

EARLIEST DAYS IN YOKOL VALLEY;

INDICATIONS FOUND OF PREHISTORIC GIANT RACE

By W. T. Duncan

When we are deeply interested in any subject, we naturally give it our closest consideration and so it was in the study of the Indians on my part. From the time I was seven to eleven years of age I associated with the Indians a great deal and had a chance to study their ways and customs.

So I believe a written account of my observations will interest many readers, especially those who are interested in the subject.

They were a friendly people and if they liked you they would prove their friendship in every way possible. My parents always treated the Indian with great consideration, hence, there was always a deep feeling of friendship existing between them. Had everyone treated the Indians in like manner there probably would not have been so much trouble and blood shed.

I have never seen people who showed greater grief over the death of a loved one than the Indians. ~~Exhaustive and extensive~~ I have attended two Indian funerals and their wailings were both long and loud. They buried their dead amidst their lodges. The bodies were laid at full length, face downward, with the face resting in the hands as if in deep meditation and some of the family effects were always placed in the grave with them. If it happened to be a child, his playthings were always buried with him.

After the grave was filled the place was smoothed down, covered, with feathers, and sprinkled with white sand. The Indians believed that in some way the dead birds had an influence over their feathers and they regarded the feathers as being a sort of manitou or guardian angel and would help them to win victories over their enemies or help them to overcome their grief or keep evil spirits away. After their grief had subsided, they would erect a brush

wiki-up over the burial place to protect it from all intruders. What greater consideration could be shown the departed?

In those days the dress of the older women was of a very primitive pattern consisting merely of a short skirt in summertime, and sometimes the children wore nothing whatever. Their acorn bins were constructed of willow withes closely woven together, with oval lids made in the same manner, projecting many inches over the sides. When it rained they were covered with skins, keeping the acorns perfectly dry. During the summer and autumn they gathered and dried quantities of elderberries and wild grapes and ground them up with the acorns. The saccharin matter they contained held the meal together when made into a paste.

There were two ways of cooking the acorn bread, "atols". One was to bake the cakes on hot rocks, and the other was to cook it in hot ashes. They also prepared a sort of mush from the acorn meal by filling the mortars in the rocks full of water, then throw in hot rocks until the water was boiling. Then remove the rocks and stir in the meal. Some cooked it in water-tight baskets, but I never saw that done myself. They always shelled the acorns before putting them into the bins. The worms did not work on them so badly as they would in the hulls. I have recently taken some Indian bones and bits of pottery brought to the surface by squirrels from the depths of their burrow.

At the time of which I am writing there were several villages of Indians in the hills here who were living quietly and happily, attending strictly to their own business, making no trouble whatever for anyone. But unscrupulous white men came into the hills here and seemingly were not satisfied with any part of the country except that part occupied by the Indians. And the result was that the same scenes were enacted which have always resulted from the invasion of the whites into the Indian country, and the result was that the Indians were removed to the reservation. Being a good friend of the Indians, I hoped that ~~the~~

some dire calamity might overtake those unworthy white men who had so ruthlessly driven them away.

In my boyhood I knew the two oldest Indians in the county, Chico and Tule. It was claimed that Chico was well past the hundred mark and Tule appeared to be fully a hundred years old. But he was quite active. He would wander about over the country visiting the white people who treated him the best. He often came to our home and was always kindly treated, being given food and clothing. Chico had lost most of his band. They were killed in a battle with the Mexicans. The Indians were in the habit of killing the Mexican cattle which roamed the country at will, and the Mexicans almost destroyed Chico's band in retaliation. When Chico was practically blind he would walk to Potterville, with the aid of a heavy stick, by following the road and kind hearted people would load him down with food. The latter years of his life he was cared for by a daughter who was herself a very aged person, at least eighty years old.

It was in 1874, I believe, that most of the Indians were removed to the reservation. But two small villages remained in the hills here until 1877. One was located near Spanish Camp and the other on the ridge between the present Hodge's place and Epperson valley. There were fine springs of water at those places at that time and the Indians raised small patches of Indian corn. From time to time small parties of Indians would come into the hills here from the reservation to hunt, gather acorns and the seeds of a certain kind of thistle which grew on the southern slopes of the hills. At that time they grew extensively in these parts but only a few are to be found at the present time. Their seeds resemble the seeds of the sun flower and the Indians were very fond of them. They also gathered a sort of reed which grew along the creek banks from which they made baskets. They often camped on our place for weeks at a time and they were a well-behaved people, never touching anything that did not belong to them. Father gave them fruit and vegetables and gave the men employment at various times, and they were reliable. The Indian women helped mother in many

ways and they were very kind-hearted.

Yokol Valley

The Yokol Valley is a land of mystery and charm. In order to have a clear conception of the Yokohl Valley, we must consider it from all angles and it will be necessary to go back to a very remote time in its history to acquaint ourselves with its former inhabitants. We behold it now mostly as a vast stock range, controlled by the Gill Brothers, with but few of the old settlers remaining in its environs.

But through our own personal investigations we have discovered that has been occupied by no less than three races of people. Of the first race we have no history whatever, except what our investigations have disclosed, and which is very meager. The Yokohl Valley is not a single valley, as the name would seem to signify, but rather a succession of valleys of various sizes, studded with hills of various heights and sizes and formerly among these hills, which separate the valleys from one another were the homes both of the red men and the white people. Formerly the homes of a branch of the Yokuts (or Yokohs) dotted these beautiful valleys where they lived happy and contented until the whites saw fit to drive them out that they might occupy their beautiful home sites.

There among those hills lived the Indians for many years, enjoying life in the usual Indian manner. There in their council house, the chiefs entertained the chiefs of other sub-tribes. There the people participated in their native dances and tribal ceremony. There the Indian children indulged in their childish games, the same as white children do. There the young braves wooed and won dusky maidens. There the bold hunters roamed the hills in quest of the elusive deer and antelope and sometimes brought in a grizzly bear, although they regarded the bear as sacred. But though they regarded it as a sacred being, later bestowing their blessings upon it in various ways, it was every bit eaten, even to the head.

Settlement of Yokohl by Whites

The scene changes. We hear the ring of the carpenter's saw and the clip of his hammer and see new homes going up where the Indian women ground up acorns on the rocks. We see the plowman in the field turning over the sod. We see rosy checked children on their way to school. I think the first settler on the Yokohl was a man named Elliott, who settled at the extreme head of the Yokohl, and the next was Uncle George Duncan. Then came others, including the Taylors, the Lees, the Jordans, the Beinhorns, the Gills, the Stewarts, who were drowned in a cloudburst, the Andersons, the Krugers, the Streets, the Bingham, the Halls, the Braggs, the Bowlins, the Carisons, the Lisenbys, the Trulocks, the Schneys, the Starns family, the Daleys, the Dahlems, the Kilbreths, the Givens family, the Phipps family, the Osborns, John Wirt, the Hiltons, and some others whose names I cannot now recall. The Yokohl supported two school districts; the Yokohl district at the lower end of the valley, and the Bragg district at the upper end of the valley.

The Yokohl was not without its tragic occurrences. The Stewarts, a family of five, were all drowned in a cloudburst in 1884. A woman shot and killed a man and an Indian was hung by the enraged settlers for a heinous crime he had committed. A young man named Taylor was killed in a runaway accident and a man was caught in a bear trap and later lost his life from the effects of the injury.

There are now but a few of the old settlers remaining on the Yokohl. Dennis Daley and wife, and two or three of the Jordans. Emmet Gill and family also reside in the valley. The rest are all gone.

There are some interesting relics at the head of the Yokohl. The huge log walls of an old cabin built many, many years ago, and the huge rock walls of an old stone house. Who it was that built them, I cannot positively say, but they are quite a curiosity.

The giants of the Yokohl! Who were they and how long has it been

since they lived there? Who can tell? These are questions that may never be answered. But they were men of gigantic stature, being at least seven feet tall, when alive, and must have lived at the time of those large people of Mexico, whose remains are now being excavated in the interest of science.

From appearances these large people had been destroyed by some other race of man, and their bodies thrown into a large pit. Indications point to their having been partly cremated as many of the bones show the effects of fire. Some of them may have been burned to death by those who exterminated them. I have found but few ornaments; a few discs of horn or shells with holes through the middle of them. There may be other objects of interest at the bottom of the pit. I intend to renew my investigations sometime and more thoroughly explore their burial place. I may uncover something of vast interest to science. But my investigations so far have proven that this part of the country was once inhabited by a very large race of people.