

Sheep Rock Wildlife

By J. O. McKINNEY

There is no need to turn backward the hands of time for Sheep Rock. It was a guidepost of history 134 years ago. It still is. Events gravitate to its rocky outline as steel to magnet.

This most historical spot in Northern California is located 15 miles north of Weed on U.S. Highway 97. U.S. 99 is within sight of it to the west and vapor trails from jet planes crisscross the skies above it. But all along its semi-circular eight-mile course, the law of fang and claw still rules—the only statutes acknowledged by its dwellers.

It was back in 1825 that Jean Baptist McKay, factor for Hudson Bay Fur Company, mentions in his diary that he had camped beside Sheep Rock. When, or by whom it was so named is unknown. No mystery surrounds why it was called that. Big-horn sheep abounded all over its precipitous sides. Today these early day animals have been exterminated; but mountain lions rear their kittens in dens that abound; and bears hibernate through the long Northern California winters.

Eagles may be seen nesting in trees growing out of the rocky slopes; and wild horses come down from nearby Miller Mountain to keep alive the tradition that Sheep Rock will never be tamed.

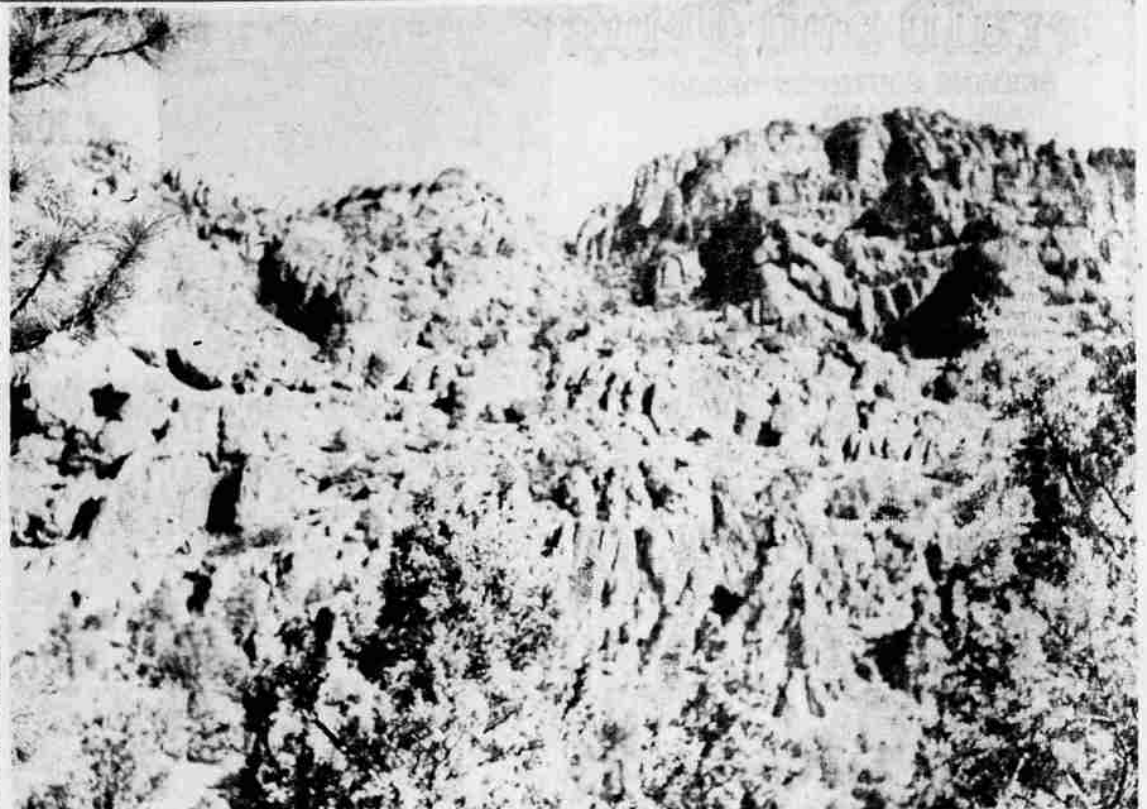
The remains of buildings, erected more than 100 years ago at the base of Sheep Rock still exist. Within recent months archeologists have uncovered relics of a prehistoric people who once lived there. And it is the setting for one of the epic immigrations into the Old West.

It was back in the mid-1880's when Stephen Soule led a band of pioneers toward Shasta Valley. No guide pointed out the less difficult passage around Sheep Rock, so these intrepid travelers came down through a gap between it, and Miller Mountain to the north. Wagons had to be dismantled, and let down the cliffs by ropes. But they could see the Promised Land of Shasta Valley ahead, and that led them on. Today there are many descendants of the leader in the valley, as well as descendants of others of the party.

But today that gap will prove a barrier to all but the most rugged who try to travel it afoot.

The sheep that gave the Gibraltar-like rock its name were a source of mutton to settlers for many years. But hunting pressure, coupled with a severe winter in 1889-90 wiped them out. A trophy head, killed there in 1884, may be seen in the Siskiyou County Museum in Yreka.

An effort was made in 1950 to repopulate the rock with big-horn sheep. Ronald Menary, Mount Shas-



WILD ANIMALS still live in their natural state in the wild and secluded caves on the steep slopes of Sheep Rock. Terrain

here is too rough for the average hunter and the beasts are not unduly bothered. — Photo by McKinney

ta stockman, was given a Mouflon ram, and two ewes. He released them on land he owned at Sheep Rock, but these imports from Corsica took a few whiffs of the lion-tainted air, and departed. They found a spot to their liking near Dwinell Lake. Here they built up a flock of about a dozen head. But poachers began sniping at them. Today they, too, are gone.

The north face of this rock is sloping, mahogany-covered terrain where big buck deer are found, but where hunting is difficult. When disturbed, the deer slip over the rim, and find a haven in hidden pastures that are surrounded with walls that are impassable to all but those who know the secret trails. Stock has been known to find these passages, and live for months without being seen by their owners.

The rock's southern, and western face is a precipitous mass of lava that runs to about 2,000 feet in height. Caves dot its entire length, and wild animals may be observed playing about the entrances that are placed out of reach of human beings.

While early day civilization used Sheep Rock as a marker for travel along Military Pass Road, and the old Immigrant Trail; while modern highways run within sight

and sound of its rough outline, the rock itself has changed but little. Deer winter in numbers on the valley side of the rock, and sheep are not found there any more. But man has made little imprint. It remains a landmark that has the appearance of an inland Gibraltar, rugged, and the natural abode of the wild things of the area.

THE COVER

Fishing will always be one of the highlights of any healthy youth's existence. This picture grasps the whole idea in one scene. Taken at Fremont Bridge it shows, left to right, David Coleman and his dog, Sassy; Fred Caines, Steve Caines, David Hardenbrook and Bill Majors. It was taken by Herald and News photographer Don Kettler.



STEPHEN S. MEAMBER, of Yreka, is a great-grandson of Stephen Soule who led an early-day party of pioneers into Shasta Valley over the rough terrain between Sheep Rock and Miller Mountain. — Photo by McKinney



TROPHY HEAD of a big ram killed on Sheep Rock in 1884 by George O'Connor gives some measure of memory of the glories of the area before the herds were wiped out. — Photo by McKinney

MD Study On Calves Made

Studies of muscular dystrophy in calves now under way at Oregon State College may contribute to understanding of the disease in man, Dr. Hugo Krueger, professor of animal husbandry, believes.

He said rabbits, guinea pigs, mice, rats, sheep and cattle all can have various forms of muscular dystrophy, some similar to the disease in humans. The more learned about muscular dystrophies of animals, the more possibility of knowing about the disease in man, Krueger explained.

The OSC studies have recently been assisted by a \$2,700 grant from the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America, Inc. The research deals with white muscle, a muscular dystrophy of cattle. The project is to study heart difficulties of calves afflicted with the disease.

Krueger explained that cattle and sheep die suddenly when afflicted with white muscle disease. Visible lesions can be seen in the hearts of some calves. This indicates that muscles are not the only part of the body affected. Circulation, the nervous system and muscles all can be affected in various types of muscular dystrophy.