

# Yosemite Indians Fade to Small Band of B

## UNIQUE PAST HISTORY OF BAND BARED

### Struggle Against Encroaching Civilization and Final Survival to Modern Life Resisted

By J. E. SHAW.

It is hard to believe the story of the Yosemite Indians. For the last 100 years, the Yosemite valley has been a national park, and the Indians have been driven from it. Yet, in the heart of the park, a small band of Indians still lives. They are the remnants of a once great people, and their story is one of struggle and survival.

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

Chief of the Yosemite Indians, Mark Danna is the only one left of the band.

## Still Active in Their "Hunting Grounds"



CHIEF CHRIS DOWNIE, great grandson of the once powerful chief of the Yosemite, Tenaya. Mark Danna is the only one left of the band.



Yosemite family and other of Indian Indians, as seen from the park. The Yosemite Indians are the only ones left of the band. The white man is the only one left of the band. The white man is the only one left of the band.

### Camp There Now

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Love Murders

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Hostility Resisted

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Woods Had Been Valley

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### New Party Remains

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### No Claim on Valley

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Dance Around Fire

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.



Yosemite in our dance. Passed out in the eyes. The regular dance are not held in the open, as the picture would suggest, but in a small level sloped depression, on a rocky ridge, almost inaccessible to the public.

### Yosemite in our dance

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Remove and Remove

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Woods Had Been Valley

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.

### Dance Around Fire

The Yosemite Indians had no written history. Their story is told by their actions and their words. They have fought against the encroachment of civilization, and they have resisted the pull of modern life. They are a unique people, and their history is one that is being bared to the world.



1Chief Chris Brown, great-grandson of the once powerful chief of the Yosemite, Tenaya. Half Dome is in the background.

## Yosemite Indian Fade to Small Band of Barred Indians

“Still Active In Their Hunting Ground”

### Unique Past History of Band Bared

The San Francisco Examiner (Monday, October 2, 1927)

Struggle Against Encroaching Civilizations Surrender to Modern Life Recounted

By J. E. Hanna.

Previous to 1851, or before the discovery of the Yosemite Valley by the whites, the Yosemite was the home of a tribe of Indians for whom the valley was named, the Yosemite—pronounced by the Indians “Yohometi.”

The Yosemite held an undisputed ownership of the valley and much surrounding country, The latter was their hunting ground and in the valley they fished and gathered acorns, grass roots and herbs and maintained their villages. “They were not disturbed by other tribes because of their close relationship to neighboring tribes, and the difficulty of gaining access to the valley, unobserved, would have been tribal suicide to any looking for trouble.

At the time of the invasion of the valley by the whites, Tenaya had been chief of a former tribe, occupying the same territory, until he and a few survivors of plague, probably smallpox, that had nearly exterminated the tribe, left and made their homes with the Monos. None dared return, because the evil spirits had killed their people and taken possession of the valley.

When Tenaya grew to manhood he took those who were bold enough to face and defy the evil spirits, and founded a new tribe in the Yosemite. His people were from the ancestral tribes in the mountains surrounding the valley. At the time of their discovery by the whites they had grown to be a well established tribe of probably 300 Indians.

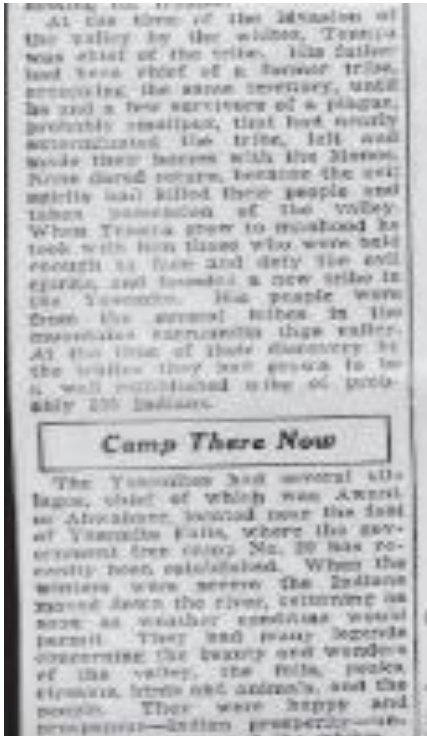
**Struggle Against Encroaching Civilization and Final Surrender to Modern Life Recounted**

**By J. E. HANNA.**

Previous to 1851, or before the discovery of the Yosemite Valley by the whites, the Yosemite was the home of a tribe of Indians for whom the valley was named, the Yosemite—pronounced by the Indians “Yohometi.”

The Yosemite held an undisputed ownership of the valley and much surrounding country. The latter was their hunting ground and in the valley they fished and gathered acorns, grass roots and herbs and maintained their villages. They were not disturbed by other tribes because of their close relationship to neighboring tribes, and the difficulty of gaining access to the valley, unobserved, would have been tribal suicide to any looking for trouble.

At the time of the invasion of the valley by the whites, Tenaya was chief of the tribe. His father had been chief of a former tribe, occupying the same territory, until he and a few survivors of a plague, probably smallpox, that had nearly exterminated the tribe, left and made their homes with the Monos. None dared return, because the evil spirits had killed their people and taken possession of the valley. When Tenaya grew to manhood he took with him those who were bold



### Camp There Now

The Yosemite had several villages, chief of which was Awani, or Ahwahnee, located near the foot of Yosemite Falls, where the government free camp No. 20 had recently been established. When the winters were severe, the Indians moved down the river, returning as soon as weather conditions would permit. They had many legends concerning the beauty and wonders of the valley, the falls, peaks, streams, birds and animals, and the people. They were happy and prosperous—Indian prosperity—until the appearance of the whites.

With the rush of whites to the mountains in the mad search for gold, and as trapper and traders, the Indians saw the finish of their vast hunting grounds, the scarcity of game and the ruination of their fishing streams. That meant the ruination of their means of livelihood: their inherited and only known mode of existence. They became restless and sullen, and endeavored to discourage the whites by stealing their provisions and their horses and mules. They

drove the horses and mules to their camps, or villages and had great feasts on the flesh of those animals. The whites attempted to punish the Indians for their thievery and the enmity grew until there was bloodshed. Finally, the Indians resorted to murder. (Who caused the first blood to flow, the whites or the Indians, probably will never be known.)

### Love Murders

At first lone prospectors were murdered, then parties of three or four, and trading posts were destroyed, and finally the Indians threatened to kill all the whites who did not get out of the mountains. The Indians of the lower lands, the San Joaquin Valley, and the foothills, gave the whites little trouble. They were soon rounded up and placed on reservations. There were attempts meant to Christianize them, and some of them became partially Christianized.

The government sent word to the Yosemite and Chow-Chillas, that if they would go to the reservation, for a peace conference, they would be well treated. This word was sent by runners from the reservation tribes. The invitation was declined by both tribes. They sent back word that they would stay and defend their territories. While they were considered by the whites as criminals, they maintained that they were fighting for their homes and inherited hunting grounds.

The miners asked upon the government for assistance and permission to organize a military company to suppress the Indians. Col. Neely Johnson, the governor's aid, was sent to help organize and prepare the company. A trapper by the name of Savage, who had just recently had his trading post, was chosen major. Major Savage had five squaw wives until the post was destroyed and the squaws carried away. Each squaw had been chosen by a separate tribe, that Savage might enjoy the friendship of the several tribes.



†Yosemite Family and display of Indian baskets, at entrance to bark teepee. The Yosemite no longer live in teepees, using, instead canvas tents. Since the white men control the valley and surrounding country, once owned by the Yosemite, the Indians are not free to strip the bark from the trees, as they once did. This may account for their having adopted the white men's tents.

Yosemite Family and display of Indian baskets, at entrance to bark teepee. The Yosemite no longer live in teepees, using, instead canvas tents. Since the white men control the valley and surrounding country, once owned by the Yosemite, the Indians are not free to strip the bark from the trees, as they once did. This may account for their having adopted the white men's tents.

### Hostility Excused

When the company had been as thoroughly drilled as time and conditions would permit and was about to start for the higher mountains, Colonel Johnson addressed the men, in part, as follows:

“While I do not hesitate to denounce the Indians for the murders and robberies committed by them, we should not forget that there may perhaps be circumstances which, if taken into consideration, might to some extent excuse their hostility to the whites. They probably feel that they themselves are the aggrieved party, looking upon us as trespassers upon their territory, invaders of their country and seeking to dispossess them of their homes,” etc.

Their country was invaded. Their homes and their food stores of acorns and dried meats were burned. Their territory was seized and they were transferred to the reservations, where many died of white men's diseases and whiskey, inactivity and restraint. Later, most of those who survived were allowed to return, under restrained conditions, their spirits broken, their homes and provisions burned to ashes and the ashes scattered by the four winds of the heavens. Their hunting grounds were no longer hunting grounds, and no longer their property.

## None Had Seen Valley

When the company men set out, none knew where they were going, except to the higher mountains. No white men had seen the beauty of the valley where the Yosemite Indians lived. Colonel Johnson did not accompany the troop. "Major Savage took charge, but soon after they reached the high mountain, a messenger overtook them with orders for Major Savage to return with the messenger to Fresno, for the purpose of dealing with the Indians from other sections of the State who had either been captured or had gone there voluntarily for a peace conference. The company was left in charge of Capt. Boling.

When Major Savage arrived at the Fresno reservation, he sent "Mission Indians" who had visited Tenaya's people, to help Captain Boling. These Indians guided the white troops to the beautiful valley of the Yosemite. Dr. Bunnell, the company surgeon, named the Valley Yosemite, in honor of the Indians.

Shortly, after the company entered the Yosemite valley, three of Tenaya's scouts were captured. Two of them later escaped. The third proved to be Chief Tenaya's youngest son. Captain Boling had sent out white scouts up the valley, and two of them discovering some baskets of acorn near a trail, thought they had frightened the Indians from their task of gathering acorns. They followed the trail up a narrow pass and had started to follow it up a ledge, when the Indians, waiting at the top of the ledge, rolled boulders down upon two, injuring one. The other scout, seeing an Indian peering down over a ledge, raised his rifle and killed the Indian. He then picked up his companion and carried him back to camp. One of the injured scout's friends swore to revenge his friend's injuries, and murdered the unarmed prisoner, son of Tenaya. While these things were taking place, the "Mission Indians" had trapped and captured Tenaya, and took him to camp. When Tenaya arrived, a prisoner in camp, he saw his murdered son lying where he had fallen when shot by the white trooper a few minutes before. (The murderer was never punished for his crime.)

## Refuge with Monos

After Tenaya was captured, some of his people took refuge with the Monos and other tribes. The others stayed near the valley in hopes of aiding their chief to escape. Captain Boling spent several days trying to persuade Tenaya to lead him to the camp of his people, but the old chief refused. Finally the "Mission Indians" announced that they had located the trails of the scouts who had been watching the whites. They took the trails, closely followed by Captain Boling's men, with Chief Tenaya tied and led like an animal. They surprised, surrounded and captured the camp of Indians on the shores of the beautiful lake about ten miles above the valley. In honor of the chief, Dr. Bunnell named the lake "Tenaya."

Chief Tenaya was released from the end of the rope, but was further mortified by being refused permission to talk to the men of his tribe, and ordered to stay with the women and children. The Indians were ordered to prepare for the march to the reservation. Tenaya was informed that he would never again see his beautiful valley. He was so depressed that finally Captain Boling, taking pity on him, allowed him to march at the head of the column with the officers, under strict guard. One of the guards was one of the much despised "Mission Indians" who had betrayed and helped to capture him. After a short stay at the reservation, Tenaya, with his family was allowed to return to his home. A number of his people soon afterwards followed him. Another attempt on the part of the Yosemite Indians to keep the whites from entering the valley, more bloodshed, and again the troops were sent to capture Tenaya and his

people. Five Indians were captured and shot. The rest escaped to the higher mountains and lived for some time with the Monos, and Piutes, and again later, returned to their old home. The Monos had raided a white man's ranch and had stolen a band of horses and mules. The Yosemitees feared to do likewise, so a few of their young warriors drove off a part of the stolen animals from the Monos' camp of Mono Lake and by a long, round-about route finally got the animals into the valley. They then proceeded to hold a great feast. While they were in the midst of the feast, the Monos surprised them and slaughtered all but a few who managed to flee down the river. Tenaya was killed, his skull crushed by a boulder at the hands of a Mono brave.

#### Now Forty Remain

Today there are about forty Indians claiming to be Tenaya's descendants. Johnnie and Chris Brown are grandson and great grandson of Tenaya. Chris is called chief. However, as much his duties are light. There are no wars, no hunting grounds—no vast territory—no teepees. There is no need to guard against invasion, for they have nothing to guard. They occupy but do not own, a low, rocky, ridge covered with scrub oaks and brush, with a sprinkling of cedars. Instead of teepees, they live in ragged canvas tents—pitched among the boulders and brush. The place is called the "Indian Village" as is proven with a crude sign painted with a lead pencil on a box end and fastened to a tree facing the main drive at the foot of the ridge. It is the only spot of interest not defined by a well defined trail.

The present Indian village is near the site of the former Awani. I do not know, Neither do I know how they happened to move, or to be moved, to that spot. It is the least desirable place imaginable, and if they moved their on their own accord, it must have been for some reason of which they do not care to speak. I heard their versions, none of which sounded true to me.

#### No Claim on Valley

I interviewed several of the Yosemitees, among them Mary Wilson, Joe Rube, Bill Todd and others. None expressed any resentment, but all hoped that they would soon be assigned a better location. They have great faith in Uncle Sam, and all are sure that when the Indians decide unanimously on the location must be suitable, the government will assign them that location. They realize that they have no claim upon the valley, or any part, thereof, outside of tradition, although the former Chief Tenaya did not sell his rights or the rights of his people to the whites. Without having made inquiries, I presume that there is no record of the government having purchased from the Indians their rights and claims to the Yosemite.

Dr. L. H Bunnell says, in reference to the statements of the five Yosemitees, who were shot by the United States troops, that the whites had no right to enter the valley without their permission: Lieutenant Moore told them through the interpreter that they had sold their lands to the government, that it belonged to the white men now, that the Indians had no right there. They had signed a treaty of peace with the whites, and had agreed to live on the reservations provided for them. To this they replied that Ten-ie-ya had never consented to the sale of their valley and had never received pay for it."

Many of the Indians now living in the valley had hoped to be moved back to their old homesite. Awani, but seemed to have later abandoned that hope. They offer many reasons now for not desiring return to that location. Their principal reason for not having arrived at a conclusion as to the most desirable place is that several of the older Indians have become discouraged and sullen and do not wish

to be disturbed. Those, on advice of the others, I did not interview, I suggested a general council, that an agreement might be reached satisfactory to all, and it was planned to hold such a council. However, the Indians are easily excited. One of the young men secured some fire-water and although he did not get noisy, and disturbed no one, he was reported and banished "for a time" from the valley by the authorities. That so upset the others that the council was postponed, and probably will not be revived again until some outsider urges it.

#### Rumors and Rumors

Rumors that a church is to be built on the former site of Awani probably has something to do with changing the minds of those who had wished to return to that spot. Also rumors that a store is to be built on their present location has made some of them uneasy. That rumor is probably false, as there are so many more accessible spots to be had. But the Indians realize that there at the pleasure of the whites, and should their village site be wanted by the whites, they must go, whether other provisions have been made for them or not. After each rumor was repeated to me, still I was assured that Uncle Sam would see that they were taken care of.

Two or three of the Indians own small automobiles. They cannot drive their autos to their homes, but must park them a short distance away. They could probably build a road, with little effort but they have not inherited an ambition along the lines of labor. They do work, for they have no other means of earning their living. They work at road building, wood cutting and as government packers, etc.

Few of the ancient Indian customs remain. Among those still observed are—cooking the village meals over the village campfires. --- and during the tourist season. Nightly war dances and the singing of old Indian songs. The admission to the war dances and singing is advertised at twenty five cents. The twenty five cents is collected by passing a basket after the spectators have assembled trusting to everybody's honesty, to pay the right amount, if anything. The proceeds from this entertainment is used to help buy the necessities of life for the village.



## Dance Around Fire

The war dance takes place around a very small campfire, in the bottom of a small bowl shaped depression in the same rocky ridge that the village occupies. Probably one hundred and fifty spectators can uncomfortably view the dances, standing or sitting on the sides and rim of the bowl. It is not easy to get to the dance bowl, as there are no trails, and many who would like to witness the dances and hear the songs, hesitate to wander around among the boulders and brush after dark. The Indians hang coil-oil lanterns from the trees to light the way to and from the dances, but coil-oil lanterns are very ineffective to us who know only electricity for lighting.

Among those who take part in the wardances, one is an Indian girl, about 17 or 18 years old. She is the granddaughter of Mary Wilson. Mary Wilson has 20 grandchildren, not all in the Yosemite. Bill Todd who takes part also, devotes his spare time teaching the boys and girls of the village the old war dances, that they might not die out as have many of the old Indian customs. Only five or six take part in the dances, there being no room for more dancers. Three or four others furnish the "Indian music." The beautiful Yosemite Valley that was their home, is now our playground. It seems to me that we could spare a position—a very small portion for the comfort of those whose ancestors were so unfortunate as to have been the weaker people.