

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF



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# restore

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE CACHE CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

# restory

AUDIO TOUR INTERVIEW WITH

*Wyatt Cline*

STOP 5:

*Memorial Grove*





## Stop 5: Memorial Grove

### **What happened to the local Native way of life when Europeans settled in this area?**

Well I think when the Europeans came to this area whether it was for ranching first, the local Native people, as in other areas of California, life changed dramatically.

The first thing that probably happened was the diseases that wouldn't bother a European person, you know, they'd get over a cold or the flu in a week or two, it devastated the population and a major deprivation of people died.

And then of course the lands were taken over and farmed and grazed, in some cases overgrazed, and there was a misunderstanding that the Native peoples were on a subsistence living and were barely making it. They called them "Diggers," which is now a derogatory term and probably was then because they saw them using digging sticks, etc. Well you know, they were actually farming and digging tubers and rhizomes, etc., farming clovers, you know. They would hunt with sticks whether it was quail or rabbits. The men hunted.

But those were things that weren't recognized and so many of them were put to work; the ones that couldn't escape and live elsewhere. So it was a dramatic change. The population is still here though somehow amazingly.

### **How would you say the Mission Era and the Gold Rush Era impacted the local Native tribe?**

The local Native tribe, I don't know how the Mission Era would have affected them because you know, our closest mission is probably in San Francisco or San Rafael around there somewhere in that part of the Bay Area, but I'm sure it did because it brought the Spaniards.

And in this area would be the Berryessa brothers up from this area and this was a Spanish land grant where we sit now. So it did affect them because it brought the people that the missions brought.

The trapping companies, Hudson Bay for one, that changed things. They over trapped and took the animals and the firs that the people used.

### **Did you have a sense that the Gold Rush also changed the way of life for the local Native people here?**

The Gold Rush is an interesting question on how that might have changed the life of the local people here because obviously they didn't hit gold in Yolo County, however the people that went to find gold from other places in California figured out, sometimes quickly, that it didn't work. Came to Yolo County to farm and homestead and make a way of life. So that obviously had an influence on what happened to the Native peoples. And a lot of the Native people became farm workers and that changed their way of life. They became – had a Eurocentric influence put upon them.

*Memorial Grove, continued (p.2 of 4)*

**I don't know if you've seen that booklet that the Yocha Dehe tribe puts out. It's a beautiful booklet. It tells the story in a very overview way, but one of the things that caught my eye is they describe generations of struggle and deprivation for Native Americans. They talk about the Europeans and the missions and Gold Rush, but then they mention that after that, until recently, there were generations of deprivation and struggle. Do you have any sense of why they would say that or what they're referring to?**

Some local Native Americans, we've been here a long time I will say that, the 1860s, but we came from further up in Northern California. My family – I'm careful. I'm not going to speak for the local Native population, but I will certainly give my opinions.

My family, the Wintun part of my family, my great-grandfather was Johnny Cline and he was an Indian cowboy and he came here with his brother Frank Blodgett in the 1860s after a couple of his brothers were killed in Shasta County and the rest of his family would come back and forth. He came to Colusa County first kind of on the county line and ended up with a job in the summit country for Von Logan Sales Cattle Company and he was a foreman, he was, like I said, a cowboy Indian.

So a different kind of influence I think on Indians that weren't on a Reservation or a Rancheria and good, bad or indifferent, there was – I think you had more freedom if you weren't in a static place and controlled by the United States government in a sense controlled more.

The local people here, it wasn't that long ago that when electricity went up to Capay Valley it didn't go to the Reservations or the Rancherias (they were called at the time). When everybody else was digging wells, they might not get one. So luck and prosperity was few and far between because they weren't really even considered.

Great workers and good friends and neighbors to some and a lot of those people are friends today, but no, prosperity was really hard to get and you were lucky enough to eke out a living and that's the truth of it.

**Since your family has been here since the 1860s, did your family talk about discrimination or being at the short end of the stick because they were part Native American?**

My family, as far Native American and being oh prejudice against or treated ill because of that, we didn't talk about that much. Number one it probably didn't happen that much because we were more assimilated mixed blood people; very mixed today. I'm a very mixed person, but one thing I'm proud of is my Wintun heritage. But that said, we lived in both worlds. One of the worlds was the European settler world where, you know, we were farmers and ended up going into public service and proud of who we were, but we were part of the Assimilation Act where basically our people were disbanded. The people here today, the local Native people, they're still together and still a people, still a tribe. Where we're still a people, but we're not a tribe so the way people treated us was probably different.

**That's so wild.**

That's a tough question.

*Memorial Grove, continued (p.3 of 4)*

**Yeah. Do you ever think it would have been better for your family to have stayed a tribe?**

It would have been better in the sense – if you look at – I mean really if we went back up there right now, all the roles are closed. We have casino money too and all that stuff, but that's a hard question to answer if it would have been better because we are so mixed. It's a part of who we are. I'm Spanish and Portuguese, French and Scotch-Irish. My father was Scotch-Irish Wintun so you can't say. We are – I am representative of America I think.

And my mother's family were Californians and my grandfather used to say – (my grandfather on my mother's side who was Spanish or Basque and Comanche Indian, he was born on a reservation,) he used to say we were here when we came and met ourselves because we're Native and come from across the pond. That's who we are.

**How do you feel about the term "assimilation"? How do you feel about being assimilated?**

The word "assimilation" I think (this is my opinion) as it related to Native people, it's a bad term in the sense that it was used to basically get the Indian people thinned out and into regular society. Not to help them, just to get rid of them and that was a fact. They couldn't give them poisoned blankets anymore, but they could make them vote and sell their land cheap like happened to my people and then they assimilate and they thought they'd get lost. The thing is some people kept their ways, some people didn't assimilate; stayed on Rancherias.

As far as assimilation as I see it today, I think that you celebrate who you are, whether it's a Hispanic person, a Jewish person, you celebrate who you are, the culture that got you here, practice your language if you want, but you're an American and that's what makes us strong is that mix and that's where I would say you assimilate good and right because you have the choice. That's the difference between the old assimilation where it was small pox blankets basically; try to thin them into society to now assimilation is celebrate who you are, but you're also an American.

**How does this preserve help renew Native American life and culture?**

As I look at this preserve you know, I think about how this preserve would renew the Native American life and culture and I don't know if the right word would be or phrase would be "renew it." I think it shows that it's alive. You can practice here. If you're not lucky enough to have a place that is natural and it's an oak savannah or woodlands or creek, you can here and you can practice. You can go to the gardens that the basket weavers use. You can collect acorns. You can go get elderberries. You can fish if you wanted. You can practice the culture. You can learn. You can look and see what it was like before the devastation and the influx of other people and I think that makes a difference. It's a live canvas.

*Memorial Grove, continued (p.4 of 4)*

**How do you think Native ways of life are practiced on this preserve today?**

Yeah, that's a tough question because I don't know if Native people are here practicing. This is a place Native life ways and experience could be practiced or taught or learned, but I don't know that Native people come here and learn and practice, but it's certainly a place where school children can come and learn and see how the old Native people lived and practiced their enterprise of making a living and surviving and what it looked like before we turned a lot of this into urban areas and I think that's probably the biggest thing. You can come here and learn.

**Okay. How have you observed what changes have happened? How has the local Native community gone from a place of real struggle and deprivation to a place of real strength and enterprise?**

I think of the changes in the local people who now we call the – call themselves Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and like many tribes and Indian people on a Rancheria you know, they've had bad luck and were treated bad, but they endeavored to persevere and now they have a very successful enterprise.

But the most significant thing – and I surely don't talk for them and I surely wouldn't try because I'm me and they're them, but what I do recognize as being a community member and active and have worked for them for a significant amount of time in the past, they are very interested and certain that they want to preserve their history and way of life and culture, not to stay there, not to go back, but to live it today and live in this society and as Native peoples did, they took care of their communities. And Native Americans all over this country adopted people and helped people in times of need.

And these people who weren't treated very well by the government and possibly the community at certain times. They did have a lot of friends and good neighbors.

But they have an opportunity now to give back and they have.

And they celebrate their culture, but they are absolutely proud to be Americans and that's – you can't get much better than that.