of his father.

Ruren's father was an active man who always worked vigorously around the rancheria to keep the brush and other vegetation cleared. He maintained a team of horses and fifteen mules and, in addition to hauling wood for various ranchers, used the team to get in and out of the Stanislaus River canyon where he fished for salmon. He also maintained the wagon road and cemetery, kept two different gardens, and planted grain on a flat above the rancheria. The grain was used to feed horses while the mules made do with grass growing around the rancheria.

Sam Casoose Domingo was a skilled



Fig. 6. Captain Yellowjacket (*So-pi-ye*), ca. 1902 (courtesy of the Old Timers Museum, Murphys, California).

craftsman with the ability to make horsehair ropes, which he sold in the Murphys area. He also made fish and quail traps, used seasonally for subsistence. Sam, Lizzy, and their ten children moved from Murphys in 1906. Of the ten children, Ruren is the only remaining Casoose.

Captain Yellowjacket. Captain Yellowjacket (Fig. 6) was a leader to residents of Murphys Rancheria and was respected by others who visited the village during "big times." He attended a mourning ceremony at Railroad Flat in 1906. According to Merriam (1955), all of the chiefs at the ceremony shouted the first syllable of each sentence in their address and sermons: *So-pi-ye* (Yellowjacket) did so with great vigor. As described by Merriam (1955: 57):

So'-pi-ye in his last address spoke of some of the old chiefs who had passed away—notably of Teniah of Yosemite Valley, whose youngest son was brutally murdered by the whites. He spoke also of the various tribes from the village poosone at the mouth of the American River to the Natooatah on Lower Kings River. At the end he said, 'Me'-chet mechet-te-woo'-te woo'-te. Koo-nahs'—his voice falling with the last word. The words mean, 'what shall we do? Let's go, let's go. That's all' or 'I'm done.'

Yellowjacket was blind, having lost his eyesight in a mining accident at the Eho Mine (Kaler 1953). He was well liked, made friends easily with the local Murphys citizens, and was seen frequently on the streets of Murphys selling pitch from pine trees (Wood 1930-1979).

Yellowjacket always went barefoot.. One time he was given shoes during a storm but the next day he was seen again without shoes. Kaler (1953) notes:

Every morning he came trotting down the road in his bare feet with a long staff in his hand, feeling his way. Friends often gave him shoes, but he would never wear them as

he said he could not see. He did not usually come to our place in the morning but in the late afternoon he would come into the gate, loaded with a bag of 'chomuch' which he left outside, and come and lie on the porch. He usually had a hard luck story to tell.

Yellowjacket was a preacher with a voice that could be heard for long distances (Schwoerer 1964). From the highest point of ground and in a sonorous voice, he would give majestic welcome to the sun (Theodoratus and Parsons 1980: 10). During the ceremonies, his speeches were made from the top of a large rock of natural metavolcanic schist (Fig. 7). Ruren explained that a speech was a prayer.

One of Yellowjacket's helpers was Dewey Mose. Information on their relationship is unknown. Ruren remembered that Dewey Mose often helped Yellowjacket out and, in fact, helped build a shack for him.

Other Residents. Genealogical data on other residents living at Murphys Rancheria during the period between 1900 and 1910 are questionable. It is possible that an "old woman" who lived in a pitched-roof cabin (Fig. 8) may be Chuella (Calaveras County 1910). Chuella did live at Murphys in 1910, but it is not certain if she lived in that particular cabin. An undetermined relationship existed between Big Boot Jack or Johnny Jack and Sally Jack, both said to have occupied a cabin set apart from the main cluster of houses on the ridge. Sally was married to John Hodge in 1910. Whether she was married before that time is unknown. Big Boot Jack or Johnny Jack may be the same person and could be Sally's brother or husband; however, this is only conjecture.

Village Geography

Murphys Rancheria was composed of five dwellings (Fig. 7). Two were square, pitched-roof style cabins and three were conical in shape. A sixth building, also conical in shape

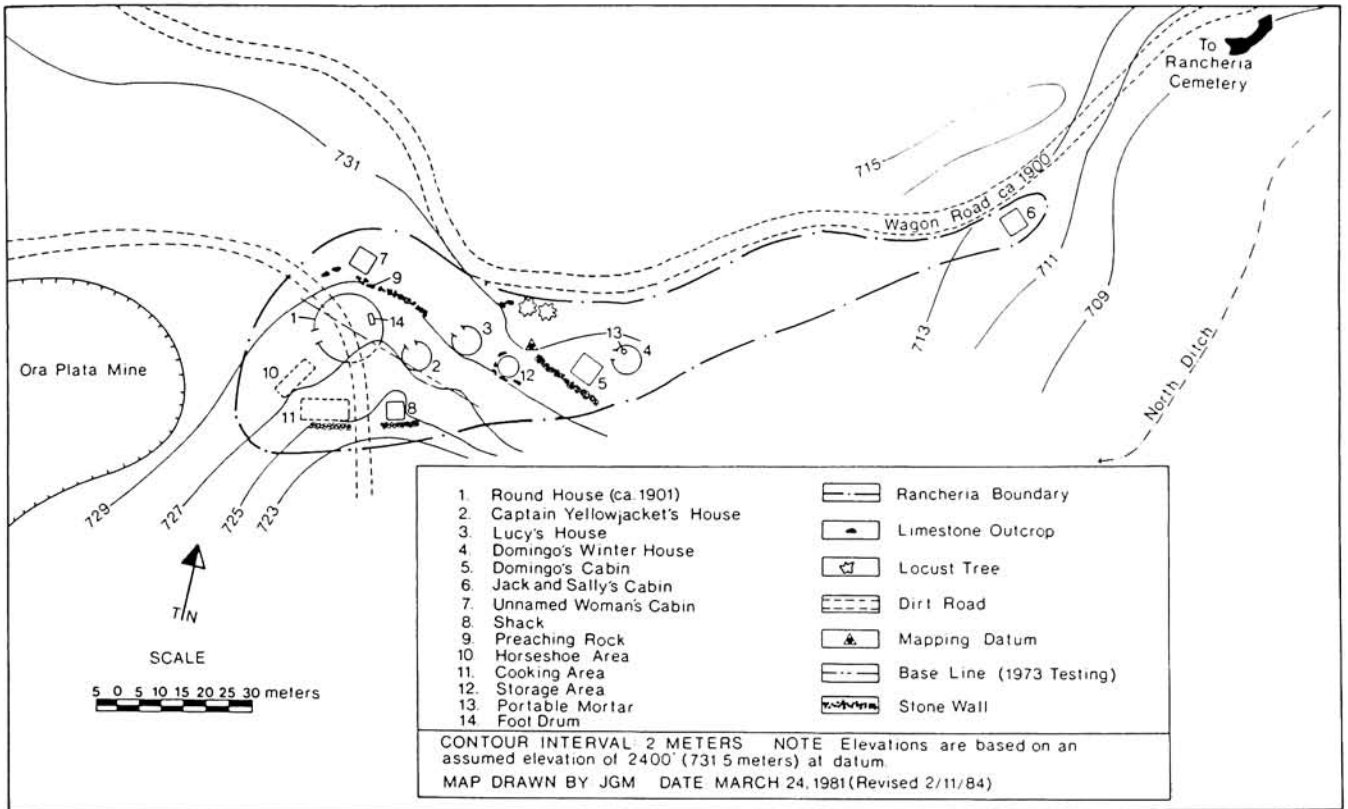


Fig. 7. Village Map. Murphys Rancheria, *Mol-Pee-So* (CA-CAL-0693).



Fig. 8. Murphys Rancheria. Ceremonial Roundhouse under construction, 1901 (courtesy of Milton B. Smith).



Fig. 9. Murphys Roundhouse, ca. 1901 (courtesy of Milton B. Smith).

but not considered to be a dwelling, was the ceremonial roundhouse. Non-dwellings included shacks, recreation and cooking areas, gardens, and the village cemetery.

Roundhouse. One large depression, measuring 15 m. (50 ft.) in diameter, was noted in 1973 and is still present at the village site. This was identified as belonging to the roundhouse, built in 1901 (Fig. 8). Ruren was five years old at that time and remembers men working on the construction; particularly, he remembers the placing of the stringers (horizontal timbers connecting upright posts in a frame) and cedar shakes. Several men, including Ruren's father, Sam, were involved in the

building. Jeff Davis, headman at Sheep Ranch Rancheria, and Captain Yellowjacket, headman at Murphys, were in charge of the construction.

The roundhouse was built with fir from a local sawmill and had a roof of cedar shakes purchased from a mill at Big Trees. A small square window allowed some sunlight into the structure. The entrance was oriented to the southwest (Fig. 9).

The interior features included a fire pit in the center, measuring a little over one meter in diameter, surrounded by four posts. A foot drum, located in the rear, was less than 1 m. deep by 1.75 m. long. Ruren recalled that

boards had been placed over the excavated hole. No traces of these depressions exist today. The structure had a dirt floor that was covered with pine needles, especially during ceremonies. Benches made from blocks and boards were placed along the inside wall for use during dances and festivities.

Numerous published and unpublished accounts suggest a fire destroyed this roundhouse sometime between 1920 and 1930 (Conrotto 1973; Goodrum 1969; Theodoratus et al. 1976, 1980; Wood 1930 - 1979, 1948). However, a review of the *Calaveras Prospect* newspaper for the years 1920 - 1930 suggests that the roundhouse may never have burned down. Moreover, a non-Indian consultant who was born and brought up in the town of Murphys said, "a fire had swept through sometime in the 1930s destroying everything but the roundhouse." The consultant also related that sometime later in the 1930s the roundhouse collapsed with the help of children (himself among them) pulling boards from the structure. In addition, archaeological test excavations conducted at the rancheria in 1973 did not reveal the presence of burned timbers (Napton 1973).

Another non-Indian consultant from Vallecito, brought up on the Saunders Ranch below Six Mile Rancheria, moved to the Murphys area around 1930. She said the roundhouse was still standing at that time and that she had peered inside and seen hay stored in the building. That hay belonged to Price Williams.

Conical Dwellings. The Domingo's house (*umu'tca*) was built in 1910 and used during the winter. It was round, 4 m. (13 ft.) in diameter, had one entrance, a smoke hole, and was oriented to the southwest. A portable stone mortar with a single cupule was set inside the house on the north side of the entry. Ruren remembered his mother using the mortar. A slight depression, mounded on the sides with earth, remains where the house

once stood.

Another depression, also measuring 4 m. (13 ft.) in diameter, and not mounded was located to the west of the roundhouse depression. This house pit was identified as Yellowjacket's *umu'tca*. His house was oriented toward the northwest and had no windows or floors (Fig. 10).

A third depression, with the same dimensions as the other two, was identified as the site of Lucy's (Yellowjacket's sister) house (Fig. 10). The house was located northeast of Yellowjacket's (Fig. 7). In one photograph (Fig. 11) Lucy is shown in mourning walking with her dog, Mushroom.

Cabins. In 1898, Sam Casoose built a pitched-roof cabin, situated at the apex of a ridge overlooking the roundhouse and measuring approximately 12 by 14 ft. (Fig. 12). A stone wall was constructed on the south side of the cabin to protect it from strong south-prevailing winds.

The cabin was constructed of wood from a local mill and was built with one window and a west-facing entrance. The interior contained a wood stove and a sleeping area. Today, the cabin area is represented by an earthen pad with ceramic fragments and square nails lying on the surface. The stone wall, now partially collapsed, is located near the cabin pad.

A pitched-roof cabin, measuring 12 ft. square with an attached shed, belonged to an old woman (Fig. 9). Ruren and non-Indian consultants could not recall the woman's name but apparently she was very old at the turn of the century. It is possible that this woman was Chuella who was living at the rancheria in 1910 (Calaveras County 1910). During archaeological mapping, this area was inspected with a Miwok consultant. The ground surface was irregular and did not show evidence of a cabin pad; however, the location had been altered after 1930 by a dirt road.

Sally and Jack lived in a pitched-roof



Fig. 10. Yellowjacket's conical house and shack, 1900 (courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).



Fig. 11. Lucy, Yellowjacket's sister, 1900 (courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

cabin set apart from the main cluster of houses. The remnants of the cabin, identified in the field, consist of a midden, a slightly mounded pad measuring 15 ft. square, and historic debris (e.g., square nails, wood-stove parts). No clear photographs of this structure were obtained; however, with magnification it can be discerned in the center of Fig. 6.

Shacks. Two small shacks are visible in Figs. 2, 8, and 10. According to Ruren, he and John Hodge used to sleep inside a shack

next to Yellowjacket's conical house while they were working for Price Williams. This structure was built by Dewey Mose for Captain Yellowjacket (Fig. 2). There are no visible remains of either shack on the site surface.

Recreation Area. Ruren pointed out where his people played horseshoes—a narrow space along a “side-hill” next to the rancheria. Horseshoe teams from Tuolumne, Sheep Ranch, and West Point competed and sometimes the rancheria residents played among themselves. The horseshoes used in the games came from the local blacksmith shop in Murphys.

Cooking Area. A cooking area, situated below the roundhouse on a narrow flat, was located and described by Ruren (Fig. 7). He stated, “women used to prepare food on open-pit barbeques.” Two barbeques were said to have been located in this area, each dug about 1 m. in diameter and 50 cm. deep. Cobbles were placed around the pit and metal bars were set on top of the stones. These barbeques were used during “big times” and may have been used on a regular basis. No evidence of the pits is now visible on the surface. The flat area used for food preparation was approximately 30 m. long by 5 m. wide.

Gardens. Sam Casoose Domingo's two gardens, which produced beans, tomatoes, and potatoes, were seen by C. Hart Merriam in 1902 during his visit to the rancheria (Merriam 1900 - 1930). There are no traces of these gardens today. Sam also grew hay on a flat above his cabin for feed for his horses and planted and cared for two locust trees (Figs. 2-3). One of these trees is still visible on the site today.

Cemetery. The Murphys Rancheria cemetery was situated on the same ridge, within walking distance of the rancheria and connected to it by a trail. In addition, a dirt road, which originated on the Williams Ranch and



Fig. 12. Domingo's cabin with Abbey and baby, ca. 1901 (courtesy of the Old Timers Museum, Murphys, California).

terminated at Sheep Ranch Road, was located along the ridge near the graveyard. The exact dimensions of the cemetery are not known; however, Miwok consultants were able to pin-point the general area on a flat below the rancheria.

The cemetery is best known and remembered by Ruren Domingo. It was well kept when his father was alive. A fence was maintained around it and brush was kept cleared. Members of the Casoose family are buried in the cemetery; among them, Ruren's brothers, Ramon and Joaquin Domingo.

Ramon's grave is marked by a marble

tombstone—the only existing tombstone in the cemetery. Other graves may total as many as thirty. Another man related to the Casoose family, *E' Nech U*, was buried in the cemetery.

Village Ceremonies

Ruren explained that the roundhouse served as a center for ceremonies, story telling, and other social events. For example, "big times" (*kote*) were put on at different times of the year at the rancheria. People from outlying areas, such as West Point, Railroad Flat, San Andreas, Ione, Angels

Camp, Sonora, Tuolumne, and even (on some occasions) Washoe from Markleeville attended. The people stayed from three to five days and activities included dancing, gambling (hand game), or a mourning ceremony or cry. Attendance was between 200 and 300 people and there was a place for everyone to stay during the event. The various families would travel by horseback and buggy; many camped out after arriving at Murphys and some slept in the roundhouse. A military wall tent, owned by Sam Casoose Domingo, was used to house visitors.

“Big time” was an organized event, with the rancheria usually providing food for everyone attending. Deer meat was barbecued in open pits, and other complementary foods, such as squirrel meat, quail, pork, acorn bread and soup, manzanita cider, roasted yellow-jackets and grasshoppers, cabbage, and garden-grown vegetables were served (Conrotto 1973: 91).

During a “big time” celebration, dancing continued late into the evening and sometimes until morning. Gifford points out that, “In January, after hunting in December, they danced the *hiweyi* and *tula* at Murphys . . . during big times” (1955: 307). The *hiweyi* dance celebrated a shaman’s performance while the *tula* was a sacred dance and ceremony (Gifford 1955: 286, 301-302). Both dances were introduced to Murphys by a singer who went to Pleasanton (Alameda County) and learned them there (Gifford 1955: 307). Ruren remembered that one couple in particular, John and Tillie Jeff (from Six Mile Rancheria), came to a “big time” at Murphys in 1906. They were both active in Miwok tradition and danced at the celebration that evening.

Mourning ceremonies were held at various times at the rancheria, with the “cry” lasting for three days and nights in the roundhouse. In 1895, at a burial ceremony held at Murphys cemetery, “Indians ‘spoke’ over the

grave, marched around the open grave and dropped personal things of the dead person . . . in a homemade casket” (Theodoratus et al. 1976: 460).

Women would put pitch on their faces to express grief. When shown a photograph of Lucy, Yellowjacket’s sister (Fig. 11), Ruren explained that she was in mourning. She would go without cleaning her face for thirty days and would remain inside the house and cry. The tears would cause streaks down her face. After thirty days were over everything was “OK” and her face would be cleaned by “washers” (during a “big time” celebration) usually appointed by a village chief (Gifford 1955: 315).

Subsistence Practices

Residents at Murphys Rancheria incorporated many native plant foods into their diet. They also fished for salmon in the Stanislaus River and hunted deer on the surrounding hillsides. Consultants pointed out that there was always an abundance of food available to them. In addition, Murphys residents grew domestic foods in gardens. These, and other food products from local town merchants, were incorporated into their diet.

Acorn Collecting. The black oak (or mountain oak) acorn crop in the Murphys area was generally good. A favored gathering location was 10 to 12 miles south of Murphys (off what is now Highway 49) at Raggio’s sawmill. Inhabitants of the rancheria often traveled there on collecting excursions.

Acorns were brought back to the village for processing and cooking. Traditionally, special burden baskets were used to gather acorns (Barrett and Gifford 1933: 143); however, consultants recall that gunny sacks were being used in the 1900s for acorn harvesting. Lizzy Domingo leached her family’s acorns below their house on a knoll near the North Ditch. Ruren recalled watching his mother prepare acorns at this location, as well

as in a portable mortar set inside their winter house. There were no bedrock mortars at Murphys Rancheria.

Supplemental Foods. Murphys residents also exploited supplemental plant foods. For example, there were two places they went to collect watercress. The closest to the rancheria was at the Adams Ranch near Coyote Creek; the farthest away was off the main road to Vallecito approximately 3.5 miles from the rancheria.

The Casoose family collected black mushrooms and manzanita berries on a hillside opposite Murphys Rancheria. The berries were dried, crushed, and used for cider. The mushroom was referred to as *sun-a-lk-a-loo* and was found growing underneath manzanita bushes. Barrett and Gifford called this mushroom *sunokulu* and noted that it grew in clusters (1933: 164).

Lizzy Casoose often went to this location by herself to gather mushrooms. When she returned to the rancheria she would lay them out in the open to dry in the sun. Ruren recalled that his mother used a bowl mortar and pestle to pulverize deer meat to combine with the mushrooms. This meal was quite popular with the family. Black mushrooms were also stored for use during the winter months.

There was a variety of food resources that could be collected in close proximity to the rancheria. The Casoose family diet consisted primarily of deer meat and jerky, gray squirrel, and (occasionally) pork, along with such supplemental foods as potatoes, eggs, and bread.

Some foods were trapped, such as dove, quail, and fish. Sam Casoose caught quail in the same area where the Casoose family collected black mushrooms. A brush fence snare, following Miwok design, was used to trap quail (Barrett and Gifford 1933: 183-184).

According to Ruren, there were two

methods of preparing quail: the first involved burying the bird in hot coals without first gutting or plucking it. The second method involved gutting, skinning, and then frying the quail. The first method was much easier, required only ten minutes cooking time and allowed easy removal of feathers and skin, leaving the meat intact.

The Stanislaus River was used extensively for subsistence. Ruren remembered going with Tom Williams of Chicken Ranch on a fishing trip to Burns Ferry Bridge (below the old road to Copperopolis). They caught about thirty salmon, which they put into barley sacks and hung over their horses. Because of the weight of the fish they ended up walking their horses out of the canyon.

Sam Casoose Domingo also fished at this location. He made fish traps of flexible willow branches, approximately 3/8 in. thick. The traps were 2 ft. in diameter and about 6 ft. long. In plan view they appeared cone-shaped. Sam watched the traps and when they were filled he dumped the salmon into barley sacks, hauling them from Camp Nine by mules. Sam often sold his fish in the Murphys area for 50 cents apiece (Theodoratus et al. 1976: 398).

SUMMARY

Ethnographic Comparisons

The village geography at Murphys Rancheria closely parallels ethnographic accounts reported by Kroeber (Fig. 7). Kroeber states, "In each settlement the houses were fairly well clustered, not actually adjacent, of course, but within conversation distance of each other" (1962: 32). This pattern is illustrated at Murphys. Captain Yellowjacket's *umu'tca* was situated alongside the ceremonial roundhouse. His sister had her house directly next to his, separated by only a few meters. The Casoose cabin and winter house sat above the roundhouse but were still within conversa-

tional distance to other dwellings.

Aside from houses, the roundhouse served as the center for ceremonial and social activities. It conformed in size to a roundhouse or assembly house (*ha ni*) as described in the ethnographic literature (Barrett and Gifford 1933: 201-205).

Fig. 8 shows the construction of the roundhouse. In the photograph, four center poles are visible, as is the excavated floor; however, there is some deviation from the traditional style. First, instead of eight intermediate beams around the four center posts, Murphys had 18 to 20 side-posts which supported the roof (Barrett and Gifford 1933: 201). Second, the conical roof did not extend all the way down to the top of the excavated pit, but came to rest on the side-posts described above, a few feet above the ground. Third, the entrance was characteristic of a corridor style, similar to that used by the Southeast Pomo (DuBois 1939) and the roundhouse at Groveland, another Central Sierra Miwok village (Barrett and Gifford 1933: 204). Finally, the roof was covered with cedar shakes instead of thatch and earth.

Consultant memories of the roundhouse interior partially match Barrett and Gifford's information. There was a foot drum and a fire hearth located in the rear and center of the roundhouse, matching the ethnographic description. Murphys also had one window, and benches were placed around the inside of the walls. These were additions to the roundhouse.

The three depressions (or house pits) at Murphys, attributed to Captain Yellowjacket, Domingo, and Lucy, were all 4 m. in diameter. Domingo's winter house was characterized by mounded earth forming a shallow depression less than 30 cm. deep. The other two had more depth, averaging 50 cm. Murphys houses were constructed of milled lumber instead of cedar bark slabs. Barrett and Gifford describe an *umu'tca* as a cedar bark

covered conical house, ranging from 8 to 15 ft. (4 m.) in diameter (1933: 198-199).

Cabin remnants were identified by archaeological remains (historic debris, earthen pads) and archival records, as well as by oral testimony. Murphys had three cabins; those of an unnamed woman, Sam Casoose Domingo's, and Sally and Jack's. All were pitched-roof without floors and measured approximately 16 ft. square.

Although social organization at Murphys is unclear, some data are applicable. For example, Captain Yellowjacket served as headman. A headman (or chief) acted as advisor, was official host for the tribelet, was arbitrator in disputes, served as an orator, gave formal public advice, counseled and admonished people, and welcomed visitors (Aginsky 1943; Kroeber 1962: 45). Yellowjacket was in charge and served as orator during the "big time" celebration. He had a special preaching rock from which he delivered messages to visitors and often to residents of the rancheria. Yellowjacket, with Jeff Davis and Sam Casoose Domingo, was responsible for organizing and supervising the construction of the roundhouse.

Subsistence strategies for this village could be considered community oriented to some degree. For example, Sam Casoose Domingo maintained two different vegetable garden areas where he grew domesticated plants. Residents also relied on native foods. The black oak acorn was collected and brought back to the village for processing and cooking. Women used a mortar and pestle and/or a handgrinder (a device adopted from Euroamericans). Leaching was carried out along the North Ditch. Lizzy Domingo first cracked and hulled her acorns using a portable mortar set inside their winter *umu'tca* and then would walk downhill to a spot along the North Ditch next to a yellow pine for leaching. Lizzy's mortar can still be seen *in situ* within the round depression, all that

remains of their *umu'tca*.

Residents had various collecting localities and fished in the Stanislaus River at Camp Nine. Their daily diet included manzanita berries, black mushrooms, quail, salmon, and other vegetal resources. Supplemental foods sometimes consisted of products from local merchants (e.g., milk, eggs, flour, and bacon).

Clearly, this rancheria shared basic elements of traditional Miwok culture and non-Indian lifeways. Residents became adept at incorporating the changes in lifestyle that existed in the white community into their traditional society. As seen in the photographs, this blend of old and new offers good examples of the flexibility and endurance of a small group of native Americans in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

CONCLUSION

Murphys Rancheria was not a government-registered reservation but was a widely recognized Central Sierra Miwok settlement, known among various Indian settlements—including now-registered reservations at Sheep Ranch and Tuolumne—and also by people from ethnographically known villages at Vallecito (Six Mile Rancheria, *Kosoimuno-nu*), West Point, and Railroad Flat. Non-Indian communities, primarily towns arising as a result of the gold rush, were aware of the Indian community at Murphys. The town of Murphys is a leading example since it is only one mile away from the rancheria site and had frequent interaction with village residents.

Occupation at this village was brief, probably lasting only fifty years (ca. 1870 - 1920). This estimate of the village's time frame is supported, in part, by archaeological test excavations conducted in 1973 in the area of the roundhouse and just to the east of this depression (Napton 1973). In addition to Napton's work, two excavations, conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s along San Domingo Creek (located one-half mile north-

west of Murphys Rancheria), documented the presence of village sites and temporary camps along this drainage (McEachern 1966; Rose 1971). McEachern postulated that ridgetops, until the contact period, were not used for habitation. Therefore, archaeological data combined with the ethnohistoric information suggest that this rancheria existed primarily as a result of Euroamerican ownership of more favorable land.

From the standpoint of native American concerns, Murphys Rancheria should be preserved. This feeling is the general consensus expressed by ten native Americans interviewed during the study. They do not stand alone because non-Indian consultants also feel strongly about saving this site.

A specific concern expressed by Miwok people is directed toward the cemetery. They justifiably feel it is an important place and that it belonged to the Indians during the occupation of the village. The cemetery is presently overgrown with brush and is inaccessible to Miwok descendants. Consultants would like to see this cemetery cleared and made available to local Indian and non-Indian communities.

Presently, an attempt is being made by the local landowner to preserve the integrity of the Miwok village. Apart from having a National Register nomination prepared (by this author), his tentative long-range plan includes a dedication of the site to the local Miwok population, a memorial park and learning center, and a cultural-historical display exhibiting the village history.

In addition to contemporary native American concerns, the methodological approach used to study Murphys warrants some attention. During the research, ethnographic interviews with non-Indian and native Americans played an integral role in providing insights into Miwok lifeways in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and information concerning the identification and interpretation of partic-

ular archaeological features.

These consultants indicated where acorns were cracked and hulled, stored, leached, and cooked. The style and architecture of the houses were correlated with the archaeological surface features—location of dwellings and family residents were distinguished from the ceremonial structure depression. Gardens, trails connecting the cemetery to the village, and dimensions of the rancheria were specifically stated. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a site contour map was then drawn and the boundaries for the village thus reflected are as accurate as possible.

As a final note, this rancheria encompasses far more than physical and material cultural features. Equally important, social events and residents have been ascertained for the archaeological site and, while the overall significance of Murphys Rancheria is important in terms of substantive data, it is also important in light of the methodological approach. Integrating archaeological, historical, and ethnographic methods has resulted in a more holistic interpretation of the village. The ethnographic facts go hand-in-hand with the archaeological findings in this case. Therefore, it is hoped that other archaeologists will evaluate the example illustrated above and, whenever possible, incorporate an integrated data-recovery approach into their work.

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NOTES

1. The study of Murphys Rancheria (*Mol-Pee-So*; CA-CAL-0693) evolved from a cultural resource management-related project implemented at Six Mile Rancheria, located in a subdivision near Vallecito, California (Maniery 1979a). Briefly, that study entailed an archaeological survey of a proposed sewerline to be constructed within the subdivision. One prehistoric occupation site with a historic component was located on the fringe of the project area. It was conjectured that the last use of the site may have been as a historic rancheria. In order to test this assumption, a preliminary ethnographic study was implemented (Maniery 1979b). Data suggested that native Americans had lived at the village and, in fact, one Miwok was located who had been brought up at the site (Six Mile Rancheria) and resided there from 1909 to 1927. In short, the ethnographic information integrated with the archaeological survey data provided a more accurate interpretation of the site (cf. Maniery 1982a, 1982b).

2. California repositories visited during the study included: the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley—University Archives and C. Hart Merriam Collection; Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Davis; Amador County Museum, Jackson, California; U. S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Cadastral Surveys, Sacramento Office; Calaveras County Museum and Archives, San Andreas, California; California State Library, California Room, Sacramento, California; Calaveras Big Trees State Park and Museum, Big Trees, California; Old Timers Museum, Murphys, California; Oakland Museum, Oakland, California.

3. C. Hart Merriam was a naturalist involved in mapping life zones in California for the U. S. Biologi-

cal Survey. From 1910 to 1942 most of his time was spent in the study of historic and living Indians of California. This work was made possible under a special fund contributed by Mrs. E. H. Harriman.

4. University of California, Davis, Anthropology Museum, maintains a portion of California Indian baskets collected from various groups by C. Hart Merriam.

5. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, maintains a photographic collection of various native American groups and artifacts inventoried by number. S. A. Barrett's two photographs of Murphys Rancheria (Figs. 1-2) are assigned museum numbers 15-2748 and 15-2747, respectively.

6. In E. W. Gifford's *Central Miwok Ceremonies* (1955), he describes several different dances performed by the group at various times throughout the year. Some of the dances held at Murphys included: *tula*, *hiweyi*, *yahuha*, *sulesko*, *luhuyi*, *aletu*, and *kamini*. The *luhuyi* and *kamini* are Southern Maidu dances introduced to the Northern Miwok from Colfax. The *luhuyi* consisted of "circling around the fire with a quick step." In the Central Miwok version of *luhuyi* the dancers do not hold hands (Gifford 1955:307). The *tula* and *yahuha* dances signified ritual of the living and were considered sacred ceremonies and dances. "The *yahuha* dance, according to Tom Williams, was sometimes danced to ensure an abundance of food; rabbits, acorns, and so on. On such occasions, not many people were invited from a distance" (Gifford 1955: 293). The *hiweyi* dance is said to celebrate a shaman's performance and can be considered, in some ways, similar to the *sulesko* dance. "The *sulesko* may be properly called the devil or spirit or ghost dance and is said to have originated at *Suchumumu*, near Jamestown" (Gifford 1955: 302). The *aletu* is considered to be a profane dance and, as pointed out by Gifford, required no special training and anyone who wished could take part (Gifford 1955: 304). It is possible that this dance may have originated in Yokuts territory (Gifford 1955: 305). According to Gifford (1955: 307), "The borrowing of dances in late times is well illustrated by the dances at Murphys. It is said that before the Murphys singer went to Pleasanton and learned the *tula* and *hiweyi* dances there were no dances at Murphys except the *yahuha*."

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