

Recollection reveals past culture of Wolford Canyon



Koonsh, left, with Elijah Kishwalk.

by George W. Aguilar, Sr.

This is a short historical account of the now unknown inhabitants of the Wolford Canyon community. The era will be from the year 1855 treaty signing to the year of the Fire of 1937. This is an attempt to reconstruct an era of people that put all their heart and soul into their homes, land, family and their means of survival. Viewing this area from Highway 26, appears to be a very harsh and desolate environment. Much thanks to the Realty Department, Museum of Warm Springs, Vital Statistics Dept., Edith Danzuka, and Harvey Scott. They have provided the vital information for this particular community.

Within 80 to 82 years after the signing of the 1855 Treaty, the Wolford Canyon Community simply disappeared. The culture of the peoples of Wolford Canyon has long dissipated. The last stronghold for our heritage rests on the last three individuals who were reared in this community. Only the Polk's house and Jimmy Scott's barn survived. The rebuilding of fences corrals, barns, storage sheds and replacing the primitive farm equipment was too costly. The only means of survival was an exodus to the Warm Springs Agency. The fluent speaking of Sahaptin and Wasco language is lost. (Special note: assessment of the fire damage elsewhere is measured by the seniors migration to the Warm Springs area, Tenino Valley, Metolious Bench etc.)

Wolford Canyon was named after an individual whose name was Joseph Wolford or Til-i-sit (Indian name). Joe's father was Kuah-shi-at. This was the same person that fathered Henry and Arthur Semintyre. Joe was born in 1850. Joseph married Harriett (Yu-Mut-Ni). They had ten (10) children. The daughter Carrie (Tani-Kus-Pum) was the surviving child. The last living member was Marie Jones Wolford (Ska-Wow-Wa). She married Joe after Harriet died in 1905. In the matter of Maria Wolford, Vital Stats records provide her death in January 10, 1936. Naming the canyon after Wolford may infer that the individual was a leader of some sort of the community or a prominent clan mem-

ber. Realty records list him as a member of the Wasco Tribe. Mustering out records stored in the Museum archives show that Joe participated in the Snake War skirmish and Modoc Wars as a scout for the U.S. Army. Joe died in 1910 at 60 years of age.

Some of the 1855 first and second generation names gradually faded away. However, some of the names still live in geographical places like Seymore Springs, Sidwaller Flat, Peter Springs, Tommy Cabin, Wolford Canyon and descending into the Shitike Valley, via Highway 26 is the Semintyre Springs.

The people of this canyon were a mixture of Sahaptin and Wasco speaking peoples which evoked a bilingual language. For this earlier era, the basis of information lead to the Tygh Sahaptin which settled into the Simnasho area. The Tenino Sahaptin, Dog River Wasco and Cascade settled the Tenino Valley, Miller Flat and Wolford Canyon of the Warm Springs Reservation. (Note: when two languages are spoken in the household, the fluent speaking child will usually follow that of the mother).

Horse ranching activity in the earlier era was the heart of this community. The horses provided the beast of burden for agricultural activities, plowing the fields for hay and gardens. Transportation by horse drawn wagons, saddle horses for hunting, fur trapping and commuting to the far off Huckleberry fields, etc. The horses were also used for trading marriages, paying the Indian doctors for their services etc. So important was the horse to the earlier culture that male members regarded all their horses on the same levels as their plural wives. Space restricts the description and elaboration of the occupations of trapping, woodcutters, gardening, berry fields, root digging areas, hide processing and river fishermen (Note: the congressional Dawes Act of 1887 (allotments) prohibited the male members to claim more than one wife).

The Glitter of Hollywood 1937-1939. Squatters became common in the settlement south of Warm Springs. Later it was to become known as Hollywood. The narrow ungraveled dirt road ran North to South and each

shanty type house possessed their very own outhouse. Hollywood was a gathering place for the displaced people of the Fire and newlyweds. The Paiutes established their places in the South Wolford and Tenino in the mid section area. The Northern portion usually consisted of the younger and more modern oriented people. A new culture emerged from the 1937 fire migration, a melting pot of different people coming together. The Paiute, Sahaptin, Wasco, Nez-Perce, California, Plains and other Tribes began the intermarriage process. These were a spill over of the C.C.C. Work Camp employees. Baseball quickly became the pastime. In some homes batter operated radios blaring Red River Valley and Jimmy Rodgers Cowboy music. A rodeo corral was constructed, the Longhouse for the Root Feast was of a dirt floor; the frame structure was of fir poles and covered with canvas. The feasts and ceremonial activity lasted a whole week or more. The Pil-yah-wit (gambling) was seen at the feast's activities. Felix Wallulatum and Alice Switzler introduced the Tent Evangelism.

Automobiles replace the horse and wagons. Many became transient workers, moving to and from different stages of crop harvesting. Many of the older generation did not return to their broken down ranch life. They



Cain Brunoe, left with George Pitt.

that remained in Hollywood eventually died of old age and heartbreak. In 1957 a culture of the pre-1855 Treaty, gasps in its final breath. The thundering Celilo Falls of the great Columbia River is silenced and drowned forever. Cruising the Highway I-80 and viewing the dead and polluted waters that cover the Tenino and Celilo Falls location is now just a memory and legacy. Just like the Wolford Canyon Era of just 20 years before.

These are the recollections of the remaining people that once lived in the Wolford Canyon.

Edith Switzler Danzuka remembers the horse herd of Elijah Kishwalk that consisted of some very large gray horses. The herd became slicks (unbranded) upon the passing of Elijah. The now unbranded horses quickly earned a reputation for some of the hardest and meanest rodeo bucking horses that came out of the Wolford Canyon.

Kishwalk corral was the heart of the Wolford Canyon roundup place, for all branding, horse breaking, gelding, etc. This is the place where you might have heard

the gleeful and joyful laughter of Maria Wolford. Maria was the sister Teresa of her era for this particular community and Tenino Valley. She had comforted the ill, provided labor for household chores. Maria had performed these particular duties because of her compassionate nature and she did not expect anything in return. To the children it was a connection to the outside world. The older people there was the buzzing of gossip and news of other areas of the reservation.

Edith mentioned the beautiful sorrel horse herd of my grandmother Hattie Polk, Aunt Dorthy and George Aguilar Sr.,. Their herd increased very quickly. Most of the herd turned to slicks when the family abandoned the ranch life in 1937. The family moved to the inherited house from Jerry Holliquilla at the Warm Springs Agency. Jerry was a half brother to Hattie Polk.

Cain and Emma Parker Brunoe came to this area at the turn of the century. Possibly 1890s. Cain built a large house for his family. This is where Adeline, Jennette, Augustus and Lorraine Brunoe was born. Emma Parker Brunoe was the daughter of Chief Billy Chinook. This family's children migrated elsewhere as they became of age. Jennette later occupied this house when she married Manual Garcia, Sr. Edith states some of the older Garcia

They raised hay for their thousand (1,000) plus head of cattle based in the Dry Creek Lot No. 3024. The Barn that survived the fire was torn down and relocated to Sidwaller Flat, where some of the smoke stained boards became a storage shed. It still stands to this day. The humble beginning of Jimmy's success was a frantic dawn to dusk of wood cutting.

Edwin Scott, son, had served on several tribal committees, served three terms on the tribal council, one of the terms was the chairman for the council.

Ray Scott, son, became the tribal chief of police later, a criminal investigator.

Hazel Scott Seyler, daughter, retired after twenty plus years as one of the tribal credit personnel.

Harvey Scott, son, is still employed as a heavy equipment operator for a fire suppression crew; at the age of 70 years.

Eliza Symontire Seymore, Wa-Pah-Nish married and relocated to the Tenino Valley area. After passing of her first husband, she married Ira Seymore and had one son named Joe Dale Thompson. Joe was named after his great uncle Joe Wolford or Til-I-Sit of which his family resides the Thompson lineage. After the fire destroyed her home and property, she relocated to mid Hollywood area and lived out her years here.

Pierson and Eva Seymore Mitchell (Little Eva) lived in the wooded area at the head of the canyon. Pierson was 3/4 Wasco 1/4 Warm Springs, Eva was 4/4 Warm Springs. They had two sons, Archie and Noah, and one daughter named Bertha Mitchell Stevens. Noah and Bertha's husband had fished with Joe Esterbrook at the Tenino area. They attended the set net scaffolds, sturgeon long lines and gillnets. Joe was probably the first Native American to use the gillnets. Archie Mitchell became a prominent Shaker Member and passed on before getting to know of his many great grandchildren. Little Eva passed on in the mid Hollywood. The entire homestead went up in the flames of the Fire.

Susan Seymore family (Wa-Ki-Sma), Jasper and Ruby Switzler resided on Jasper's grandmother's place; located between Joe Wolford and Eva Polk. This is the place where as a child I played with Evangeline and her brother Delton. Edith Switzler Danzuka was the older of the children. Edith was probably the pioneer for the BIA day school policy. Her daily attendance at school was quelling because of the inclement of weather

that included rain, hail, and cold blowing snow storms. Her trip to the agency school was a daily ten (10) mile round trip by horseback. This was approximately a thirteen (13) hour trek, that includes classes, saddling, watering, feeding and unsaddling the horse she also probably had household duties that need to be tended to as well. Edith became one of the very first tribal employees which she at times ran the entire administration. Many times served as the Acting Secretary Treasurer for the tribe. As the Tribal Organization emerged from it's infancy stage, Edith served as the Tribal Enrollment and Vital Statistics officer. Her service with the Tribes was thirty years (several more years with the government before that). Edith served one term on the Tribal Council. The male Switzler members were Columbia River fishermen. Their set net scaffolds were above the big eddy area across from Spear fish area.

John Polk built a small cabin on the Northwest side of the Canyon. He had fished adjacent of the Spear Fish area. He never used a boat because he usually swam the channel. This very same dangerous channel claimed the lives of five (5) of our family members. John was one of the practicing Indian Doctors of the community.

For a long time the residence near the apple tree was a mystery. Gladys Thompson a senior, identified the occupants. This is where Jacob Thomas built a home and resided. Jake (nickname) married Emma in 1869. This was two years after his mustering out of the U.S. Army Calvary at the Dalles Fort. He served as a scout and bugler in the Snake skirmishes and Modoc Wars. Jake drew a pension for his service with the U.S. Army records in the Realty Dept. reveal him to be a shrewd business oriented person. Jake had three daughters, they were Martha, Ada and Eva. Martha was the wife of Jimmy Scott. Lucinda Scott Smith, Suppah brothers and Greeley Brothers are descendants of Jake Thomas. Jake died February 22, 1928. Records show him as of the Wasco and Cascade tribe.

It is my hope that his short article has enlightened some of my relatives and the 1,000 plus people that can trace their dependency to this community. It was a culture that differed somewhat to the other areas of the reservation especially the religious and Indian traditional activities of which was deleted in this writing.



Horse roundup at Seymore Corral.