

**The 2014**  
**Periscope**



**Journey of a People:**  
**A History of the**  
**Cahuilla and Chemehuevi Tribes**  
**of the Coachella Valley**

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COACHELLA VALLEY  
HISTORY MUSEUM

## Credits

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Cover Photo: This photo was taken of a Cahuilla family in Section 14 of present-day Palm Springs, California c.1888. *Photo courtesy of the Coachella Valley History Museum.*

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# Journey of a People: A History of the Cahuilla and Chemehuevi Tribes of the Coachella Valley

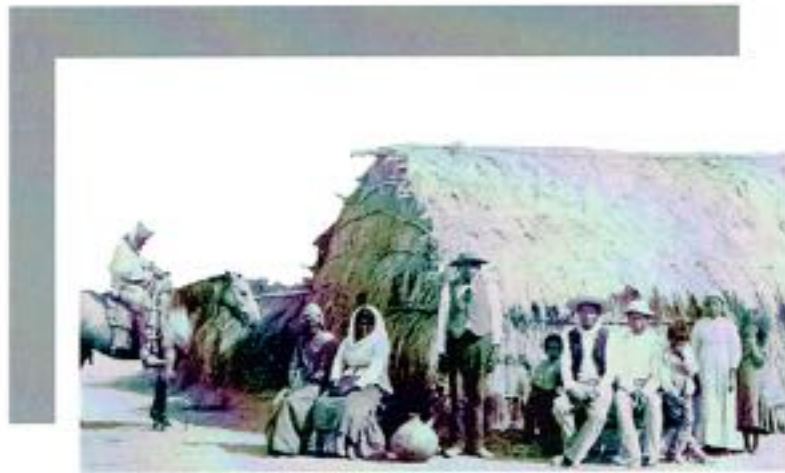
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## ***An Introduction to Journey of a People: A History of the Cahuilla & Chemehuevi Tribes in the Coachella Valley***

By Erica M. Ward, Curator and Exhibit Designer

The 2013-14 exhibit at the Coachella Valley History Museum featured a history of the Coachella Valley's Native American tribes. Developed by archivist Erica Ward, displays of prehistoric Cahuilla (pronounced Ka-wee-yah) Indian artifacts, historic photographs of the tribes, and individual histories from each of the five tribes that call the Coachella Valley home were included in the exhibit. Additionally, visitors were able to explore the role the tribes and their people have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Residing in the region prior to European settlement, the Desert Cahuilla people (the ancestors of today's Agua Caliente, Augustine, Cabazon, and Torres Martinez Tribes) have been a part of the Coachella Valley for centuries. The Cahuilla were well-adapted to the extremely arid and hot desert of the area. They foraged for food from mesquite trees and other indigenous plants and hunted a variety of desert life. When the Ancient Lake Cahuilla filled most of the Coachella Valley, the Cahuilla people also trapped fish on the shoreline. Remnants of these fish traps can be found in a few spots around the Coachella Valley. Like most settlements, the Cahuilla villages required a water source. The Desert Cahuilla people demonstrated their inventive technical skills by digging walk-in water wells without the use of machinery. Despite the harsh environmental conditions the Cahuilla faced, living in the southern part of the Colorado Desert, the people flourished.

The Cahuilla people developed customs and traditions that express their relationship with the world and land. Honoring the plants and animals every day was a reflection on their belief that Mukut (the creator) had turned some of the people into plants and animals in order to provide nourishment for the rest. The Cahuilla had spiritual traditions that marked important life events.

With the encroachment of Europeans into Cahuilla territory, many of these cultural traditions changed. The Cahuilla changed their attire as they traded or purchased European fabrics and clothing. When control of California changed from the Spanish to the Mexican government, the European influence continued. When California joined the United States the Cahuilla faced dramatic upheavals, especially when American settlers began to inhabit the area.

Land use patterns also changed with the arrival of more settlers into the Western hemisphere of the United States. In 1867, Chemehuevi people (the ancestors of today's Twenty Nine Palms tribe) migrated from areas in present day Utah, Arizona, and Nevada to the Southern California Desert. Additionally, the arrival of white settlers encroached on Cahuilla lands, and thus the reservations established in the late 1800s represented only a small fraction of Cahuilla lands.

The American government established tribal names and reservations based on names the Spanish and Mexican governments had written on maps. In the process the U.S. government often put multiple families into one tribe, disregarding Cahuilla and Chemehuevi traditions or politics in the process. Under President Ulysses Grant, the Torro and Martinez reservations were combined to create the Torres-Martinez reservation. President Grant also created the Cabazon and Agua Caliente reservation in the same 1876 presidential order. Congress formed the Augustine reservation in 1891, while the Twenty-Nine Palms reservation was created in 1895 by President Grover Cleveland.

Each reservation faced obstacles placed on them by the dominant American society aimed at "civilizing the Indians." Many of the Cahuilla and Chemehuevi children were forced to attend one of three Southern California Indian boarding schools: St. Boniface Indian/Industrial School, Perris Indian School, or Sherman Indian School. While attending the school, the children were prohibited from speaking their native Cahuilla language. These children were forcibly alienated from their own culture while at school.

Today, Cahuillas and Chemehuevis have worked to re-establish their cultural traditions despite the challenges they faced. When Coachella Valley tribes began gaming, they were able to finance and develop programs with the goal of strengthening cultural traditions and tribal government. The tribes have also continued to define and strengthen their sovereignty. The five Coachella Valley tribes have established their tribal governments to govern within their lands. With gaming funds, most of them have also developed language and cultural programs to teach their children about their traditions and history.

Several of the tribes have developed other business opportunities including resorts, golf courses, travel centers and more. The continued success of the tribes in the Coachella Valley is taken on by each new generation as they study the past.

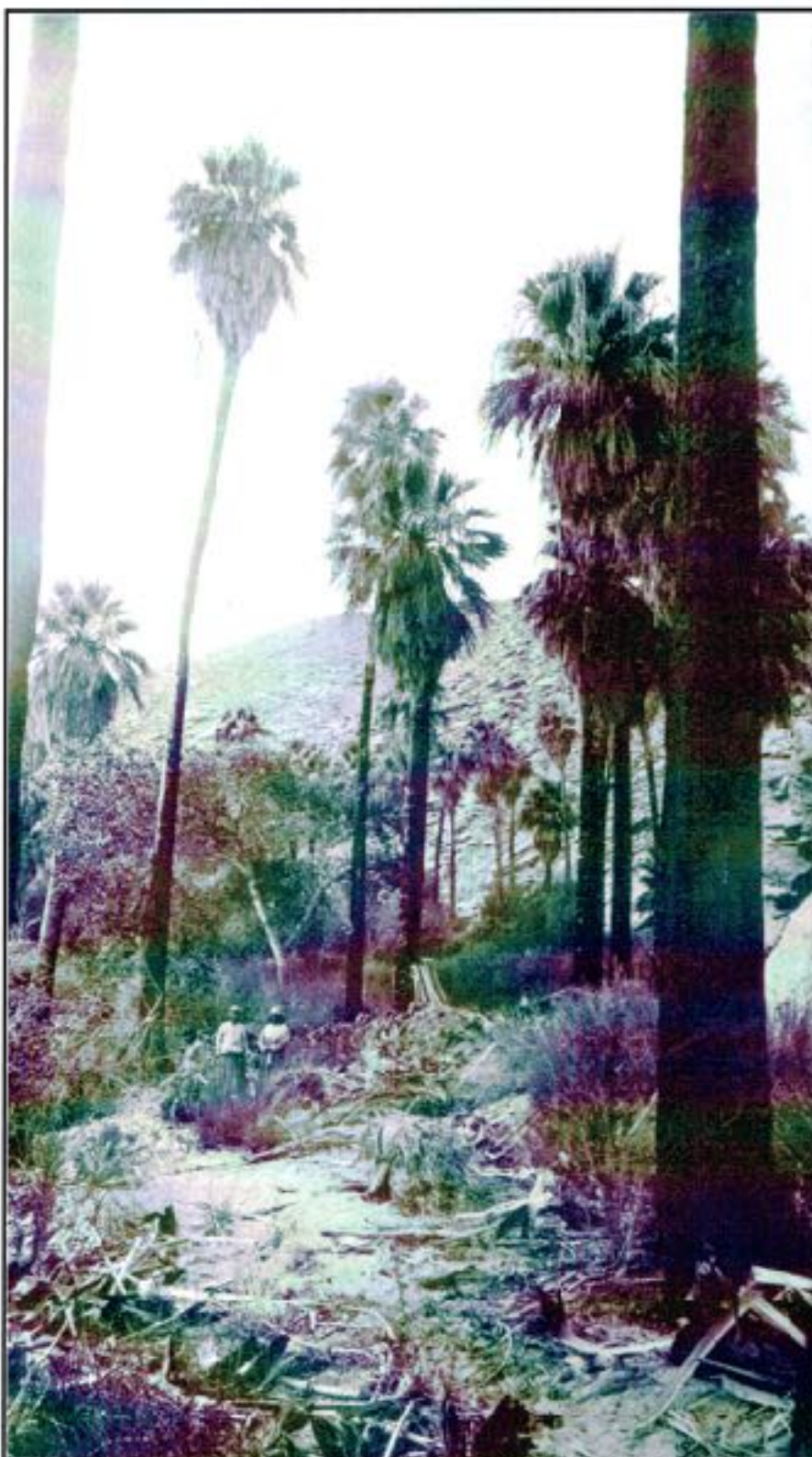


Figure 1: Two Agua Caliente women standing among the palm trees in Palm Canyon, @1900. Coachella Valley History Museum Collection

## The Cahuilla Indians

By Friscilla H. Porter\*

(Note: The text for this section is based in part on *Mukat's People: The Cahuilla Indians of Southern California* by Lowell John Bean. The past tense is used to place the Cahuilla culture in historical perspective.)

### Physical Location

The location of the Cahuilla Indian villages varied from the low deserts to the high mountains. The area covered about 2,400 square miles (roughly 44 miles by 53 miles). The elevation ranged from the peaks of the San Jacinto Mountains (San Jacinto Peak, Elevation 10,804') and the San Gorgonio Mountains (San Gorgonio Mountain, Elevation 11,499') to 273 feet below sea level at the Salton Sink. It included the summits of the San Bernardino, Little San Bernardino, the Orocopia and the Chocolate mountain ranges to the north; the Colorado River to the east; the area to Borrego Springs to the south; the eastern slopes of the Palomar Mountains to the west and the San Jacinto Plain near Riverside. The San Gorgonio Pass (elevation 2,616')

separates the San Bernardino Mountains from Mount San Jacinto and the Santa Rosa ranges. The Coachella Valley separates the Santa Rosa Mountains from the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

The Cahuilla had distinct vertical life zones within their territory that were defined by altitude. Plant and animal resources came from different life zones. The following Life Zones chart is a synthesis of material presented in *Mukat's People*. (Bean p. 25-28)

Life Zones	Plant Resources	Animal Resources
<p><b>Lower Sonoran Zone</b> is the desert region and it extends into some of the foothills. It lies below the juniper-pinyon belt. Contains about 60% of total Cahuilla land.</p>	<p>Arrowweed, barrel cactus, beavertail cactus, brittle bush, California fan palm, creosote bush, desert agave, desert willow, desert lavender, Mojave yucca, octotillo, sugarbush, screwbean mesquite, teddy bear cholla, yerba mansa, yucca whipplei (Our Lord's Candle), cat's claw, desert honey mesquite, desert ironwood, milkweed, palo verde, saltbush</p>	<p>More edible varieties than any other zone, including badger, chipmunk, cottontail rabbit, mule deer, raccoon, seven species of mice, three species of rats, three species of kangaroo rats, three species of squirrel, gray squirrel</p>
<p><b>Upper Sonoran Zone</b> lies approximately from the 1000 ft. to 5000 ft. elevation. Contains 30% of the total Cahuilla land.</p>	<p>60% of the plants used for food are in this zone, including oak trees and pinyon trees, cacti, agave, mesquite, nolina, octotillo</p>	<p>Abundant fauna including mule deer, antelope, mountain sheep, numerous rabbits and other rodents</p>
<p><b>Transition Zone</b> lies at the five to seven thousand foot elevations. Contains 7% of the total Cahuilla land. Cold, snowy winters with 20-30" precipitation per year.</p>	<p>15 % of the plants used for food occurred in this zone, including oak trees, elderberry, service berry, wild cherry. Plant life also includes coniferous forests with groves of oak trees, and cottonwoods growing along streams. South slopes have chaparral vegetation.</p>	<p>Deer, gray squirrel ground squirrel, chipmunk, deer mouse, pinyon mouse, pack rat. (Bears and mountain lions were not eaten but they were dangerous to the hunter and were competitors for the same food resources.)</p>
<p><b>Canadian-Hudsonian Zone</b> is at the highest elevations. Contains about 5% of Cahuilla land. Heaviest precipitation, lowest temperatures.</p>	<p>Very little food resources</p>	<p>Mountain sheep, mule deer, rabbits, rodents, lizards and snakes</p>

The territory occupied by the Cahuilla is unusual geographically in its great variety of topography, climatic conditions, and biological life zones. By being able to freely hunt or gather in more than one life zone, the Indians could secure a much greater variety of plant and animal foods. Villages were usually placed on alluvial fans and at canyon mouths where they received the benefit of warm winter breezes from the desert and cool summer winds coming down the canyons from the mountains. It should be noted that within these life zones there is considerable variability in patterns of plant and animal distribution. (Bean and Saube p. 9-10)

## Food

Prior to the disappearance of the Ancient Lake Cahuilla in 1400 A.D., the Cahuilla people lived near the water. Using bows and arrows, nets, and stone enclosures called fish traps; they trapped fish and shellfish and hunted water fowl, as well as, foraging among the indigenous vegetation for food. After 1400 A.D., the Cahuilla's food sources changed, as did their methods for getting food. (Ward, Exhibit Notes)



Figure 2: Fan Palm

The fan palm tree was used for food, construction material, tools, clothing, weapons, ceremonial objects and, of course, shade (Cornett, p. 25). The most important food resource was the palm fruit. It was eaten fresh, and the hard seeds were spit out. Sometimes the fruit was dried and later it would be ground into flour using bedrock mortars after they had been made soft by soaking in water.

Many species of birds were an important part of the Cahuilla diet. Quail were regularly hunted and provided a significant portion of the diet year round. Seasonal birds such as ducks and geese were more difficult to acquire. Most birds in the area were eaten except for the eagle or raven which were significant in Cahuilla rituals.

As noted in the Life Zone chart, a variety of large game and small game were eaten by the Cahuilla. Hunting, butchering and skinning were done by men and cooking by the women. A few major crops such as pinyon, acorn, and mesquite involved the labor of the entire family. Generally, the exclusive gathering of food plants was an activity of women but men through hunting often became familiar with locations of the best stands of plants.



Figure 3: Agave plant

In some of the food plants, such as agave, men were almost the exclusive collectors because of the physical labor involved in gathering (Bean and Sautel p. 18) Men were judged by the quality and quantity of agave they produced for their families. Consequently, boys were trained at an early age in agave cultivation and preparation. Groups of men and boys traveled to the agave areas, camped for several days, excavated baking pits, harvested the agave stalks when they were three or four feet tall, and prepared the food by baking it. Some stalks were spared so that the flowers they would produce later could be eaten. Many pounds of flowers were picked by the women each spring. (Dozier p. 10-11) The flower bud, usually called the mescal head, was rich and juicy.

Reptiles eaten include numerous snakes (rattlesnakes were a particular favorite), lizards (such as the chuckwalla) and tortoises. Insects, including ants, grasshoppers, cricket pupae, cicadas, and moth larvae and worms were also a source of food. Fish were sometimes caught in mountain streams and small lakes and were obtained by trade from neighboring groups.



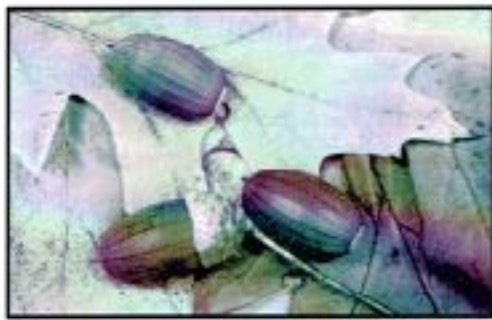


Figure 4: Acorns

The most extensive food-producing tree for the Cahuilla was the oak. The black oak, coast live oak, and canyon oak were the most productive and palatable of the species. A large annual food resource of acorns matured during a two-to-three week period in October or November. Properly shelled, crushed, and leached, the acorn meal was the major staple of the Cahuilla diet, and was eaten in combination with various other foods and condiments. (Bean p. 36-38)

The second most extensive food producing tree for the Cahuilla were the mesquites. These plants produced edible blossoms in June and seed pods in July and August. The blossoms were roasted in a stone-lined pit and then squeezed into balls or sun-dried and placed in water to produce a refreshing beverage. The pods were eaten fresh or mashed in mortars and mixed with water to make a drink. The beans were dried and eaten directly or ground into flour which was stored in the form of cakes. Pinyon trees also provided a source of food but it was a more erratic source. (Bean p. 39)



Figure 5: Mesquite leaves and thorns

There were many varieties of edible cactus that were gathered in early spring just after the rains. The leaves, stalks, fruit, and seeds of cacti were used for food. They were collected by women and children. The barrel cactus produced the largest quantity of edible fruit. Yucca and nolina provided two food sources for the Cahuilla: the blossoms and stalks. They were collected between April and September by the women and children although sometimes men returned from hunting expeditions with loads of blossoms and stalks.

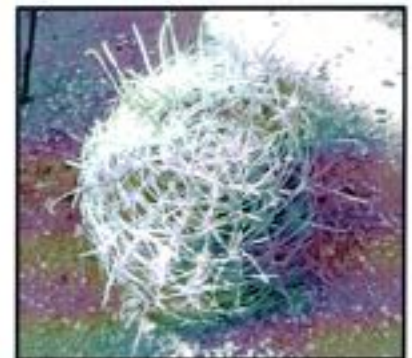


Figure 5: Barrel Cactus



Figure 7: Mesquite seed pods.

Several plants such as mesquite and screwbean produced edible seed pods that were collected from May to September and baked or collected fresh and dried and then pulverized into flour. Numerous fruits and berries added taste, variety, and nutrition to the Cahuilla diet. An important source of starch came from tubers and roots that were collected by women using digging sticks to pry plants from the soil. Seed-producing plants provided variety to the Cahuilla diet and included seeds such as sunflowers, chia, ocotillo, and juniper.

Each Cahuilla lineage had a permanent village located in relation to the natural resources of an area. As food ripened in different areas, individuals and groups moved out from the village to harvest the crops. No village was located more than sixteen miles from all its food gathering ranges, and approximately 80% of all food resources could be found within 5 miles. As a consequence, no major population movement was necessary for subsistence. (Bean and Saubel p. 19-20)

### Types of Shelter

Houses in the desert regions varied in size and shape depending upon the family's needs. Most were dome shaped although some were rectangular. Plants such as arrowweed, the sturdy leaves of the fan palm, willow and tule provided the Cahuilla with building materials. The house of the Cahuilla was made from bending willow branches and covering it with tule or grass. Willow, mesquite, and cedar provided heavier construction materials.

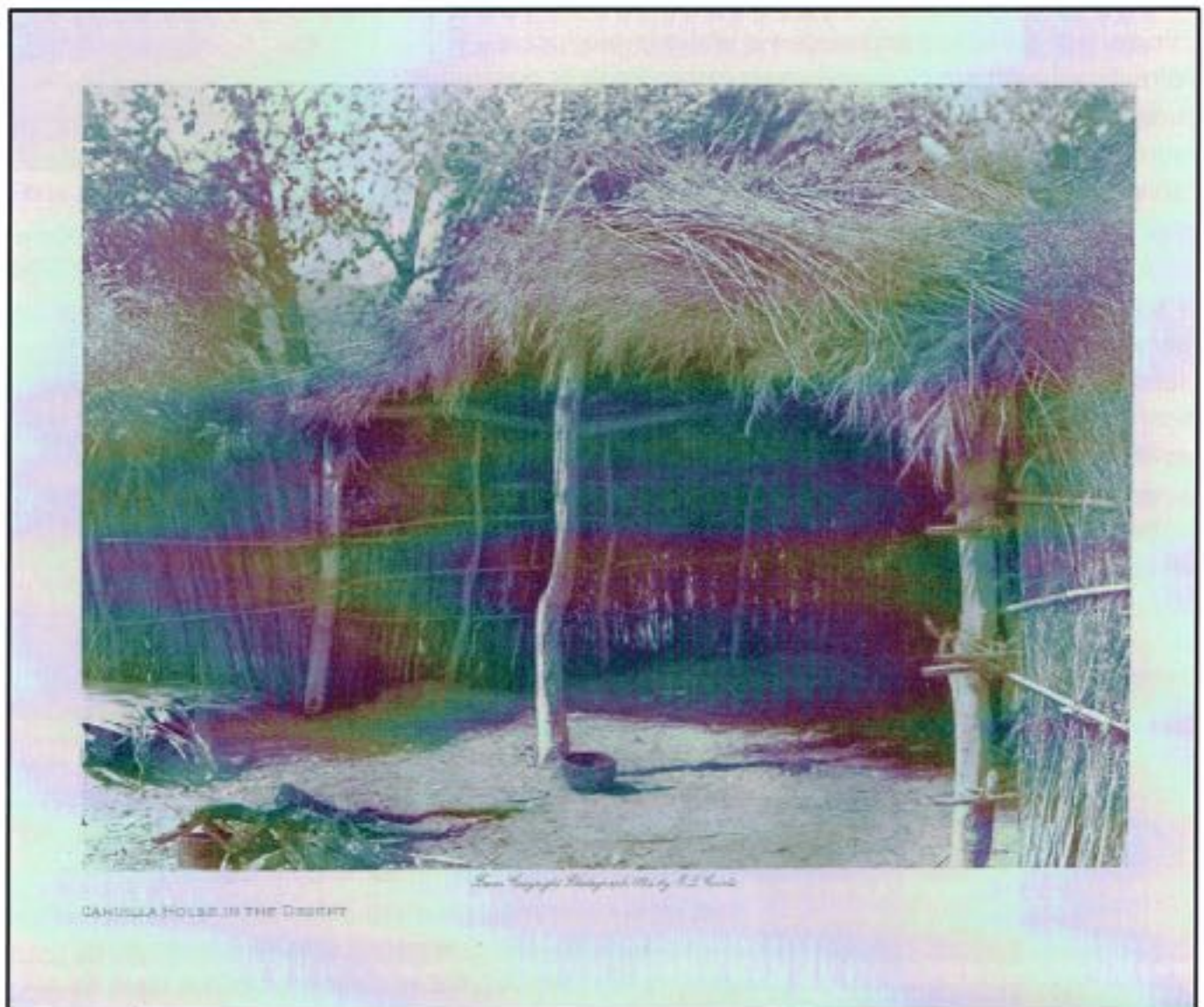


Figure 8: Edward S. Curtis, Desert Cahuilla Home. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved.

Note: Edward Sheriff Curtis (February 16, 1868 – October 19, 1952) was an ethnologist and photographer of the American West and of Native American peoples. In over 2000 photogravure plates, Curtis portrayed the traditional customs of eighty Indian tribes, including the Cahuilla Indians. Several Curtis photographs are included in this publication courtesy of the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

Each kish (family dwelling) had a front opening and a smoke hole at the top that could be covered in adverse weather. A hearth located in the center of the floor provided heat and warmth, and tule mats covered the doorway and the dirt floor. Some houses were large from 15 to 20 feet in length and perhaps as wide; others might be described as small brush shelters. Most living complexes were a cluster of two or three houses interconnected with armadas or thatched arbors and wind breaks which sheltered people from the intense summer sun and winds as they worked on domestic chores. (Bear p. 72)

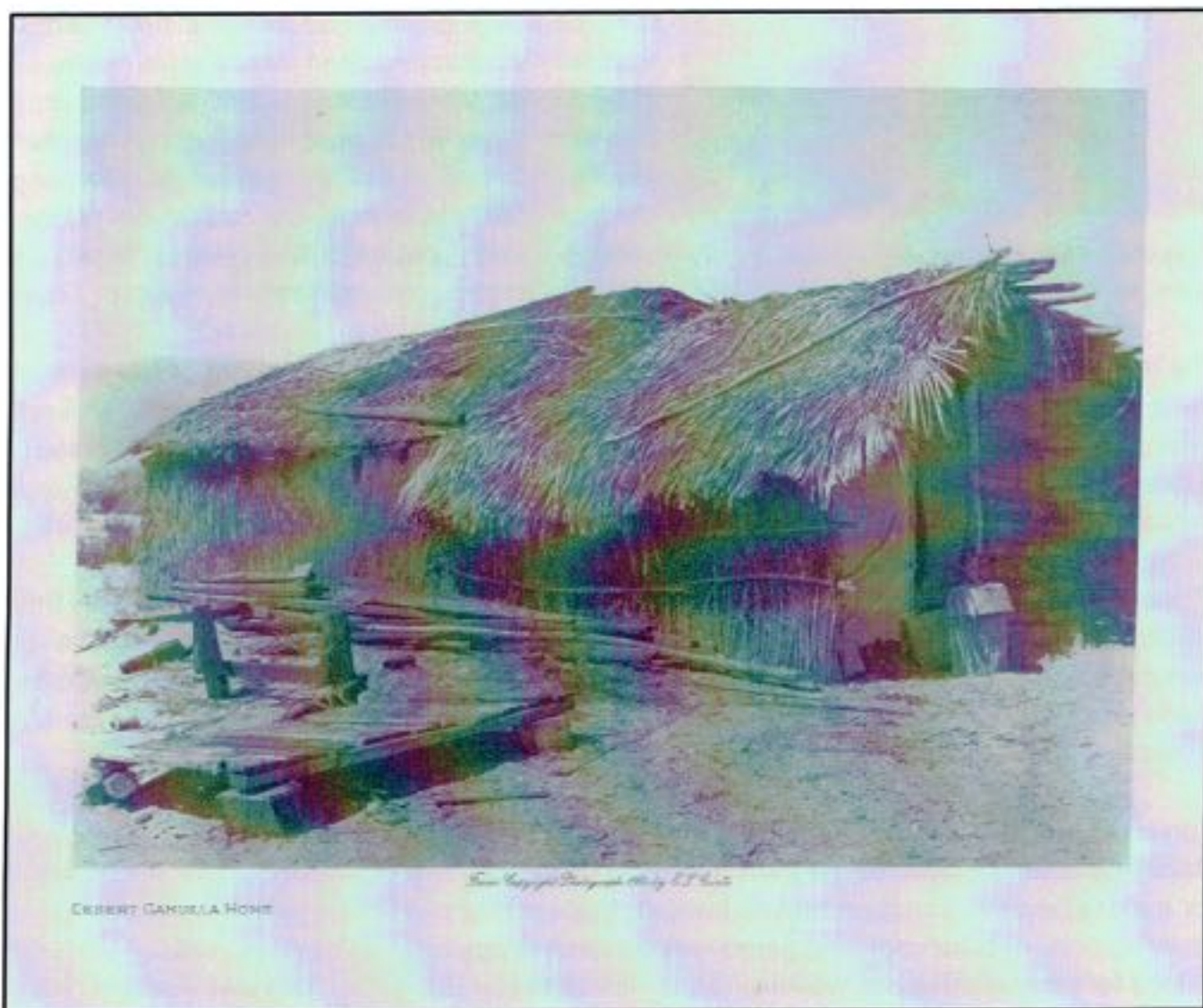


Figure 9: Edward S. Curtis, Cahuilla House in the Desert. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved.

The largest structure in a village was the ceremonial house (Kishumnawat). The lineage leader, or *net*, made this his home so he could protect the ceremonial bundle and to supervise various daily activities. This dome-shaped structure could be as large as fifty feet in diameter. Each village had a small earth-covered building called the sweathouse where men of the village would gather. Clustered around the individual homes and the ceremonial house were granaries where various seeds and foodstuffs were stored. Some villages had water wells varying in size from minor depressions to walk-in wells some thirty feet deep.

### Types of Tools



Figure 10: Stone mortar with a brush and a stone pestle

The most common method of processing food was grinding. Grinding acorns and dried berries was done in stone mortars with stone or wooden pestles. Bones were used for making tools, and tanning hides. Bones were sharpened for awls (hole-puncher), shoulder blades of animals were used for hide scrapers, and stones were made into pounding tools. Rocks were sometimes thrown at game. Flints were used for arrowpoints and small drills. Tortoise shells were used for making household utensils and rattles. Pottery containers were used for boiling dried and fresh seeds, fruits, blossoms, and meats. (Bean p. 52)

The bow and arrow and the throwing stick were the primary weapons for killing game. Bows were usually made of willow, mesquite, or the staks of palm fronds; arrows were made of cane, sagebrush, and arrowweed and tipped with stone or wooden points of different sizes depending upon the kind of game sought. The arrow tips were dipped in poisonous concoctions made from venoms of black widow spiders, rattlesnakes and fetid meat.

Fire was also used for killing game. Nests were burned and trees were set on fire to flush the game out. The game was clubbed, netted, or shot with bows and arrows as it fled from the burning area. Several types of traps were also used. Nets were a significant tool. They were made and owned by men and placed along game trails for whatever small game or birds would be caught within. (Bean p. 64-66)

Fan palm leaves were used for making various tools and utensils such as ladles and spoons. Rabbit sticks and digging sticks were made from hard woods, and flexible woods were used for making bows and cradles, and as basketry materials. Plant fiber was used for making carrying nets, nets for capturing game, articles of clothing, traps and snares, and threads and twines for sewing hides and weaving rabbit-skin blankets. String and cord was made from the stems of plants such as milkweed, yucca, or nettles. The agave leaf spine was used as a needle for sewing and puncturing purposes (tattooing, puncturing ear lobes and nasal septums). (Bean p. 42)

### Appearance

The Cahuilla were physically strong, of medium height, and stocky build. Both the men and women had long black hair parted in the middle. Both sexes tattooed their foreheads with vertical or horizontal lines. To designate clan relationships, the women also tattooed their chins. Tattoos were made by pricking the skin with a cactus thorn or a needle made from the yucca plant. Charcoal from a yucca cabbage, or juice from certain leaves, was rubbed into the open skin prick to make a blue-black tattoo.

### Types of Clothing

Most of the year, the Cahuilla wore very little clothing. Agave plants provided the Cahuilla with a sturdy fiber used in making shoes, nets and other items. Sturdy leaves from fan palm trees were used for wearing apparel. During the cold weather, they wore capes made from rabbit fur or deerskin. Capes also doubled for blankets. In warmer months the women wore only a two-piece apron of deerskin or woven tule. Most of the time they went barefoot, but if the terrain was rough they wore sandals. The women wore basket caps. They adorned themselves with flowers and tattoos.

### Basketry

Baskets were involved in almost every part of the daily routine from food gathering to food processing. Basket-making was a woman's skill and art, and the knowledge was passed down through generations. They were usually made by young girls and older women who were too aged to participate in food gathering. Some Cahuilla women were renowned for their basket-making designs, especially as baskets became traded as pieces of art. A woman who was adept as a fine basketmaker acquired considerable prestige and had an economic advantage since she could trade her product for other commodities. Cahuilla baskets were renowned for their closeness of weave. The designs were made up of symbols of significance to the culture or to the individual basketmaker. (Bean and Saubel p. 23)



While the Cahuilla and Chemehuevi baskets are obviously beautiful, their original purpose was to be useful. Baskets could be used for storage: large granary baskets and ollas were used to store mesquite beans during times of scarcity.

Figure 12: Decorative Cahuilla medium bowl, c.1920  
Coachella Valley History Museum Collection

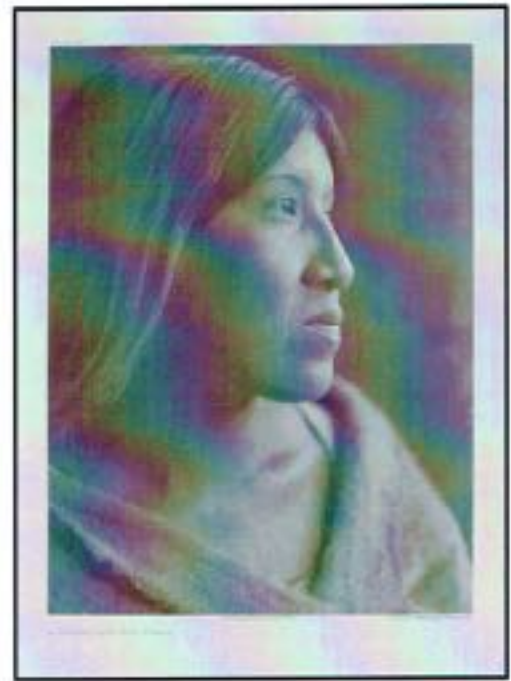


Figure 11: Edward S. Curtis.  
Cahuilla Woman. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved



Figure 13: Chemehuevi, c. 1910. Coachella Valley History Museum Collection

Baskets were also used for cooking, as women could fill their tightly-woven baskets with water to boil food. The baskets were made waterproof by coating them with pitch or tar. Various foods were cooked in baskets with liquid to which intensely hot rocks were added for instantaneous boiling.

Women supported the heavy baskets on their backs using a strip of netting on top of a cap which they wore down over their foreheads.

Baskets were used for many purposes. Among the most common basketry forms were:

- Burden baskets that were usually wide-mouthed, conical and finished with sturdy rims. They were usually fitted with some kind of carrying strap.
- Flat trays for serving food.
- Shakers, sifters and seed beaters.
- Storage baskets – used to store and preserve food.
- Treasure baskets and trinket baskets – sometime decorated with shells, beads or feathers to hold jewelry, shells, money etc.
- Leaching baskets – circular, twined shallow sieves used in the preparation of acorn meal.
- Boiling and serving baskets – sturdy watertight baskets for the cooking of acorn meal. Scoops or dippers were used for pouring water over acorn meal during the leaching process and for scooping acorn mush out of the cooking vessel.
- Water bottles – made of twined basketry were sealed with asphaltum or pitch to make them water tight.
- Fish or bird traps – elongated in design to catch fish in small stream currents and to trap woodpeckers which were unable to turn around once they entered the narrow tube.
- Cradles – from the time a child was born until it could walk, it was placed first in a small carrying basket and later in a cradle or cradle board.
- Mats – mats of plaited weaving were woven into long capes worn by both men and women. Mats were used on the floor of the house as sleeping pads and as curtains for partitions and doorways.
- Cages – cages were woven to hold insects and grasshoppers and large enough to raise eagles. (These birds were used as part of a religious ceremony.)
- Decorative baskets made to sell.

Foods were often dried and stored for future use in large basket granaries and ollas.

(Porter, p. 5-6)

Granaries like the one shown to the right were raised above the ground to allow for air circulation and to discourage rodents

Although the Chemehuevi sometimes baked pots, they were primarily basket-makers and not potters. The Chemehuevi often used woody willow and other fibers for sewing rather than the juncus plant used by the Cahuilla. (Miller and Miller p. 12)

Oftentimes, these basket materials came from afar. Desert-dwellers would have to gather these plants either from the mountains or from distant oases.

Cahuilla and Chemehuevi success at basketry shows their deep knowledge of the land and its resources as well as their ability to travel great distances.

Today, the tradition of basket-making continues in Cahuilla and Chemehuevi communities. (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

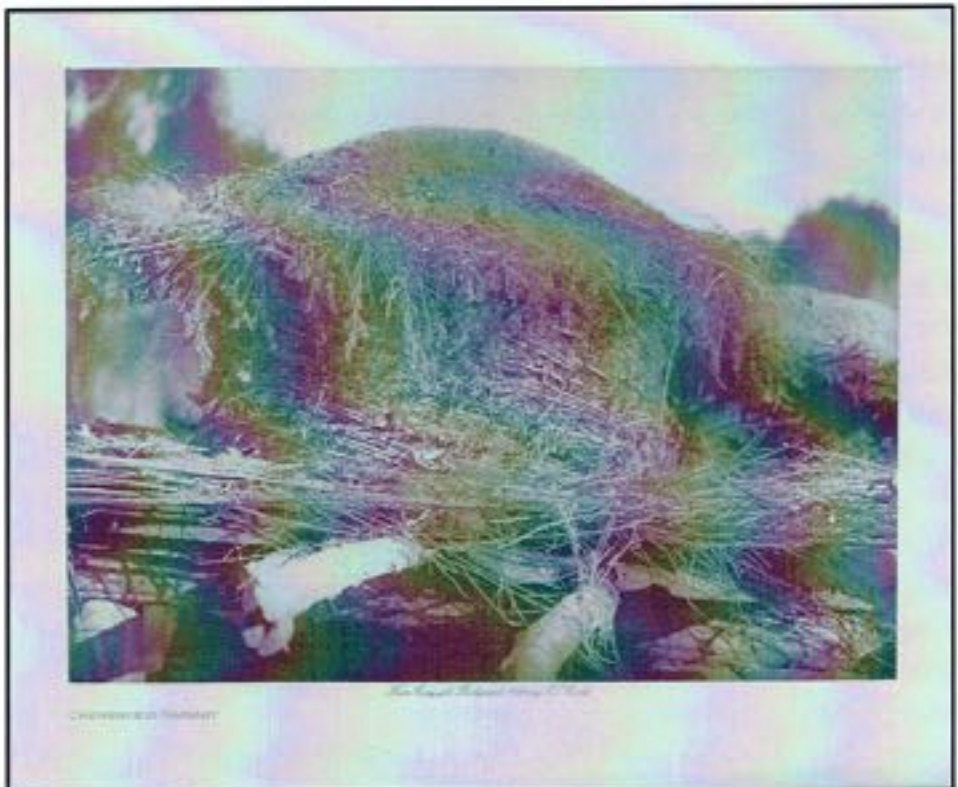


Figure 14: Edward S. Curtis, Chamehuevi Granary. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved.

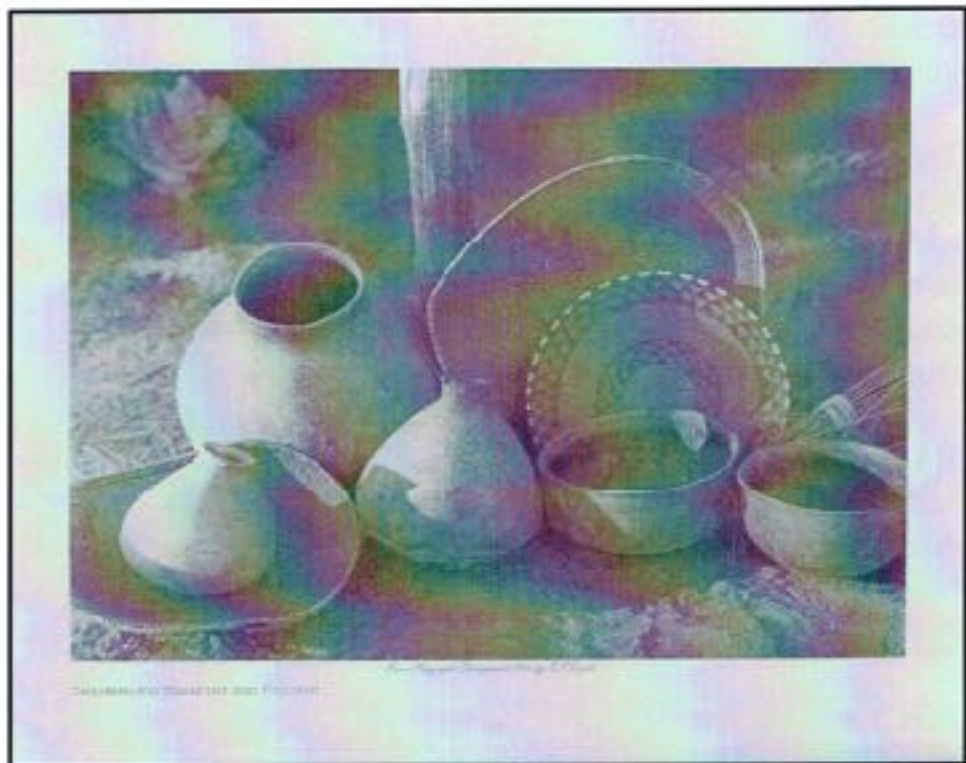


Figure 15: Edward S. Curtis, Chamehuevi Basketry and Pottery. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved.

## **Economy**

Although the basic lifestyle of the Cahuilla was that of hunter-gatherers, the wealth of food and natural resources allowed them to build a complex society of significant economic power and cultural influence.

The Cahuilla economy was based on goods and services, supply and demand and sharing. Each person in a village had a share of the work. The women provided services like raising the children. They provided goods like coil baskets. Cahuilla basket designs, taken from nature, such as animals, birds, clouds and lightning, were produced from varying shades of the rush. The men hunted and traded. They made goods like rope and string. The children also contributed by gathering yucca plants used as a staple in their diet.

The Cahuilla lived in a multi-environmental and multi-cultural milieu. The cultures surrounding them ranged from desert-oriented people like the Chemehuevi to the rich and powerful Gabrielino on the Pacific Coast, to the Colorado River agriculturalists (the Halchidoma and Yuma). The cultural backgrounds of their neighbors were also varied. Yuman-speaking Indians were to the east and southeast, Shoshonean speakers were to the west and to the north. The Cahuilla are of the Uto-Aztecan Linguistic Family (Bean and Bourgeault).

The Cahuilla territory was bisected by the major trade route, the Coco-Maricopa Trail. It was at the edge of the Sante Fe Trail which went from what is now the city of Needles through the Mojave Desert and the Cajon Pass; and the Yuman Trail, leading from the city of Yuma and crossing the Borrego Desert to San Diego. Geographical features separated the Cahuilla from all of their neighbors except their western neighbors, the Gabrielino.

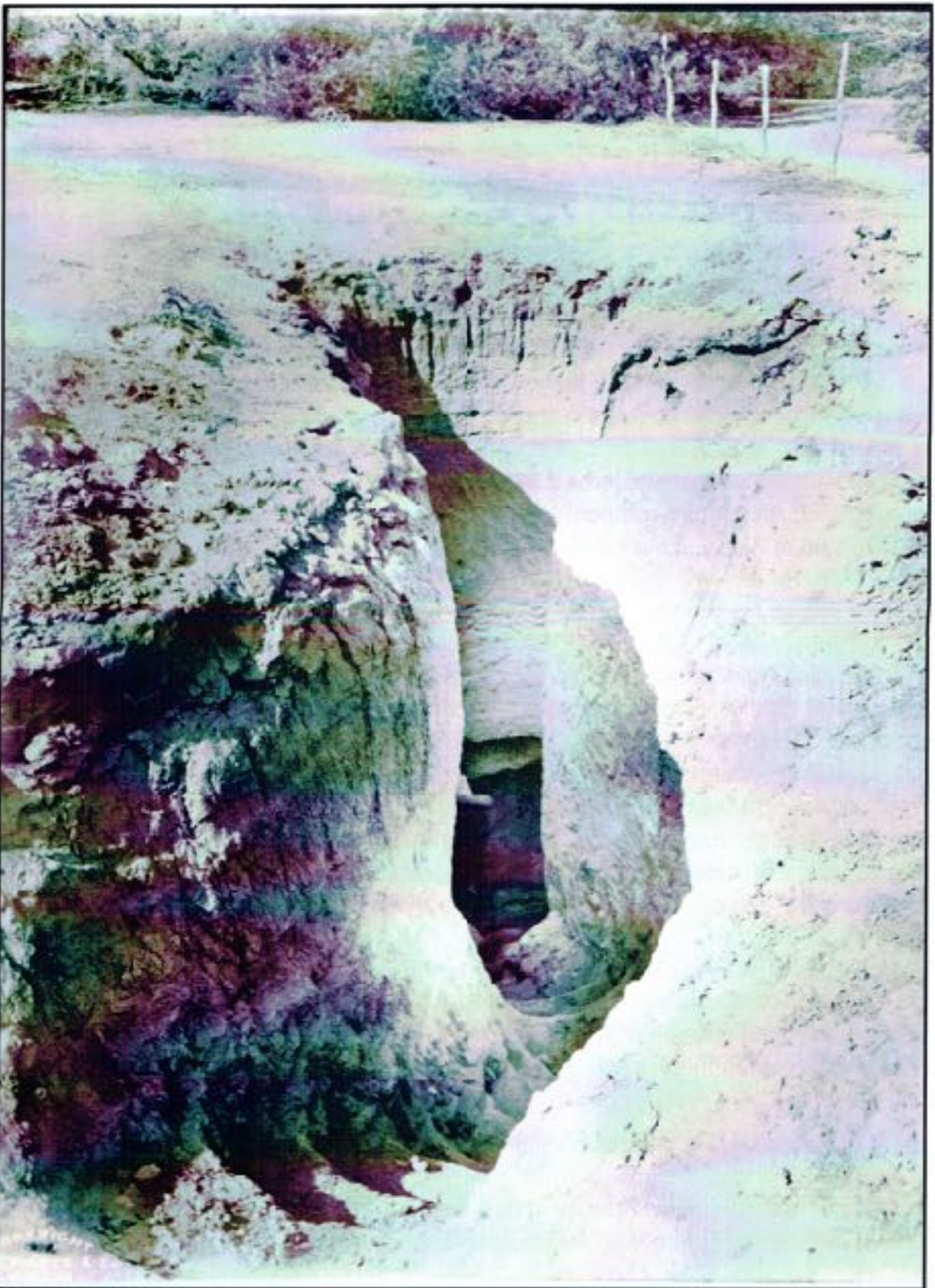
Trade was important to the Cahuilla way of life. The villages traded with each other using a system of supply and demand. The coastal Indians would trade dried fish, sea otter skins, asphaltum, and shell beads with the inland villages of the Cahuilla who would trade animal skins, including deerskins, acorns, salt and obsidian in return. Pottery and agricultural products were traded with tribes to the east. Often trading was for treasured objects such as ritual equipment, jewelry, baskets, obsidian, and other manufactured articles.

The Romero Expedition of 1823 first recorded the use of **walk-in wells** by the Cahuilla some 120 feet deep. Initially, walk-in wells may have been dug as the water level lowered due to decreased snowpack and rainfall. (Dozier, 1998) With great labor, they would construct a narrow, open passageway with steps down to the water. As far as is known, no other tribe of North America dug wells. (James, 1960)

## **Music and Games**

Musical instruments common among the Cahuilla were the flute, rattles and rhythm sticks. Most musical expression, however, was vocal. The Cahuilla had special songs which were sung at camp on each consecutive night of the three-night agave roast. (Dozier, p. 14) The Cahuilla Bird Songs were numerous and they told of the movement of the ancestors.





*Figure 15: The Coachella Valley is an arid, extremely hot desert and the Cahuilla people were excellent well diggers. They developed and mastered digging out walk-in water wells known in Cahuilla as, "temskawomal" or "earth olla." Courtesy Coachella Valley Water District.*

Cahuilla Bird Songs were sung and danced from sun-down to sun-up for three nights, without repeating any songs. Most of the songs are also dances. Dances varied among Cahuilla lineages but common to all were the Eagle Dance, the War Dance and the Deer Dance. Today, only a fraction of the songs are remembered. (Siva, p. 22)

One of the most popular games was the peon (stick) game, often called "The Hand Game". Each player needed two short sticks that could be hidden within a closed fist – one white and one black. Traditionally coyote or other bones were used rather than sticks. Counter sticks were used to keep score – any number desired up to 15. The players were divided into two teams. All the members of one team would hide their short sticks. Then they brought their hands in front of their bodies and folded their arms. A "killer" was chosen from the opposite team. He guessed which hand held the white stick for each of his opponents by berding his head (or pointing) toward the hand he chose. His team got a counter stick for every correct guess. Now the other team hid their short sticks, and a "killer" from the first team guessed. The game continued until one side held all of the counter sticks. They were the winners. (Porter, page 10) An intense competitive game that was often played throughout the night, songs were said to help win the game. Peon songs were sung to taunt the opposing team or mark a triumph, or simply to bring them good luck. (Siva, p. 20)

### **System of Government**

Cahuilla land was divided into ten or twelve distant geographical areas called sib areas ranging from 70 to 600 square miles and each ranging from the Lower Sonoran to the Canadian-Hudsonian life zones. The Cahuilla population was estimated at five to six thousand persons. Villages within each sib were occupied year-round. Although the villagers moved to different places while gathering foods during the summer and fall, they always came back to their permanent village. Villages within sib territories were connected by a complicated but well-defined trail complex making movement from village to village relatively easy. These trails also connected villages to gathering and hunting areas.

The sib acted as a political or economic unit. The *net* or leader presided over a council of lineage leaders. The status was usually inherited, preferably from father to eldest son. The *net* was the ceremonial leader and was in charge of taking care of the ceremonial bundle. He also served as the economic leader, determining when and where people would go to gather foods or hunt game.

When two individuals were unable to settle a dispute, the *net* would hear both sides of the issue and make a decision that was binding upon the conflicting parties. The *net* met with *nets* from other lineages concerning land use, boundary disputes, and disputes between lineages regarding marriages, warfare and ceremonial decisions.

The *paxaa* was the ceremonial and administrative assistant to the *net*. The status of *net* and *paxaa* in Cahuilla society were greatly sought because they provided sources of power and prestige. (Bean p. 104-105)

The Cahuilla were divided into two moieties or family clans: the Wildcat (*Istam*) and Coyote (*Tuktum*). These two societies were subdivided into a multitude of clans, membership in the clan being through the father. They were further divided into approximately a dozen patrilineal clans, each having its own name, territory and common ancestry. Every Cahuilla lineage or sib was a member of a moiety. They were distributed in space so that most sibs of one moiety immediately bordered a sib of the opposite moiety. Moiety locations were situated for determining appropriate marriage matches as well as for ceremonial and economic activities. (Bean p. 85-86)

The Native American Tribes in the United States are considered by the federal government to be "domestic dependent nations." The tribes retain tribal sovereignty which includes the authority to govern themselves within their territory. Despite the recognition of tribal sovereignty, the tribes work with state, county and city governments in their areas, as well as, receive some services from these agencies. (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

### **A Brief History**

The Spanish Period - As the Spanish explored California and built the Spanish mission system, they created maps using Spanish names for points of interest and for the Native Americans they encountered. Native Americans living in the vicinity of a Mission became part of it and were known as Mission Indians. The San Gabriel Mission, built in 1771 just east of present-day Los Angeles, was the closest mission to the Cahuilla people. The first recorded Cahuilla contact with European culture was in 1776 when Juan Bautista de Anza traveled from Sonora and came in contact with Desert Cahuilla Indians who would later become part of the Torres Martinez tribe and then passed through the Los Coyotes Canyon and down Bautista Creek near today's San Jacinto. (Ward, Exhibit Notes) The next record of contact was not until 1809 when baptisms of Cahuilla were recorded by the San Gabriel Mission (Bean and Bourgeault, p. 83). In 1819 a sub-mission (assistencia) was established near San Bernardino.

San Gabriel Mission also had a ranch in the San Geronimo Pass (near present-day Beaumont). Many of the Cahuilla were impacted by the San Gabriel Mission through experiences of family members living close to the mission's ranch and through access to European goods. For instance, the Cahuilla's clothing changed when they began to have contact with Europeans. They went from wearing their traditional clothing made from the surrounding vegetation to wearing European-style clothing [dresses for women, trousers and shirts for men]. The Mission San Gabriel ran cattle through San Geronimo Pass and as far as present-day Palm Springs. Some Cahuilla worked as cowhands and could speak Spanish (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

The Spanish rule of California came to an end in 1822 when Mexico declared its independence from Spain.

Mexican Era - Mexican Independence in 1821 meant a new system for California. The Mexican government gained control of the mission system in California in 1834. The Mexican government leaders replaced the Spanish mission system and its religious leaders with the Mexican *Rancharía* system. On maps of California, the word Mission was replaced with *Rancharía* and many of the Mexican elite class were appointed to the governing position of the Californian *rancherías*. The Mexican government divided the Coachella Valley into twenty-two *rancherías* or villages and appointed a leader for each. In some cases, the appointed leader was Cahuilla. As with the Spanish Era, the Coachella Valley Cahuillas' lives remained the way they had traditionally lived for decades because of the Coachella Valley's harsh environment and remote location (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

Two expeditions through the Coachella Valley area (1823 and 1826) were made by Jose Romero who was in search of a land route to the Colorado River and on to central Mexico. Much of Romero's route followed an ancient Indian trading route, the Coco-Maricopa Trail.

The American Era - The United States and Mexican governments signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Unknown to the Cahuilla people, control of California shifted to the United States government and this would significantly change their world. The treaty opened the west for white Americans seeking their fortune in land and resources. By the early 1850s, the relationship between the Cahuilla Indians and non-Indians had become strained (Bean and Bourgeault, page 88). Often non-Indians moved into fields prepared by Cahuilla and simply took them over. They also used streams and springs that belonged to the Cahuilla. In 1852, the Cahuilla signed the Treaty of Temecula with the United States government which the Senate never ratified.

The smallpox epidemic of 1862-63 was a significant event when large numbers of the Cahuilla population died and there was a considerable shifting of village locations. It is estimated only about 2,500 Cahuilla survived from an estimated population of 6,000 (Bean and Bourgeault p.89) As a result of the epidemic, some of the knowledge of their cultural traditions and language was lost as many elders and children died.

By the 1870s, more people began to settle the Coachella Valley, primarily as they worked to install the railroad tracks going from Los Angeles to Yuma. Present-day Indio, being the halfway point, became a major train depot stop (Ward, Exhibit Notes). The unique development of land ownership in the Coachella Valley resulted in a checkerboard system of 1 square mile land sections. Primarily influenced by the railroad development through the valley, this system deeply impacted the Coachella Valley tribes. The tribes' focus was on the community as a whole rather than on the individual. The checkerboard system divided the reservations into multiple 1 square mile sections that often did not touch, making it difficult for families to visit or interact with each other. Tribes also had difficulty governing over these disconnected sections. (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

A Mission Indian Agency for Southern California was established in 1877. Reservations for the Cahuilla, Torres- Martinez, Cabazon, and Morongo, were established by executive-order of President Ulysses S. Grant. While defining the boundaries, these Executive Orders eventually reduced acreage on several reservations. By then, the Cahuilla were scattered in small villages over wide areas, and the boundaries were often vague. With no legal rights under California law, the reservations were not protected by the law and it was easy for the white settlers to appropriate the best lands and water resources. (Bean and Bourgeault p.91).

By 1891, the federal government started Indian schools, run by religious groups or the government, to "civilize the Indians." Some Desert Cahuilla children attended the Parris Indian School. Students were encouraged not to, and often punished, for speaking their native languages. Students were expected to learn the English language and Anglo-American traditions, while forgetting their own language and traditions. Many children who were sent or forced to attend these schools had difficulty communicating with their own family members since their native language development stalled when they were attending school. Some of the students of the American Indian Day/Boarding Schools liked the schools, while others despised their experience (Ward, Exhibit Notes).

Helen Hunt Jackson wrote her famed book, *Ramona*, in 1884. She had been contracted two years earlier by the United States government to survey the Indians of Southern California and to determine where land suitable for reservations was located.

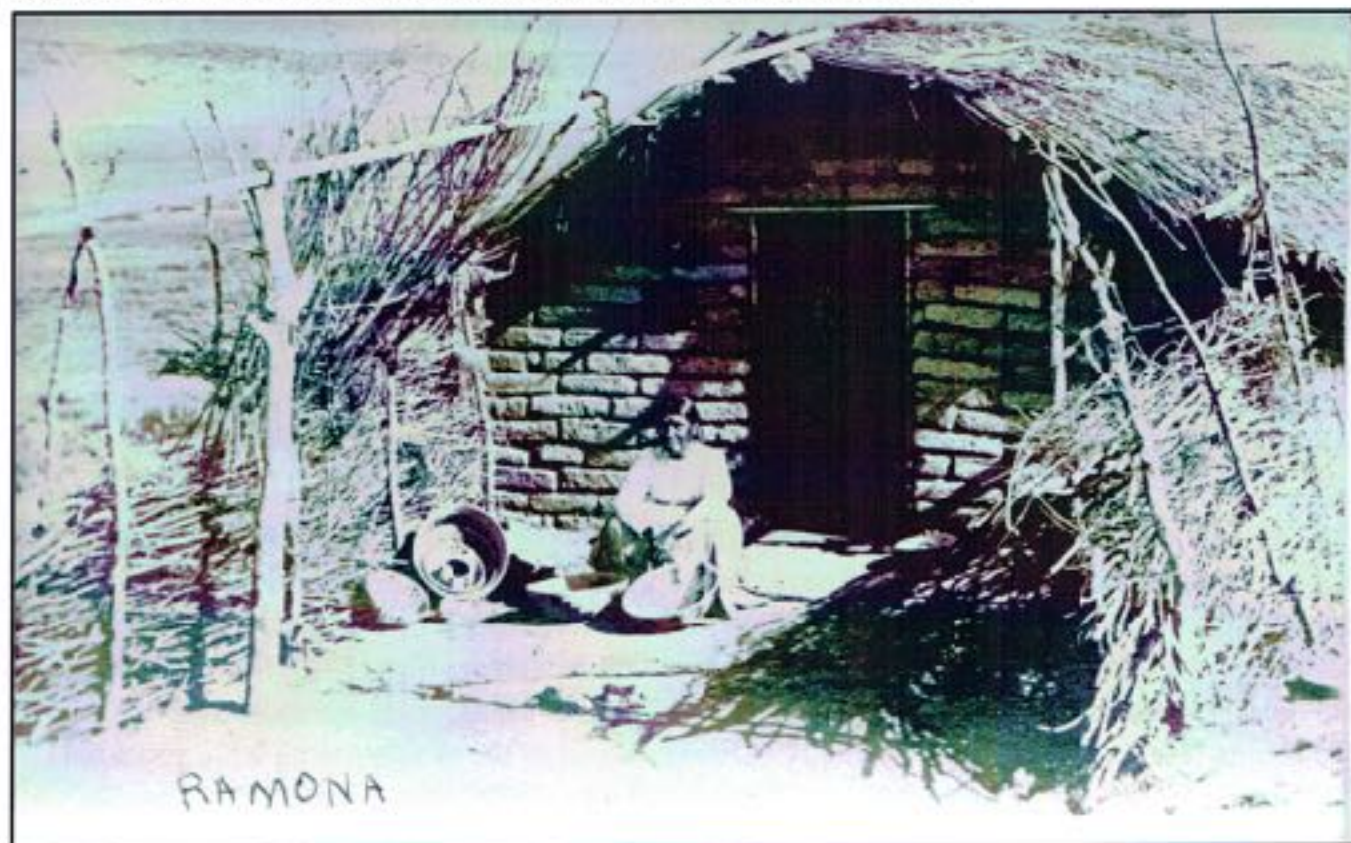


Figure 17: Black and white photo postcard featuring Ramona Lubo sitting in front of a thatched roof adobe structure with baskets. Postal indicia dates card to 1907-1914. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. All Rights Reserved.

Jackson felt that only a work of fiction could communicate the human dimension of the losses suffered by the Indians. Although the book is fiction, Ramona was based on a real Cahuilla Indian woman named Ramona Lubo and her husband, Juan Diego. Jackson depicted Juan Diego as the tragic character Alessandro. Sam Temple, a white man, unjustly accused Juan Diego of stealing his horse and then shot and killed him. Jackson's novel is remembered in the annual Ramona Pageant in Hemet. (Dozier, 1998 p. 136)

The Dawes Act of 1887 allowed agents to divide reservation land into separate tracts of varying acres that were allotted to individual Indians. Thus, through allotment, the government changed land ownership on the reservations from communal ownership to individual ownership. (Bean and Bourgeault, p. 93) The privatization of the reservation land directly clashed with the Cahuilla people's belief in the community over the individual. The new land ownership also created a drastic divide between those with land and those without. The tribes continue to face problems created by individual allotment. (Ward, Exhibit Notes)

On January 12, 1891, Congress passed the Act for the Relief of Mission Indians that created the Mission Indian Commission better known as the Smiley Commission. Albert Smiley led the Commission that helped to secure reservations for several tribes living in Riverside County. The Cahuillas, Luisenos, Chemehuevis, and Mojaves secured for themselves a small portion of their former homelands. (Trafzer and Smith, p.7) At the same time, new Executive Orders reduced the amount of land on the Morongo, Agua Caliente, Cahuilla, and Cabazon reservations. Thus, some tribes lost acres and others gained acres. The Cahuilla Indians were left with only two-thirds of the land they controlled prior to 1891.

In 1920, several Native American leaders met to form the Mission Indian Federation, an intertribal organization formed to protect Indian rights and to push for self-rule. One of the primary goals was to seek financial compensation for Indians lands that were taken from them by Executive Orders. (Trafzer and Smith, p. 100) While they sought to diminish the power of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Federation made a concerted effort to show their loyalty to the United States. (Trafzer and Smith, p. 103) For more information about the Mission Indian Federation refer to the article, *As It Rules the Birds of the Air: The Mission Indian Federation in Cahuilla Country* by T. Robert Frzeklasa.

For Cahuilla people, the struggles with the Indian agents are a sad story in their history. Agents felt the Indian culture should be destroyed because they were noticeably different from the Europeans and Americans. They were kept from attending their accustomed ceremonies. Cahuilla children were sent away to U.S. government schools. Many Cahuilla protested the land allotment program, because they had not received the individual allotments promised by the government. However, most of these allotments were too small for efficient farming. As non-Indians destroyed the Cahuilla economy, the Cahuilla people went to work on farms and ranches and had to rely on wage labor. This is the economic result of the settlement and development of the Coachella Valley.

### **Indian Gaming - The Cabazon Decision of 1987**

Indian gaming as we know it today began with the U.S. Supreme Court decision *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987). The Court's landmark 6 to 3 judgment reaffirmed tribal sovereignty and opened the door for gaming not just in the Coachella Valley but for tribes across the country. In the mid-1980s, the Cabazon Band and the Morongo Band each operated a bingo parlor open to non-Indians. In addition, the Cabazon Band ran a card club for playing poker and other card games on its reservation. California argued that the gambling violated state law and it wanted the court to recognize its authority to regulate gambling on reservations while the Band argued that its status as a sovereign government prevented state interference in its affairs. The Supreme Court effectively overturned the existing laws restricting gaming on U.S. Indian reservations. In 1988, Congress passed the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) which expanded the kinds of games that tribal casinos could offer, and provided a framework for regulating the industry. As part of the act, the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) was formed and Indian gaming was divided into 3 classes. Class I includes charitable and social gaming with nominal prizes; Class II includes bingo and other punch-board/pull-tab style games; and Class III includes high-stakes bingo, casinos, slot machines, and other commercial gaming.

### **Reservations Today**

Today, the Cahuilla own the reservation lands as a corporate group, and some own land as individuals (Bean and Bourgeault, p. 97). Reservations are no longer run by the net. Instead, each reservation is run by a business committee as a separate political and economic unit. (Bean and Bourgeault, p. 99) The committee members are elected by reservation residents every two or three years. Both men and women serve on these committees.

Cahuilla tribes in Southern California span nine reservations linked by a shared language yet distinguished by tribal identities.

**Mountain Cahuilla** (Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians and Ramona Band of Mission Indians near Anza, the Santa Rosa Band of Mission Indians near Hemet and the Los Coyctes Band of Mission Indians near Warner Hot Springs)

**Pass, or Western Cahuilla** (Morongo Band of Mission Indians near Banning)

**Desert Cahuilla** (Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in Palm Springs, the Augustine Band of Mission Indians near Coachella, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians near Indio, and the Torres-Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla near Thermal)

Following is a brief description of each band of Coachella Valley's Desert Cahuilla Indians.



### **Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians**

<http://www.aguacaliente.org/>

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians occupies approximately 32,000 acres of land within Riverside County of which 6,700 acres are within Palm Spring City Limits. The Agua Caliente tribe is currently the largest collective landowner in the Coachella Valley. The reservation was established by Executive Order in 1876 by President Ulysses S. Grant. It was expanded in 1877 and 1907 when the federal government added even numbered tracts to the Agua Caliente reservation. In 1957, the tribe ratified their constitution and bylaws gaining Federal Recognition.

Today, the Agua Caliente people have a number of businesses, including two gaming casinos: the Spa Resort Casino in Palm Springs and the Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa in Rancho Mirage. They have donated to many causes including the City of Palm Springs, Hidden Harvest and the National Museum of the American Indian.

*Mission Statement: The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians is an indigenous sovereign nation that seeks to promote and support the health, welfare and development of its Tribal Membership now and in the future.*



### **Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians – The Smallest Coachella Valley Tribe** <http://www.augustinetribe.org>

The Augustine Reservation is located in Coachella, California. In 1856, the village was called Temal Wakhish by United States surveyors. This site would later become the Augustine Reservation in 1891 by Congress.

The Augustine Tribe at one time flourished, but with the 1863 smallpox epidemic many of the members died. By 1986, Roberta Augustine, a direct descendant of Chief Vee-Vee Augustine for whom the reservation is named, was the last enrolled member of the Augustine Tribe. Roberta's daughter, Mary Ann Green, and her two sons, Gregory and Herbert, sought enrollment into the Augustine Tribe and were enrolled in the late 1980's. The siblings formed the tribal council and they began the process of developing the infrastructure for the Augustine Reservation. Through the leadership of Chairwoman Mary Ann Greer, the tribe developed a successful gaming casino. The tribal members also learned more about their heritage, culture and history. The Augustine Tribe continues to honor their ancestors and teach their youth about their culture, while contributing and assisting others in the local community.



### **Cabazon Band of Mission Indians**

The Cabazon Band of Mission Indians is a small but strong tribal nation that works to preserve the culture and land of their heritage in order to keep their old traditions alive, while continuing to create new ones. The Cabazon reservation occupies 1,459 acres in various small parcels spread over 16 miles. The largest section, in Indio, contains the tribal offices, tribal museum, gaming operations, hotel, golf course and a bowling center.

The reservation was established by Executive Order on May 15, 1876 by President Ulysses Grant. On February 25, 1987, the Supreme Court ruled that neither the State of California nor Riverside County could regulate the bingo and card game operations of the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians. This landmark case, known as the "Cabazon Decision," made them the first tribe in California to establish non-regulated gaming and resulted in the creation of the Indian gaming industry.

Like other Cahuilla tribes, the Cabazon band is using perseverance and a diversified economic base to ensure their future remains optimistic. "We are a people. We are a heritage. We are a nation." (Cabazon Band of Mission Indians)

### **Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla** <http://www.torresmartinez.org/>

The Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe has reservation land in the southern part of the Coachella Valley in Riverside County continuing into the Imperial Valley in Imperial County. This tribe's reservation, created in 1876 by President Ulysses S. Grant, combined different Cahuilla familial bands, including the Aimo band, Martinez band and Toro band.

When the Colorado River breached an irrigation canal, it flooded a portion of the valley floor including about 11,000 acres of the Torres Martinez reservation. In 1982, the Torres Martinez tribe filed a lawsuit against the Federal Government, Imperial Irrigation District and the Coachella Valley Water District for the loss of reservation land that the Salton Sea occupied. It would not be until 2001 when the case would be resolved in favor of the tribe.

The vision statement of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian tribe states: In keeping a relationship with our Anma (creator) and ancestors, we must maintain our language, culture, customs and traditions. Whereas, we the people of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe, through its government and power as a sovereign nation, value a clearly defined enrollment process, upholding the tribal constitution and laws to protect the tribe, people, land and resources while increasing tribal employment to achieve self-sufficiency where families may live and enjoy life.

The Torres Martinez Tribe has developed, with financial support from a federal grant, a Cahuilla Language Program to teach children starting with preschool-age, as well as, adult classes. As more of the fluent elders pass away, more of the Cahuilla language is lost. This program and the other programs developed by several other Cahuilla Native American tribes have begun to start to revitalize the language.

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## Learning from Cahuilla, Remaining Chemehuevi

By Clifford E. Trafzer\*

In the early twentieth century, agents of the Office of Indian Affairs planned the removal of the Chemehuevi Indians from the Oasis of Mara, better known today as the town of Twentynine Palms, California. Chemehuevi and Serrano Indians lived at the desert Oasis of Mara, but the government wanted the Twenty-Nine Palms Chemehuevi and the Serrano to move to the Coachella Valley. Government officials did not like the fact that Chemehuevi and Serrano people lived so far from the Coachella Valley sixty miles from the Malki Agency headquarters on the Morongo Indian Reservation. In 1907, Agent Clara True wrote openly about moving the Chemehuevi to the Coachella Valley. In 1909, a fateful year for the people of Twenty-Nine Palms, events unfolded that brought about the relocation of the Serrano to the Mission Creek Indian Reservation and the Chemehuevi to the Cabazon Reservation (Trafzer, Madrigal, and Madrigal, 81-86).

In 1909, Agent Clara True visited the indigenous people of the Oasis of Mara. At the Oasis, she met Serrano leader Jim Pine and Chemehuevi headman William Mike (sometimes identified as Old Mike or Mike Boniface, but the family maintains the name of Mike). True asked William Mike to move into the Coachella Valley or nearby Banning Pass (Mike Interview, October 24, 1997). She tried to convince the Chemehuevi to move to the Agua Caliente or Morongo reservations. She offered them land on either of the two reservations, saying they could live in peace with their friends and relatives on these reservations. Neither Pine nor Mike wanted to move, so both the Chemehuevi and Serrano refused, saying they preferred to live in the middle of the Mojave Desert away from non-Native newcomers. The people had nothing against the tribal people of Morongo and Agua Caliente. They had no long-standing animosity or ill will against the Cahuilla or Serrano of the two reservations, but they remained adamant throughout True's visit that they wished to remain far from towns, railroads, saloons, and gamblers (Benitez Interview, September 10, 17 1997).

The Oasis of Mara had been the home of desert Serrano since time immemorial. Chemehuevi made the oasis their new home in the 1860s. During that decade, soldiers built Fort Mojave, and Chemehuevi fought a war with Mojave that created deep tensions. On March 3, 1865, the federal government created the Colorado River Indian Reservation in the Parker Valley along the Colorado River. Indian agents wanted the Chemehuevi then living on the banks of the river to move onto the reservation and live with Mojave. Some Chemehuevi ultimately chose to live on the Colorado River Reservation, but some left the Colorado River and moved west into the Mojave Desert, including Jim Mike and his younger brother William. They became the Twenty-Nine Palms Tribe (Trafzer, Madrigal and Madrigal, 56-57).

During the 1860s, the Mike brothers led their band of *Nuwuvi* people from Chemehuevi Valley to the Oasis of Mara. They had visited the oasis before on journeys to the Pacific Ocean and considered the Serrano friends. When the Chemehuevi arrived at the oasis, the

Serrano were not home. They may have abandoned the village temporarily to hunt and gather or they may have fled the village to escape the smallpox epidemic that ravaged indigenous people during the 1860s. When the Serrano returned, they agreed to host the Chemehuevi, so the two people lived together as friends, becoming relatives through intermarriage.

From the 1860s to the 1900s, Chemehuevi expanded agriculture at the oasis by creating a pond that fed a large garden. The number of residents at the oasis fluctuated between thirty to sixty people (Mission Indian Agency Censuses, 1890s). For many years, Chemehuevi and Serrano maintained positive relations with Mountain and Pass Cahuilla people. In addition to hunting, gathering, and farming, members of both tribes traveled into the Banning Pass and Coachella Valley to work on farms and ranches. While living and working temporarily in the Coachella Valley, Chemehuevi traded, worked, and conducted ceremony with Cahuilla. According to Chemehuevi elder Joe Mike Benitez, Cahuilla sang Bird Songs while Chemehuevi sang Salt Songs. During funerals and memorial services, Cahuilla sometimes asked Chemehuevi singers to share their Salt Songs. Over the years, Chemehuevi learned Bird Songs from Cahuilla singers, which they in turn shared with Mojave. (Benitez Interview, September 10, 17, 1997; Tsosie Interview, November 21, 2013).

Far more Cahuilla lived near the Oasis of Mara and the Coachella Valley than Chemehuevi or Serrano. Cahuilla people outnumbered all other tribal people in the inland area of Southern California near present-day San Bernardino and Riverside counties (Mission Indian Censuses, 1896, 1920). Cahuilla enjoyed a rich culture that attracted the attention of other tribal people, including Chemehuevi who learned some cultural ways and medicine from Cahuilla people. Some Cahuilla ceremonies proved similar to those of Chemehuevi with slight variations and different songs and practices. Many of the Cahuilla Ways appealed to Chemehuevi people, and they learned elements of Cahuilla culture and language. According to contemporary Chemehuevi leader Dean Mike, Chemehuevi interacted a good deal with the Cahuilla. Tribal relations became even closer during the twentieth century through increased cultural contact, intermarriage, and the relocation of Chemehuevi people from the Oasis of Mara to the Cabazon Indian Reservation in Indio. As a result of increased contact with Cahuilla, Chemehuevi adopted elements of song, language, medicine, and ceremony from Cahuilla (Benitez Interview, September 10, 17, 1997).

In 1909, Clara True established boundary lines for a Chemehuevi-Serrano reservation at the oasis, but she soon learned that the proposed reservation existed on land set aside by the state of California in 1875 and sold by the state to the Southern Pacific Railroad. The land office informed her that no reservation could exist on the boundaries she had proposed. Unfortunately, no one informed the indigenous inhabitants at the Oasis of Mara that they did not "own" their traditional lands. However, these facts did not cause the relocation of the Chemehuevi and Serrano. Instead, a violation of the traditional marriage or incest laws resulted in their removal from the oasis (Benitez Interview, September 10, 17, 1997).

In 1908 or 1909, a young Paiute man named Willie Boy arrived at the Oasis of Mara and quickly fell in love with Carlota Mike. She was the sixteen-year old daughter of William Mike, the spiritual and political leader of the Chemehuevi at the oasis. Willie and Carlota ran away to elope but their families found them, split them up, and told Willie to leave the village (Sandos and Burgess, 3-17). Carlota moved in with her aunt and uncle, Jim and Matilda Pine, who spoke to her about tribal rules of marriage and the sacred obligation of avoiding incest. Carlota and Willie were too closely related to marry in accordance with tribal law. Tribal elders counseled her to respect the ways of the people and not marry Willie Boy. Chemehuevi, Cahuilla, and Serrano shared similar incest laws, and the community understood the importance of keeping Willie and Carlota separated (Sandos and Burgess, 113).

During the summer of 1909, William took his family to Banning where they worked on the Gilman Ranch. They earned cash money they used to buy sugar, coffee, flour, and other staples. William served as an Indian foreman. Carlota worked on the ranch too. Soon Willie Boy appeared as a hired hand on the Gilman Ranch which soon led the couple to flirt and "make eyes at each other." Willie and Carlota were in love but she refused to run away with Willie without her father's permission. One night, Willie visited William but he took a rifle. Willie feared the elder Mike, a man of considerable power. He was a strong, sturdy man who had once fought Mojave. He was also a medicine man. No one knows what really happened, except the rifle fired point blank into William's face, killing him (Sandos and Burgess, 8, 23-24). Willie and Carlota fled into the Mojave Desert where someone killed Carlota, most likely an indigenous tracker named John Hyde. He carried a high-powered rifle with a scope and likely mistook Carlota for Willie since she carried or wore his eather coat (Trafzer, Madrigal, and Madrigal, 1992).

The posse made a few treks into the desert to get Willie. Members of the posse claimed Willie committed suicide. Native Americans—including Cahuilla elders like Juan Siva, Katherine Saubel, and Anthony Madrigal--tell another story. Native Americans say Willie got away, and tribal elders from Pahrump, Nevada, claim that Willie lived his life with them and died of a lung disease, probably tuberculosis. In any case, the murder of William Mike brought about the removal of the Chemehuevi to the Cabazon Reservation. According to Joe Mike Benitez, the families from the oasis chose to move to Indio, fearing the ghost of Joe's grandfather, William Mike. William's violent death led to a disturbed soul that had the potential of harming the living. The Chemehuevi burned their homes at the oasis and turned the soil to confuse William's spirit and encourage their leader's spirit to go north to the land of the dead. The people asked to move to the Cabazon Reservation where many had worked near Indio and Coachella. The federal government agreed, adding 620 acres to the Cabazon Reservation to be held jointly by Cahuilla and Chemehuevi. In 1910, Chemehuevi moved to the Cabazon Reservation, and government agents enrolled them there. Susie Mike, the mother of Joe Mike Benitez, became the only Chemehuevi person to remain. Agents allotted Susie on the Cabazon Reservation, which today is the home of Joe Mike Benitez (Benitez interview, September 10, 17, 1997).

The other members of the Twenty-Nine Palms Tribe of Chemehuevi moved to the Torres Martinez Reservation where they had friends and relatives. Most of the people eventually moved into Palm Springs or the Banning Pass to live and work with Cahuilla people. Some Chemehuevi intermarried with Cahuilla (Dean Mike Interview, October 24, 1997; Benitez Interview, September 10, 17, 1997). They also learned the Cahuilla language and participated in the intricate Nukil Ceremony as well as wakes and memorials, all of which required a deep understanding of Cahuilla culture. At the same time, most Chemehuevi kept their tribal language, songs, and cultural ways of life. Through ethnogenesis, Chemehuevi blended some elements of Cahuilla culture with their own, actually strengthening their identity as indigenous people. They kept a close association with each other and participated in ceremony and sings with other Southern Paiute or Nuwuvi people on the Colorado River and north among the Paiute people of Nevada, Utah, and Northern Arizona. Cahuilla people greatly influenced the course of Chemehuevi history, especially for the Twenty-Nine Palms Tribe, which split from the Cahuilla of the Cabazon Reservation in 1975, forming their own tribal government. Today, all of the Chemehuevi of the Twenty-Nine Palms Tribe in Coachella, California, continue to be influenced by Cahuilla culture. They have lived with and near Cahuilla for over a century, and the Cahuilla have proved to be close friends of *Nuwuvi* people of the Twenty-Nine Palms Tribe.

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## As It Rules the Birds of the Air: The Mission Indian Federation in Cahuilla Country

By T. Robert Przeklasa\*

In November 1919, leaders from throughout Southern California Indian Country gathered at the home of Jonathan Tippet in Riverside, California. There they formed the Mission Indian Federation (MIF), an early self-government movement. It was a continuation of Native resistance and independence that spanned the region's colonial history. Numerous mission uprisings from the Quechans on the Colorado River to Toyupurina at San Gabriel marked resistance to foreign domination during the Spanish Period. Raids on Mexican *ranchos* and the Garra Rebellion of 1851 at the start of the American Period demonstrate an ongoing desire for independence. The MIF carried this tradition of tribal sovereignty and resistance into the twentieth century.

Federation membership grew and soon covered Gabrieliño groups on the Pacific Coast east to the Hualapai of the Grand Canyon, south along the Colorado River to the Cocopah and Quechans, and back to coastal Juaneños, Luiseños, and Kumeyaays. Every tribe within this area, including Serranos, Chemehuevis, Cupeños, Kwaaymiis, and Cahuillas, joined and engaged with the MIF. In this, it continued a trend toward political consolidation in the region. Given the harsh realities of population and lineage collapse, smaller, more fragmented groups allied with strong leaders capable of shepherding people through the chaos. Juan Antonio, the famed leader who held sway over a significant portion of the Cahuilla people in the middle of the nineteenth century, is an example of this shift. (Philips, 44-45) Strong regional leaders provided safety in numbers against the growing onslaught of, at times murderous, non-Indian immigrants.

Likewise, the Federation sought strength in unity. By the time of its founding in 1919, the Native land base of Southern California had deteriorated to some thirty small, scattered reservations of marginal value. The populations of these reservations varied greatly from several individuals to several hundred while many worked migratory jobs off the reservation throughout the year in order to provide for themselves and their families. The situation was the result of divide-and-conquer colonialism. Adam Castillo's (Soboba Luiseño) claim, "I am their president... The 30 reservations are united," (Castillo, 1938) proved the Federation's remedy of the situation in unity under a powerful regional leader.

Confederacies formed across Indian Country since pre-contact times, as with the Iroquois, and as a coping mechanism after contact, such as the Muscogee and Tecumseh's Confederacy. The Mission Indian Federation followed such Native traditions but also infused their organization with Anglo political features such as a president, secretary, and treasurer. (Bee, 110) The MIF recognized traditional leaders or *capitanes* as well as judges on individual reservations and fielded its own police force replete with nicked badges. These leaders brought larger issues to Federation conventions and conferences throughout the year



for adjudication by a supreme court or the Federation's executive officers. (Sloan, 1927) Officials from the Indian Bureau and critics often charged that the non-Indian Grand Counselor Jonathan Tibbet, who hosted Federation meetings, controlled the organization. However, impartial eye-witness accounts affirmed the independence of the Native leadership.

Just as other nations arose out of confederations, so too, the Mission Indian Federation sought to create a new tribe: The Mission Tribe. Since the federal government referred to the culturally and linguistically diverse inhabitants of the region as Mission Indians, the Federation sought to appropriate the label for their own unifying purposes. During the 1930s, MIF officials began to identify members by their reservation which they then subsumed under the 'Mission Tribe.' This shift represented an attempt at ethnogenesis in early twentieth century Southern California; it was an attempt to create a new people out of a number of formerly distinct groups. In the end, the endeavor did not succeed. Even the shift from political identification at the traditional village to newer regional level never met with complete success.

The Federation followed the call of the physician and activist Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai) and sought the abolition of federal Indian Bureau control over tribal peoples. To do so, the group aligned itself with the conservative anti-federalist politicians of the region and across the country in their attack on the bureaucracy. Given a multitude of factors including intense indoctrination in individualism at boarding schools, extensive missionization, and a strong dislike of the federal government, many Native peoples shared much politically with their rural, non-Indian neighbors. These factors combined with the demand for a continuation of traditional government made the Federation a uniquely Native conservative organization.

Since the Federation fought the very existence of the Indian Bureau, government officials bitterly opposed the organization and its leaders. At every occasion possible, Agency officials sought to stamp it out. In early 1921, Superintendent Paul Hoffman took punitive legal action against Tibbet, whom he characterized as a puppet master who misguided a large group of 'ignorant' Indians. He obtained indictments and arrested Tibbet and fifty-six others. The action placed nearly all of the region's traditional leadership behind bars, including the legendary Desert Cahuilla leader Fig Tree John, aged over one hundred at the time. (*LA Times*, 1922) Though the government eventually dropped the charges, the Bureau echoed the arrests in 1938 when local agents jailed the traditional leadership of the Agua Caliente Cahuilla and later non-Indian MIF advisor, Purl Willis. Their opposition to the Bureau's dictatorial takeover of the band's government again roused charges of conspiracy against the United States of America and locked up elderly Native leaders. (Hanks, 175)



Figure 1: Fig Tree John. Courtesy of UC Riverside, Special Collections and Archives

The MIF published a monthly magazine, *The Indian*, continuously at least from 1921 to '22 and sporadically thereafter into the 1940s. Samuel Rice (Cahuilla) of the Santa Rosa Reservation served as the magazine's first editor. Rice underlined the sadly necessary role the Federation played when he wrote its leaders: "Were it that nature ruled them as it rules the birds of the air, they would flourish and seek not their conversions for protection and justice." (Rice, 1922) Not all favored the MIF, however. Various groups lead by leaders including the Cahuilla Reservation's Ignacio Costo Rice (Cahuilla), and Tom Largo Rice (Cahuilla) in the 1920s and '30s respectively, opposed the MIF and represented different views on the complex political stage in Southern California Indian Country at the time.

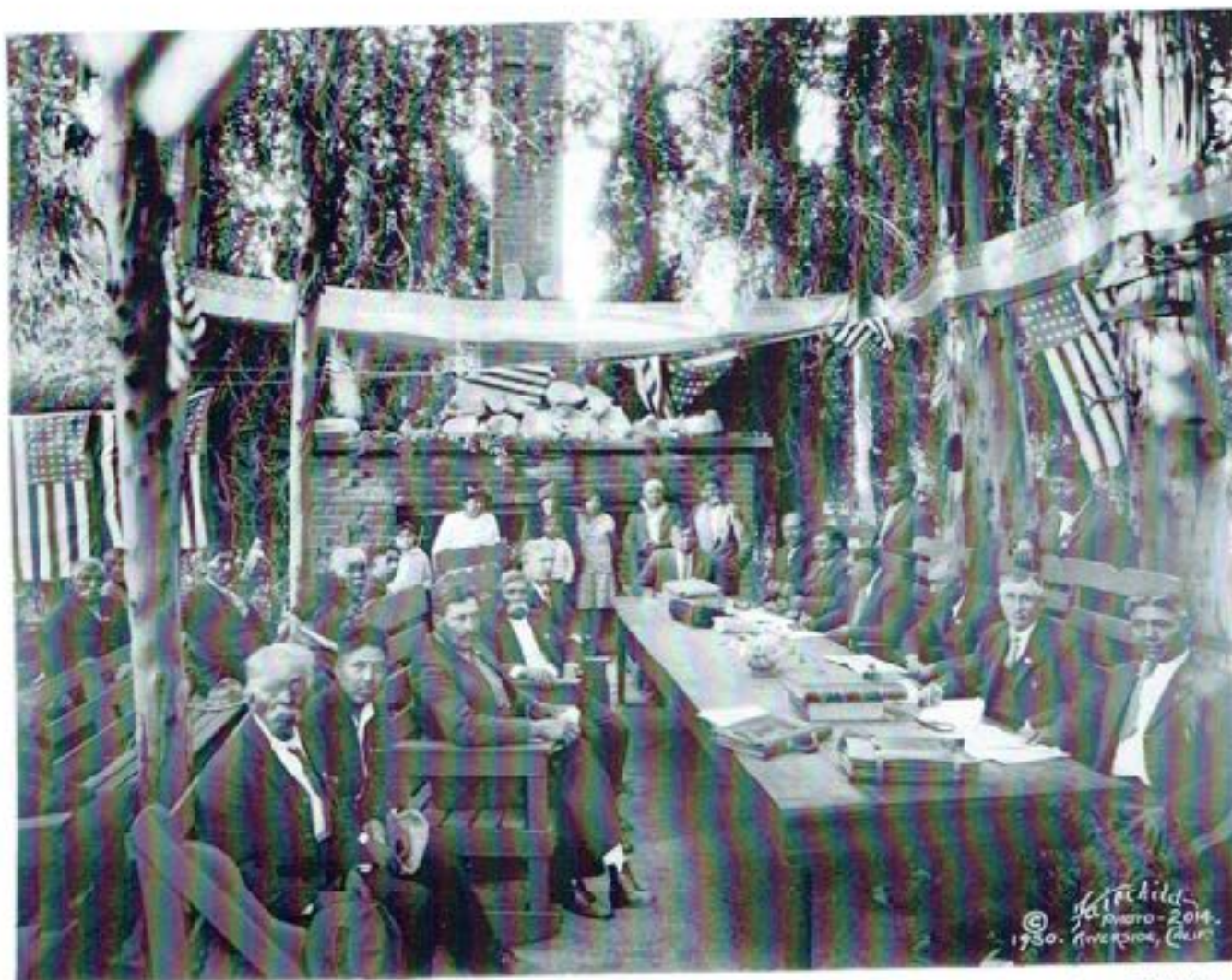


Figure 2. In October 1930, the Mission Indian Federation Conference was held at Jonathon Tibbet's home in Riverside. To show their loyalty to the United States, the Federation displayed many US flags while at the same time criticizing the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Courtesy of the Riverside Metropolitan Museum, Riverside, CA

The Federation entered the 1930s with tragedy as Jonathon Tibbet passed within the first months of the decade. The following year, however, a non-Indian deputy treasurer of San Diego County toured local reservations on a fact-finding committee. That man, Purl Willis,

became the MIF's non-Indian advisor for nearly the rest of its existence. A controversial figure, Willis advised his Federation friends' children to go to law school when they grew up, recalled Camen Lucas. (Lucas interview, 2013) Though charges of corruption and outbursts of physical violence followed Willis throughout his tenure with the MIF, he steadfastly fought to advance its causes until his death in 1972.

Franklin Roosevelt won the presidency in 1932 and chose non-Indian activist John Collier as his commissioner of Indian affairs. Previously based in California, Collier knew about the Federation and even secured its endorsement for the commissionership. The MIF believed Collier would advance their cause and eliminate federal control over their lives as he previously advocated. The New Dealer instead sought to implement liberal reforms to the nation's Indian policy. Tempers flared and allegiances shifted; Collier became Federation enemy number one.

When Collier learned that the Southern California Indians refused to have their Federation co-opted as his agent, he followed his predecessors' courses and endeavored to eliminate the MIF. The Commissioner used his knowledge of the Federation and the region to accomplish his goal. He undercut their power by "throwing self-government squarely at *each* of the bands." (Collier, 1933) Collier's concerted, well planned attack transformed the Federation from a quasi-government into a political party. The divide and conquer tactic struck at the heart of the organization which soon found itself forced to jockey for power within the federally sanctioned governments established by Collier's Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). The Federation's opposition continued, however, and many reservations rejected the IRA and its non-Native governmental structures. (Madrigal interview, 2013)

The dramatic growth of the Indian Bureau during the New Deal greatly alarmed Federationists. Many Southern California Indians fought valiantly shoulder-to-shoulder with non-Indians during the Second World War. Their service only increased their desire for freedom from federal wardship and to be treated on an equal basis with every other citizen. The post-war period saw a strong emphasis on Claims Cases that sought redress for lands stolen under the unratified Treaties of 1851. The MIF even had to fight for the right to hire their own attorneys for the suits, a battle they eventually won. Many California Indians believed that victory in the cases would do several things. First, the money from the settlements would enable Native people to establish themselves economically in modern society. They would also right the wrong of the treaties and thus settle the grievances of the past. Then, Native Southern California could move on and prosper.

Having failed to solidify independence from the Bureau, however, the Federation advocated a complete severing of the relationship between the federal government and Native nations through termination. One of the few Native institutions that supported termination, the Federation did not believe they needed their culture, language, religion, and way of life sanctioned by the federal government. They sought to privatize their Indianness, a

strategy that held remarkable appeal among conservative post-war era politicians who sought to shrink the federal government. They also praised the tax savings the Federation claimed would follow. However, a significant shift of opinion in Southern California Indian Country and organized opposition lead by people such as Rincon's Max Mazzetti (Luiseño) stopped the drive toward termination. The Federation lost supporters throughout the 1950s and 1960s and it slowly declined as fewer and fewer elders continued to meet and the Federation faded into history on the Pechanga Reservation in the 1970s.

The Mission Indian Federation was a remarkable testament to the tenacity and ingenuity of the peoples of Southern California Indian Country. It was a dynamic and pragmatic organization that advocated policies that were not widely accepted until the self-determination policy of President Richard Nixon in 1970. Its civisiveness underscored an active and vibrant political scene on the ground in the region though today it is remembered as a source of pride for all Southern California Indians.

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## All-Woman, All-Modern: Agua Caliente in the 1950s

By Julia Sizek\*



*Figure 1: Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians all-women Tribal Council, 1955. L-R: Vice Chairman LaVerne Saubel, Member Elizabeth Monk, Member Gloria Gillette, Chairman Vyola J. Olinger, Secretary/Treasurer Eileen Miguel. Photo courtesy of The Desert Sun.*

In 1954, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians elected the first all-woman Tribal Council in the United States. Both back then, and today, this council is considered notable for how it modernized the tribe. These five women—Vyola Olinger (later Ortner), LaVerne Saubel, Eileen Miguel, Flora Patencio, Elizabeth Pete Monk—created a constitution for the tribe and they worked with the US Federal government and others to increase economic development opportunities for the tribe (Ortner, 2012). In this paper, I use

accounts in newspapers and periodicals from the 1950s and Vyola Ortner's retrospective from today. This examination of the modernization of Agua Caliente begins with three sets of reforms: (1) the end of the traditional leadership structures and the adoption of an all-woman tribal council, (2) the beginning of "professionalism" within the tribe, and (3) the new policies necessary for development of Section 14 in the heart of downtown Palm Springs. Together, these changes define what modernization

became for the Agua Caliente Band in the 1950s and 1960s—a kind of modernization based on the standardization of their systems, and the synchronization of their systems to those of the settlers. However, these changes challenged the very difference that separated Native communities from others.

For those wishing to demarcate the end of tradition, the death of the last *net* in 1951 is often cited.<sup>1</sup> Albert Patencio was the spiritual and ceremonial leader of the Agua Caliente Band, and with his death, the traditional ceremonial roundhouse, the *kishumna'a*, was burnt to the ground (du Pont, 2012). While customs would dictate the rebuilding of the *kishumna'a* and the continuation of the *net* leadership structure through the next male descendant, Patencio's family—Flora Patencio and Joe Patencio—decided to discontinue the traditional leadership system. According to Vyola Ortner in Diana C. du Pont's (2012) summary of events, tribal practices were already fading and the Patencios did not want to continue traditions "in a compromised form." But ending traditional practices did not make the Agua Caliente tribal members "modern," nor can the adoption of modernization practices entirely eliminate tradition. But, for the Agua Caliente Band, the process of modernization emerged through simultaneously erasing difference and adopting new standards.

When the all-woman council is described as modern, it is on the basis of making women seem to be similar, rather

than different, from men. However, the similarity of women and men was not solely about erasing gender differences, but also about modernization, which, for the Agua Caliente tribe, was about finding a space to fit within settler society. For example, scholarly articles about the Cahuilla point to the predecessors of the all-woman council in historic terms, noting how women served as "informal community leaders" and how women often had to substitute for men during times of war or financial duress (Bean n.d., Bean and Bourgeault 1989). The view of the all-woman council in these pieces was that the women were only a substitute for male leaders, only filling in because "there were few males either mature enough or young enough to qualify for the council" (Grattan, 2013). In conspicuously erasing the gender difference between men and women, these statements erase traditions in which men and women played different roles.

More recent statements about the past also attempt to erase difference between males and females. In Vyola Ortner's remembrances of her time as chairman, she adds that she prefers to be called "chairman," rather than the gendered "chairwoman" or the gender-neutral "chairperson," thus attempting to erase the difference between her and the male chairmen of the Agua Caliente Band. However, these erasures are not limited to Agua Caliente tribal members. Lowell Bean, noted historian of the Cahuilla people, spoke regarding the success of powerful women in the Agua Caliente: "Maybe it isn't so much about what role women play in that culture, as that, at any time, truly exceptional people move

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Diana C. du Pont 2012 and Grattan 2013.

through a system and excel" (Marcum, 1995). This statement, in addition to complimenting the female leaders at Agua Caliente, erases the distinction between men and women by making them all the "exceptional people" that have the possibility to make change. By erasing these gendered distinctions, they erase difference between men and women, but may also elide the history and current presence of discrimination against women.

Through adopting "modern" standards of equality for women, perhaps Agua Caliente could aspire to modernity.<sup>2</sup> And yet, these descriptions left out the dissonance and the controversy that surrounded the women when they initially came into these offices. Both the men who challenged the idea that women could be political leaders and those who chastised the decisions of the women as stereotypically feminine—too soft on city council members—are forgotten. As they are erased, perhaps this paints the Agua Caliente Band as one that has always been modern.

When the Agua Caliente Band began to formally codify their political practices and promote more democratic ideals, they are seen to be undergoing "modernization." In 1955, Agua Caliente was among the first few tribes in the country, and only the second in California, to adopt a constitution and by-laws (Grattan, 2013; du Pont, 2012; Ortner, 2012). Although the constitution was

<sup>2</sup> As in Tsing's (2005) idea of "aspiration" and Latour's (1991) notion of "modernity," perhaps the task of "modernity" never has or will be complete, but forever stuck in the phase of modernization toward an impossible goal.

specific to the tribe, it codified issues that had before been ruled by tradition, and thus created a standard practice that could be evaluated by text. Of special relevance was that this constitution provided a structure of governance that had not existed before the last *nef* had died. This codification was not only important for its content, but also for the fact that it formalized governing structures. These changes signal a kind of modernity that Jessica Cattelino calls the "bureaucratization of culture," under which what had been before ruled by tradition is now determined by rules, laws, and professionalism (Cattelino, 2008). These changes at Agua Caliente formally standardized practices that before were malleable under the wide umbrella of tradition or were liable to exceptions based on the circumstances.

The changes in tribal governance structure were also complemented by a new addition to the tribe: legal counsel (Fisher and du Pont, 2012). Despite the objections of some tribal members, Vyola Olinger hired a lawyer for the tribe. In many ways, the hiring of the lawyer signaled the adoption of a kind of professionalism within the tribe—that is to say, a tribe ruled by contracts rather than kinship.<sup>3</sup> While contracts did not replace kinship, the use of legal counsel began to shift ideas about how to relate to other groups outside of the

<sup>3</sup> However, this is by no means the first time that Agua Caliente tribal members had engaged in business relations with people outside of the tribe. While many Agua Caliente tribal members worked off the reservation in farming or ranching operations in the area, some entrepreneurial tribal members sold admission to the hot springs on Section 14, which later became the site of a renowned spa. (See du Pont 2012).

tribe through the use of contracts. The effective use of lawyers became essential for Agua Caliente's legal battles. The federal lobbying and legal actions undertaken by the Agua Caliente Band complemented the internal changes in the tribe. The various land (and by extension, economic) reforms were central to the tribe's development, and were actively considered to be part of the modernization process.

For the Agua Caliente Band, the two most important issues were property equalization and leasing periods, both of which arose from the nefarious nature of trust land and allotments. Although reservation land (trust land) had initially been given to Native Americans as communal property, the Dawes Act in 1887 mandated that Indian tribes across the nation break communal property into allotments given to every member of the each tribe (du Pont, 2012). For Agua Caliente, these allotments were to be split in the following manner: 47 acres for each member, with 2 acres in downtown Palm Springs, 5 irrigable acres, and 40 non-irrigable acres (du Pont, 2012, pg. 28). The Agua Caliente Band resisted these allotments even through laws like the Mission Indian Relief Act of 1891 called for individual allotments to be made on reservation lands. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, this pattern continued in various iterations until the Supreme Court mandated in *Lee Arenas, et al v. US* (1944) that allotments must be made and finalized by the Agua Caliente Band (du Pont, 2012, pg. 29).

However, this was not the end of the battle for the Agua Caliente Band, whose allotments were inherently unfair based on the location of tribal lands and their proximity to the hot springs and downtown Palm Springs. Using the law and lobbying to their advantage, the Agua Caliente Band successfully convinced Congress to pass Public Law 86-339 in 1959, which provided that certain areas (including Section 14 with its valuable hot springs) would remain as communal property and that equalization would take place ("Agua Caliente Reservation, Calif. Allotments, equalization" 1959). Equalization provided that each member of the tribe was given allotted lands, but further that the land had the same value by evening out the differing financial value of the land, which could vary from \$87,500 to \$629,000 based on its location (Grattan, 2012). By changing the law, Agua Caliente found a way to level what had been economic difference. But, this had an impact that was far greater — these practices allowed the Agua Caliente Band to ensure that profits from the land were shared. Thus, when they were able to integrate themselves into the rapid growth of the Palm Springs tourism industry, everyone in the tribe benefited.

Their second legal battle, for increased leasing periods, furthered their ability to integrate into the wider Palm Springs economy and become thoroughly "modern." In order to reap the rewards of economic development, the Agua Caliente Band had to increase leasing periods on their land. Because land held in trust is different from that owned by a private landowner, the leasing periods were only for five years (Grattan, 2012). Practically,



this restricted the Agua Caliente Band's ability to develop their property because they did not have the capital, credit, or expertise to begin a major development project on their own. However, if the leasing period was increased to ninety-nine years like for privately held lands, they could pursue contracts to develop the land and make a profit.

When the final version of this Public Law 86-326 was signed on Oct. 22, 1959, the Agua Caliente Band could finally rent their lands for ninety-nine years, which allowed them to pursue economic development, and practically treat their lands like any other privately held land in the United States (Agua Caliente Reservation lands, 1959). The ability to conduct economic development like a corporation was the hallmark of modernity for the tribe. As du Pont states, this is also a sign of moving beyond the constricting traditions of the past: "while their Cahuilla ancestors may have valued the tribal hot springs as a sacred space imbued with religious and cultural meaning, these intrepid leaders fully understood its financial value in the modern context" (du Pont 2012, 53). In this quote from du Pont, this understanding of financial value is exactly what juxtaposes the modern context from the ancient traditions, and Agua Caliente modernized as soon as they became part of the modern economic system. When they opened their spa in 1960, the Agua Caliente Band became part of the tourist economy of Palm Springs, even being reviewed in *Palm Springs Life* ("Desert Report Card," 1960). Hardly set apart from other entrepreneurs, the Agua

Caliente Band became modern just like everyone else.

In each of these small tales of modernization, the story is predicated on the elimination of differences between the settlers and the tribe. Despite the debate at the time, the election of the all-woman council has become a signifier of the end of patriarchy and conformity to standard gender norms. Through making a constitution and by-laws, Agua Caliente created new standards within the tribe and formalized structures. These new policies were more standard and relations were more "professional." However, without economic development, Agua Caliente's journey to modernization would not be complete. The land laws implemented as a part of the lobbying efforts of the tribe became the hallmark of modernization when Agua Caliente could finally become like the other entrepreneurs making a profit from the tourism in Palm Springs. However, the same ability to adapt and integrate into economic systems under the process I call here "modernization," threatens to challenge the very difference that separated Native American tribes from their settler counterparts. So this is the challenge for the Agua Caliente: how to continue their successes at integration and adaptation to make a kind of modernity that allows them to keep the difference that make them Native.

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Cahuilla Funerary Practices at Agua Caliente Reservation  
By Sean Milanovich\*

The Cahuilla Indians of Southern California have lived in the Coachella Valley surrounded by the San Jacinto Mountains, Santa Rosa Mountains and Little San Bernardino Mountains for as long as they can remember. The Agua Caliente Band are settled in and around the present city of Palm Springs, California. The Late Tribal Chairman Richard Milanovich of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians often said his people had been there since time immemorial. Today, the Agua Caliente are made up of several clans including the *Kausiectem*, *Painiktem* and the *Wariktem*. The Agua Caliente call themselves *Pálsewichem* meaning People of the Hot Water<sup>4</sup>. The Cahuilla language belongs to the Uto-Aztecan stock and is closely related to the Cupeño, Luiseño and Gabrielino languages. *Iviuat*, the Cahuilla language, is sparsely spoken in public these days but it is alive in song at fiestas<sup>5</sup> and wakes<sup>6,7</sup>. A Cahuilla Wake was called *Hénmukwen* and many of the beliefs and traditions of the *Hénmukwen* are still practiced today at many of the Cahuilla reservations as well as at Agua Caliente.

Each Cahuilla family is the bearer of cultural knowledge and teaches their children their beliefs and ideas. Not all families practice the Cahuilla funeral traditions in full today. Many of the traditions that are practiced are only a small part of what once existed.<sup>8</sup> Many of the beliefs and practices are still in practice but what has changed is the understanding. Due to a lack of understanding and meaning behind the tradition, some things have changed and are no longer practiced. When the *Kausiectem* clan burned down the last *Kishumnawet* Ceremonial House in the 1950s, the belief was that the Agua Caliente People would no longer practice their culture in the form of language, songs, and ceremonies.

One thing that changed was the *Núkil*, a week long ceremony in honor of those that had passed within the year. This ceremony continues in shortened form today leaving out certain portions but allowing for the spirit to make its passage to the next world. This ceremony was held during the winter months; the last time this ceremony was held by the Agua Caliente was in 1947 for the late *Kausiectem Nét* (Tribal Leader) Francisco Patencio.<sup>9</sup> After the death of *Kausiectem Nét* Alejo Patencio in 1951, the *Kishumnawet*, the Ceremonial House, was burned since the majority of the Tribe had veered from its traditional ways.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> The Cahuilla name originates from the hot mineral spring located in the center of Palm Springs. The Cahuilla name for the spring is called *Séxhi* meaning cooked. After one sits in the water for a while they become cooked and relaxed.

<sup>5</sup> Bird Songs are sung at festive occasions. Bird Songs tell the Cahuilla migration story.

<sup>6</sup> Wake, Funeral and Death Songs are all the same and are only sung when someone passes away and on their anniversary. The Wake songs help the spirit get to the spirit world.

<sup>7</sup> There is a strong renaissance of the Cahuilla language. The younger people want to know their history and are revitalizing their language and culture that was put aside with assimilation.

<sup>8</sup> The Agua Caliente and other Cahuilla have forgotten and lost many of the traditional ways.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Patencio Manuscript by Lowell J. Bean 2003

<sup>10</sup> Alejo Patencio. Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, 2013. Website.

Tribe put away the practice of traditional ceremonies and practiced the dominate religions around them. "Their past, with all its wisdom, songs, laws and values, ceased on that day."<sup>11</sup> This was the practice for two generations. The late Agua Caliente Vice Chairman said to this that she was ridiculed in school for being Indian. She wanted only to move on and not dwell on the past. Chairman Richard Milanovich said that the people were following what the elders had said to do and that was to look out after the children by adopting the ways of the culture that encircled them so they could become equivalents, be free and manage their own resources.

Before the ceremonial house was burned, there were procedures set in place to care for the dead. When someone passed there were immediate gatherings; there was the *Hénmukwen* (Wake) and there was the *Núkil* (Image Burning Ceremony). The *Hénmukwen* was a gathering, a wake, that took place soon after a person passed away. The ceremony consisted of singing over the dead. The songs told the story of creation according to Cahuilla world view. In addition, there were a series of songs that helped guide the *té/vlavel* (soul) to *Télnekish* the Spirit World.<sup>12</sup> The *Núkil* was a planned event that occurred within 1-2 years.<sup>13</sup> This week-long gathering consisted of singing every night by invited guests and the host group, feasting, games, trade and many other activities.<sup>14</sup>

Ceremonial singers were invited to attend and participate in the activities and to sing their death songs. There were certain clans that had ceremonial relationships with one another and each group supported each other group in their ceremonies.<sup>15</sup> When someone passed, or they wanted to announce a *Núkil*, runners were sent out in all directions to invite people to pay their last respects and ask singers to help with the singing guiding the spirit on its final journey. The runner carried a string of olivella shell beads.<sup>16</sup> A tribe that received these beads was ceremonially bonded to attend the ceremony/gathering. If the beads were accepted then it was understood that the invited would attend.

When the people arrived for the ceremony they needed to be cared for and attended to. They would spend at least one night there and probably up to a week.<sup>17</sup> They had to have places to sleep, and it was expected that the people within the community opened their homes to the invited guests which were usually family members. An abundance of food was

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<sup>11</sup> Finn, Melanie. When a Museum Serves as Tribal Elder. "Los Angeles Times." 5 May 2002.

<sup>12</sup> These songs are sometimes referred to as Death Songs and Wake Songs.

<sup>13</sup> The time depended on the number of people who passed and the resources available to hold such an elaborate event.

<sup>14</sup> See Bean, Lowell. *Mukat's People: The Cahuilla Indians of Southern California*. University of California Press, Los Angeles: 1974.

<sup>15</sup> Each ceremonial group (lineage or sib) was connected by the fire. The fire was the ceremonial entity that connected each group ceremonially. The people at Palm Springs were connected ceremonially to the people at Santa Rosa, Torres Martinez and Morongo.

<sup>16</sup> The shell beads were made from olivella shells from Catalina Island. The shell strand was usually four feet in length and was called *wichiw* for the number four.

<sup>17</sup> Outside the funeral activities, there were other things going on such as trading resources, games of chance like *táxnengil* (Peon) and visiting with family.

required for all the people. Lori Sisquoc, a Mountain Cahuilla, said there was ceremonial food that was prepared.<sup>18</sup> These foods consisted of *súkat hépal* (deer stew), *súish hépal* (rabbit stew), *wíwish* (acorn pudding), *ményikish* (mesquite beans ground up) and *tévilmalem* (beans). These foods were prepared at all gatherings with love and care.

To help prepare for the large quantities of food needed, all people in the community were expected to help. The men would go out and hunt deer, bring it back, and place it in the big house where it was cleaned. The men fasted before they hunted the deer and sang songs with a hooved rattle to help bring the deer to them.<sup>19</sup> The people captured hundreds of rabbits at a time for *Hénmukwen* and *Núkil*. They trapped with large nets spread across the land with people walking and holding the nets and making noise to scare the rabbits.<sup>20</sup> At Agua Caliente, they would drive the rabbits from the open flat lands into the canyons.<sup>21</sup> All meat was skinned, cut up, roasted and boiled. From their personal food banks and surplus foods, acorns and mesquite beans were collected. With acorns, *wíwish* was made. With mesquite beans, mesquite cakes were made and the finely ground flour was used in stews. Other beans and accessible foods provided by *Iémel*, Mother Earth, were also gathered and prepared. Food was gathered and collected from different elevations which required the entire community to work together and sometimes required families from other communities to assist.

The feeding of the people all week required quite a bit of food as sometimes hundreds of people would come to honor the dead. Even the guests brought whatever surplus food they had or could donate. The food was then taken to the *Kishumnawet* where it was redistributed to the people as meals and gifts when they left.<sup>22</sup> This was the way the host Tribe thanked the people for coming to honor the dead. The people continue this tradition today with food and cigarettes.

The *Kishumnawet* was decorated inside with feathers from birds of prey and feathers with bright colors. The feathers of the *kúpanil* (the woodpecker) were valued for their bright orange color. When calico material was introduced it soon replaced the feathers on the inside of the walls of the *Kishumnawet*. Today calico and other fabrics are used in place of the

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<sup>18</sup> The *wíwish* (a ground up acorn mush) came from the acorn nut found in the mountain. The *ményikish* (mesquite bean that was ground up) came from the mesquite bush found in the desert. Both of these were staple foods and were very important. Being a staple meant that these foods were sometimes the only food that was available in a given area. The acorn and the mesquite bean were survival foods.

<sup>19</sup> The songs asked permission from the deer to take its life to feed the people.

<sup>20</sup> Bean, Lowell John. Cahuilla. "Handbook of North American Indians." Volume 8 California, Smithsonian Institute, Washington: 1978 Print.

<sup>21</sup> The net was long up to 100' and 3' wide and the people would walk holding the net. They made lots of noise as they walked. The rabbits would run themselves into a corner and they would be captured and clubbed.

<sup>22</sup> Lowell Bean refers to this as reciprocity. The people would bring anything that was extra. In one area, mesquite beans might be plentiful so they brought mesquite beans. In other areas piñon nuts might be plentiful where there were no mesquite beans so they brought their piñon nuts. When the people arrived at the gathering, all the food was redistributed so if one individual brought piñon nuts that person might leave with mesquite beans and vice versa.

feathers. Inside where the Wake takes place, the material is hung on the walls, removed before the sun rises, and taken to the cemetery.

Once the wake started in the *Kishumawet*, the people were quiet. No one made a sound except the singers, according to Corinne Welmas-Siva<sup>23</sup> The ceremony started with a prayer as smoke from a cigarette was blown to the four directions, on the dead on the people and on the cigarettes. The blowing of smoke represented the creator's breath and blesses the dead, the family, the guests, the food, the cigarettes, the structure, the land and the ancestors. Singing immediately followed and continued all night long over the dead until sunrise.<sup>24</sup> The songs helped guide the *téwlawel* to the spirit world. Joe and Flora Patencio both sang the death songs together for the people at Agua Caliente and there were no other singers all night long remembered Mike Mirelez, a Cahuilla from Torres Martinez in Thermal.<sup>25</sup> Joe knew all the songs from start to finish. Joe and Flora Patencio were from the *Kauisic* (Fox Clan) and they were cousins. Joe was the last *Háunik* at Agua Caliente. Today there are usually two or three groups that come to sing to honor the dead and help them complete their journey through song. Today the people have their wakes at the Tribal



Figure 1: The Jane Augustine Patencio Cemetery Marker

Building. Family members sit in the front of the body as they used to do and pictures of the loved one are placed on an altar. All the people are fed. There are head cooks at every Reservation that help prepare and organize all meals and food that is prepared.<sup>26</sup> In the past, there was a person who called the people to come and eat. This person usually fed the singers first, then the elders and the people who came the farthest, and then the family of the deceased would eat last. There was coffee and something sweet available after midnight.

*Múkish*, (the dead) were always cremated. Cahuilla belief in cremation is a long tradition that goes back to the beginning when the Creator *Múkat* had instructed his children to cremate his body upon his death.<sup>27</sup> It was only recently with the introduction of Christianity that the Cahuilla people began to bury their dead. Each clan had their own cremation area. Flora Patencio recalled, in the late 1890's when her grandmother Jane Augustine Patencio passed away, the eldest son, her uncle Alejo Patencio looked for a new place to bury his mother after being told he was not allowed to use the

<sup>23</sup> Personal Communication. Circa 1999. Corinne Welmas-Siva was a member of Agua Caliente. Corinne said she would attend the ceremonies with her mom and sit behind her and sleep after a when she was little girl.

<sup>24</sup> If this was the *Núkil*, the week long Ceremony, the singing would persist through the night while other activities were performed during the day.

<sup>25</sup> Interview by author with Mike Mirelez 2013. Mike is a *Háunik* ceremonial singer who learned from the late Katherine Saubel Siva. Mike Mirelez is from Torres Martinez, but he sings wherever he is asked to come sing.

<sup>26</sup> Rosanna Saubel is head cook at Agua Caliente and sister of the late Chairman Richard Milanovich.

<sup>27</sup> Patencio, Francisco and Boynton, Margaret. *Stories and Legends of the Palm Springs Indians*. 1943.

*Kauisic* plot that had been the family cemetery and cremation area.<sup>28</sup> He found a place out in the desert and buried his mother there. This resting place is now called the Jane Augustine Patencio Cemetery. The cemetery is open for burial to members of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and their spouses.

After the all night wake, *núkish*, the dead, are buried in the cemetery. Early in the morning the grave is dug before the body arrives.<sup>29</sup> Tribal elder Renona Pennington said that only the people digging the graves were allowed in the cemetery before a burial.<sup>30</sup> Usually the young people dig the graves. When the casket arrives all the people proceed in a procession as they carry the casket to the grave from their vehicles. A *námiwet* (a wooden white cross) is constructed especially for the burial and is held during the procession through the cemetery.<sup>31</sup> The casket is lowered into the grave and immediately buried. The cross is planted at the head of the grave with all graves facing south toward the beautiful mountains. Flowers from the wake are placed over the grave. According to Pennington, flowers were used in the past to wipe away the footprints of the dead so their spirit did not stay here in this world. Family members of the deceased drape the material that was hung on the walls in the *Kishumnawet* over the graves. This material is the last gift the family can give the dead to keep warm on the other side, *Télmekish*<sup>32</sup> the spirit world. The material is then picked up and kept by the guests (non-family members). Since the dead cannot use the material in a physical sense, it is redistributed to the guests who can then use it to make clothing.



Figure 2: Andreas Ranch in 2013

Andreas Ranch was home to the late Anthony Andreas of the *Painiktem* Clan. Gatherings and events for the community of Agua Caliente were often held at The Ranch. At times there were *kéwet* (fiestas) and Bird Singing events, pit barbeques and more. The ranch even hosted gatherings for lunches after burials. Here the people gathered in a common area that was known for good times thus helping the people deal with the loss of a loved one. Anthony Andreas even helped cremate his good friend and Cousin Jimmy Saubel from Agua Caliente

<sup>28</sup> Memorial Rock placed in the Jane Augustine Patencio Cemetery. The story etched in stone was told to Flora Patencio by her uncle Frank Patencio. The story in part divulges: "... In 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant set aside every other even numbered section of land in Palm Springs for the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation. Our People roamed and lived all over this desert valley. They couldn't understand when told by Indian Agent, Horatio N. Rust, that complaints from white settler, J.A. McCallum, forced him to tell the Indian people that they could no longer bury on what had been their ancestral ground long before the coming of the white man."

<sup>29</sup> Phillip Prieto from Agua Caliente is the head digger and helps to organize all plot placements at the Jane Augustine Patencio Cemetery.

<sup>30</sup> Interview by author with Renona Pennington 2013. Renona is an elder at Agua Caliente. She is also a niece to the late Flora Patencio and aunt to the late Chairman Richard M. Milanovich.

<sup>31</sup> Personal Communication, 2013. Vince Gonzales III makes the crosses as requested by family members.

<sup>32</sup> Some refer to *Telmekish* as Heaven

at the beginning of the new millennium at the ranch. This was the first time cremation had been done since Francisco Patencio passed in 1947.<sup>33</sup> After the burial at the cemetery<sup>34</sup>, everyone was invited to eat food prepared by the family. The food is usually home cooked and prepared by individual members although this is not always the case. Sometimes there is store-bought food and at times the entire lunch has been catered. The family decides what is easiest for them during these very sad, hard, and stressful times.

The *téwlevel* remains on earth for one year until the *Núkil* (Year Anniversary as it is called today) is completed. Around the time of the year anniversary, all the belongings of the dead were burned recalled Damon Prieto, a Cahuilla from Agua Caliente.<sup>35</sup> People today at Agua Caliente continue the traditional burning a family member's personal belongings after the death of a loved one. All family members and guests are fed at the burning. Food is a big part of healing and laughter. The family members can now rest and move on with their own personal lives.<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that people do not still feel sad for their loss, but this is a time for new beginnings. This is a time for the living to remember their loved ones, to share fond memories, and to start new connections and paths.

With some changes, the funerary practices at Agua Caliente continue today as they have for a millennium. The meaning has not changed behind the ritual. What has changed is the way things are done to avoid persecution and discrimination from the community. The Cahuilla adopted Christian beliefs and today walk in both worlds, that of their ancestors and that of the community. The Cahuilla are a strong resilient group of people with a robust way of life and they are ready to do what it takes to survive. Yes the Cahuilla carry on the traditions of the past while carrying for the children of tomorrow. The late Chairman Richard M. Milanovich lived by his words, "I DO WHAT I DO FOR THE FUTURE OF MY TRIBE." The funerary practices of the Cahuilla are deeply rooted in tradition.

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<sup>33</sup> Andreas Ranch was home to a Cahuilla Revitalization Movement within the Cahuilla community.

<sup>34</sup> No Cremations are allowed at the Jane Augustine Cemetery only burials.

<sup>35</sup> Personal Communication Circa 2007

<sup>36</sup> Immediate family members will usually stop participating in social events. Some will not even attend any type of events. The women will cut their hair. Men will stop singing.



## Growing Pains in the West: United States Expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

By: Thomas Long, Ph.D.\*

In the United States in the nineteenth century, the American West represented the country's last frontier. Its dramatic landscapes and wide range of climates appealed to those in overcrowded, polluted industrial centers. It held a vast amount of undeveloped land and unexploited natural resources that beckoned to the industrialists of the East, and to the homesteaders seeking a way outside of their out of the urban environment. Many Americans, many of whom had heard tales of gold miners and cattle drivers becoming wealthy, which further compelled these post-Reconstruction emigrants not only to dream about striking it rich in this wilderness, but to actually try. There were also the dramatic landscapes and the temperate climates that were most appealing to those who lived in the overcrowded and polluted industrial cities. However, as unexplored and unsettled as the West seemed to many Easterners, it was far from unpopulated. This area had also been home to many tribes of Native Americans, some of whom had always lived there; others many of whom by 1877 had been forcibly relocated from the South, East, and Midwest to this region. Conflicts between white settlers and Native Americans had occurred since Europeans arrived on the continent's soil, but as many inhabitants of Eastern cities made plans to move west in search of open plains and the possibility of making their fortunes, the occurrences of struggles over land and rights rose exponentially. Many tribes had already moved once; as settlers moved westward, tensions grew ever higher. While the conflicts between the Americans and the Indians had existed since the birth of the U.S., the tensions would take new forms during this period. Regardless, from 1850 to 1912, every western territory that had once been considered simply a part of the frontier, had achieved statehood,

and the U.S. was fully a continental nation. The West may have represented great promise to many Americans, but the changes it underwent had an impact on both Native Americans and the environment.

Plans to make the West part of America were not novel; they had begun in the eighteenth century, with Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson believed that expanding westward, and retaining the land for farming, would prevent the fall of America's empire. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the country nearly doubled in size, and interest in westward growth increased among Americans. Although the term "manifest destiny" was not coined until the 1840s, many Americans already believed that it was their right, their duty, to explore and settle the West. In order to realize the nation's full potential, they believed that they had to move into this empty, unused land and cultivate and settle it. Later events conspired to make the West even more attractive.

The impact of the California Gold Rush, which took place from 1848 to 1850, on changing the course of history in the American West cannot be ignored. It drew even more settlers west, in search of their fortunes. Remarkably, during this brief, yet incredibly momentous event, over more than one hundred thousand people poured into this far western territory that quickly became a state in 1850. The economic possibilities of striking it rich in the gold fields that tugged at the emigrants' imaginations compelled them to make fantastically difficult journeys across the mostly unpaved, and predominantly uncharted western half of the continent. Other routes included travel by sea.

The second route was by sea and was even more perilous as it required either

navigation around Tierra del Fuego, the southern tip of South America or an even riskier cut off through the malaria-infested jungles of Central America, through the isthmus of Panama. In any of the three potential routes, disease, starvation, dehydration, and death loomed overhead. Arrival at the mining camps did not necessarily mean safety, as the inhabitants faced primitive conditions and crime. For the immigrants who came from Europe and Asia, the journey was even more dreadful. However, with these difficulties, the gold's siren call to discover the gold brought in the people; however, though in the end, fewer than 15% percent ever struck it rich in gold. However, many did find wealth in other endeavors in the explosive economy and wide-open society that had very few formal regulations. Consequently, the population continued to grow after the Gold Rush ended, and regardless of the fact that most who tried their hand at gold mining failed. The reason was simple, the vast untapped natural resources throughout California, as well as the greater West, were free for the taking, which gave businessmen a freedom unknown in the East. This wave of settlement came with a high price to Native Americans living in the region and to the environmental consequences of how business and settlement in this wide-open territory developed during Industrialization, the Gilded Age and through the Progressive Era.

During the Civil War, two particular pieces of congressional legislation further compounded the rapid settlement of the West, the exploitation of this rich, yet fragile physical environment, and the near eradication of the myriad of Native American societies that had lived in this vast region for thousands of years. In 1862, Congress passed the symbiotic Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad Act. During the mid-19th century, railroads were the lifeblood of transportation in the East. Following the U.S. defeat of Mexico in the Mexican-American War in 1848, the vast

territories that Mexico had previously claimed, from contemporary New Mexico and Colorado extending west to the Pacific Ocean, fell under the American flag. Later, during WWI, Germany tried to entice Mexico into attacking the U.S. by promising a return of these lands after the defeat of the Americans. The U.S. intercepted the communiqué, known as the Zimmerman Telegram, Mexico never accepted the German offer and the U.S. proved instrumental in the defeat of Germany. The mining craze that began with the California Gold Rush, fanned out from Northern California and into Nevada. Other precious minerals in massive deposits were discovered as well as vast virgin forests of Redwoods and other trees, and untold millions of acres of rich soil that had never been turned by a plow. The economic potentials seemed limitless. Additionally, the United States had become a two ocean nation with a gap of over 1500 miles separating California from the rest of the nation. The middle had to be filled in and the two coasts had to be connected and the commodities needed to be brought to market. The Homestead Act and Transcontinental Railroad Act were the solutions.

The Homestead Act, passed on May 20, 1862, was an enticing proposition for both the new immigrant and the natural-born citizen. For a small filing fee, an adult male person who was over twenty-one, and who was the head of a household, could secure 160 acres of surveyed government land of his own. Those who filed to own property had to promise to "improve" it by building a home and cultivating the land. Prospective homesteaders could also acquire land after residing on it for six months and making small improvements to it. The Pacific Railroad Act, which was passed on July, 1862, offered up huge grants of land past the Missouri River; these lands were to be used for the development of a railroad line and telegraph system stretching to the Pacific Ocean. The Union Pacific and the Central

Pacific railroad lines were authorized to construct the transportation system; work on the line began in 1863 and ended in 1869. The construction of the transcontinental railroad in the United States was, up to that point, the greatest engineering feat the world had ever seen. The economic possibilities that it offered were immeasurable.

These two acts did a great deal for the growth and advancement of the United States, but they brought with them many problems and issues as well. First of all, the Transcontinental Railroad spurred economic exploitation of the West, fed further industrialization in the East, and accelerated white settlement from the Mississippi to the Pacific, leading to an influx of settlers into Native lands. Even as white settlers moved west in hopes of a new life, they soon learned that the act of homesteading was not as simple as its process had been. Despite the relative ease in which many settlers were able to acquire land for themselves, few were able to bring their homesteading dreams to fruition. Here on his own land, a man could experience a freedom he had never dreamed possible while either living in the industrial urban environment of the Great Lakes or Eastern regions of the U.S., or, for that matter, in virtually any of the European nations. Life would be difficult for those who had been city greenhorn dwellers who knew little, if anything about agriculture or frontier life. It was difficult simply to build a farm, till the land, care for livestock, and cover the basic necessities of life. Many would fail, though in response to the high failure rate among the Homesteaders, scientific management experts, such as Oliver Wendell Kelley, were sent by President Andrew Johnson to assess the problem. After finding that the isolation and lack of community was one of the key issues, Kelley formulated the solution: The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. At the meeting houses of the Grange, as it commonly became known, the farmers could

form co-ops, trade valuable information, and have greater control over their economic enterprises. The greatest achievement of the so-called Grangers came at the dawn of the Gilded Age, as they were able to secure a favorable U.S. Supreme Court decision that permitted states to regulate what businesses could charge for transportation and also for grain storage in *Munn v. Illinois* (1876).

The construction of the transcontinental railroad in the U.S. was up to that point in history, the greatest engineering feat the world had ever seen. The economic possibilities that it offered were immeasurable. While the idea of a railroad connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific had been bantered about for over a generation prior to the passage of the act in 1862, it took the collective political and financial genius of four California men to convince a Congress that was in the grips of the Civil War to underwrite the construction of this massive enterprise. Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Collis P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins, known as the Big Four were able to secure federal subsidies for their corporation, the Central Pacific Railroad and for their associate in the east, the Union Pacific Railroad. This remarkable outlay of capital, raised primarily through bonds, offered subsidies that ranged between \$16,000 on flat land to \$48,000 for the high mountains per mile of track laid. Completed in 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad spurred economic exploitation of the West, fed further industrialization in the East and accelerated white settlement from the Mississippi to the Pacific. This mass settlement of Americans also led to a series of conflicts with the many Native American tribes, who were either original inhabitants of these western regions or those who had been forcibly removed from the East and resettled onto Indian Reservations on the Plains and in the West.

The conflicts between the U.S. settlers and Native Americans, which have collectively

been referred to as the Indian Wars by historians, predominantly mostly took place from between 1862 to 1890. Each respective conflict had its origin rooted in the expansion of U.S. hegemony over sovereign Indian nations. While the U.S. military was at the front line of American Indian containment, the forced subjugation of the indigenous societies was based on a legalist framework generated in Washington D.C. through a series of treaties that attempted to place the Native Americans in the role of dependant nations, with individual Indians as wards of the state, and ultimately the formation of the reservation system. At various points, the United States and its citizenry, did not adhere to the agreed upon terms of these treaties, which further exacerbated the strained relations between the Americans settlers and the Indians.

The most significant of these conflicts, were the Lakota Red Cloud's War (1866-1868) in the Wyoming and Montana Territories; the Comanche Campaigns (1867-1875) throughout the Plains and Southwest; the Great Sioux War (1876-1877), a series of battles throughout the Plains that included Little Big Horn (1876); the Nez Perce War (1877) in the Northern Rocky Mountain region; and the Lakota Pine Ridge Campaign (1890), which concluded with the massacre of Lakota at Wounded Knee in that same year. In each of these military battles, the Indian casualties were not limited to warriors. Rather, women and children were also among those who were either killed or wounded. News of these tragedies of these atrocities spread throughout Indian societies, which resulted in an even greater lack of trust the integrity of the U.S. government and military. Within the greater U.S. population, the newspapers generated two utterly distinct reactions. The newspapers that propagated the image of the savage, blood thirsty Indian fueled the sentiment of exterminating the Native Americans. The reports of U.S. atrocities committed against the

Indians, led to a strong movement within the Progressives to protect the Indians from extinction. One of the strongest proponents within the Progressive camp was Helen Hunt Jackson. In 1881, Jackson published *A Century of Dishonor*, a scathing and accurate indictment of the history of U.S. policies in regard to the Indians. Her work also highlighted the trend of breaking treaties when it was economically beneficial to the United States. Jackson's work not only informed its readers of this tragic history, it also compelled many reformers into action, which led directly to the passage of the Dawes Act of 1887 and the escalation of Indian Boarding Schools.

With both the Dawes Act and the development of Indian Boarding Schools, the intent was to save the Native Americans from eradication and assimilate the Indians into white society. The Dawes Act sought to transform the Native American societies from being based on reservations, to being productive and integrated U.S. citizens, who primarily self-identified as Americans and not as Indians in their respective indigenous societies. Named for its primary sponsor Senator Henry Dawes (R-MA), the act called for tracts of up to 160 acres per Indian family that would be held in trust by the U.S. for twenty-five years, or until the Indian family or individual allotted the land could demonstrated that it was being used in a productive fashion. After the transfer of title was complete, the Indians were then able to do as they pleased with the land, including the sale or transfer of title deed. Historians have overwhelmingly argued that the effects of the Dawes Act were quite negative for the Native Americans. One of the most obvious negative impacts was the gross loss of land that the Indians witnessed during the process of allotment. One of the codicils of the Dawes Act stipulated that all Indian lands not allotted were deemed "surplus" and opened up for U.S. settlement. During the course of the forty-seven years the Dawes Act functioned, two

thirds of all Indian land was stripped away and distributed among the non-Indian U.S. citizens because of this clause. Furthermore, the land that was parceled out was, in many cases, in harsh and unsuitable areas, which made farming difficult. Even had farming been possible, the techniques that the government attempted to instill in the Indians differed from their tribal lives so vastly that they often did not become farmers. Even the Native Americans who did want to farm and had decent land could not do so because they could not afford the necessary equipment. Furthermore, the Dawes Act also left nearly one hundred thousand Indians homeless. Ultimately, the Act proved disastrous; and rather than being a device that salvaged the Indians, it destroyed countless lives before Congress terminated its existence in 1934.

The Indian Boarding Schools had the intent, at least on the surface, of saving the Indians as well. However, the practical applications of this social reform program were quite different from allotments ideals. Indian children were often coercively removed from their families and sequestered on campuses that incorporated children from several different tribes. The mission of the schools was to strip away all vestiges of their Indian cultures and transform them into mainstream American citizens; it was widely believed within the Progressive movement that assimilation was the only mechanism by which Native Americans would be saved. The curriculum of the schools was structured on the belief that the Indians were imbued with inherently inferior intellectual abilities than people of European ancestry. Life at the schools was highly regimented, and the instruction focused primarily on the manual arts, home economics, English-language instruction, Christian theology—primarily Protestantism, and U.S. citizenship. Boys were trained as blacksmiths, factory laborers and farm hands. Girls were trained as seamstresses, domestic servants

and in family management. Often when the Indian children demonstrated a high level of English language ability and manual skills in a specific area of training, they were sent to work as contract apprentice laborers in cities across the U.S. The wages of the Indian children were typically sent back to their respective sponsoring school. Usually the Indians would realize less than 25 percent of the wages their labor earned. These external service learning experiences were also aimed at the Indian children gaining permanent employment in the urban environment, far away from the influences of their families, in order to ensure that assimilation would have fewer hindrances. The Indian students were required to speak only in English, forced to wear uniforms and adopt U.S. hairstyles and comportment, forbidden to practice their indigenous faiths, and had very little minimal contact with their parents and extended families outside of the schools. While the schools overwhelmingly did aid in the eradication of Indian languages, they did not lead to full-scale assimilation. Rather, their lasting impact was economic and social stratification of the Indians within the greater United States. The mission of the schools was to strip all vestiges of their Indian cultures and transform the Indian into an American citizen, as it was widely believed within the Progressive movement, that assimilation was the only mechanism by which the lives of these Indians would be saved. In reality, the schools proved a brutal experience, more akin to a concentration camp than a wholesome school experience environment. Corporal punishment was commonplace, even for the slightest infraction. Rather than abdicate their individual sovereignty and submit to this brutal fate Indian children consistently attempted to run away from the schools and back to their families. In some extreme cases, Indians went as far as burning down the schools, in order to bring the abuse to an end.

While the Native Americans experienced the greatest inequities as the U.S. population expanded into the West during this period, other ethnic groups witnessed widespread discrimination as well. With its origins in the California Gold Rush, Western states began to pass legislation that limited the access Asians had to due process, land ownership, and business development. On May 6, 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was the first federal legislation that aggressively restricted immigration to the United States based on nationality. The ban was originally supposed to last ten years. In the previous decade, the California politician Dennis Kearney made racial exclusion one of the central tenets of the Workingman's Party. The rise of Nativism in the United States only escalated in the ensuing decades, spurred on by the increase of immigration and higher competition for jobs. In the West, the competition over mineral rich land further exacerbated this volatile situation, and in particular this anti-Asian antagonism was fueled by a perception that Chinese economic success was greater than that often enjoyed by their European-American counterparts. The Chinese were not the only Asians to endure race-based exclusion. Emanating from California, the Gentlemen's Agreement between President Theodore Roosevelt and the Empire of Japan in 1907 was a resolution that the U.S. would not formerly restrict immigration of Japanese in the U.S. so long as the Japanese Empire would not permit any further immigration of Japanese into Continental U.S. Those Asian already in the U.S. consistently were subjected to widespread discrimination and physical abuse. These restrictions were further enhanced in 1924 when Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, which excluded Asians fully from immigration.

In direct contrast to the discrimination faced by minority ethnic groups in the West

during this period, most American white women actually witnessed an expansion of their civil rights at a much greater acceleration than their counterparts in the East. Due in no small measure to the gross gender imbalance of men over women that grew out of the mining industries that sparked the first population growth cycles, local, territorial, and state governments began to grant women rights that had been previously reserved only for men. The rights to be a land owner, the right to divorce one's spouse, the right to testify in court, and to vote along with the most significant civil right, suffrage, were first afforded to women in the West as an enticement to migrate and immigrate to the region. Beginning with the Wyoming Territory in 1869, women's suffrage made great advances in the West. On November 7, 1893, Colorado became the first state to grant women's suffrage the right to vote, followed by Idaho and Utah in 1896. After ten western states and territories had extended suffrage to women, the first non-western state, Illinois, finally extended voting rights to women in 1913.

By 1896, the U.S. had effectively expanded its borders to include all of what today is the Continental United States and also the territory of Alaska, which had been purchased from Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million. Following in the mold of the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, the U.S. continued in its quest to expand its territories during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and it turned its attention to the sovereign nation of Hawaii. U.S. businesses had interests and operations in the Hawaiian Islands for decades, and fueled by concerns of Japanese encroachment and possible Japanese takeover of Hawaii along with the vast economic potential of agriculture and the strategic location of the Hawaiian Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, formal attempts at annexation of the island nation began in earnest in the late

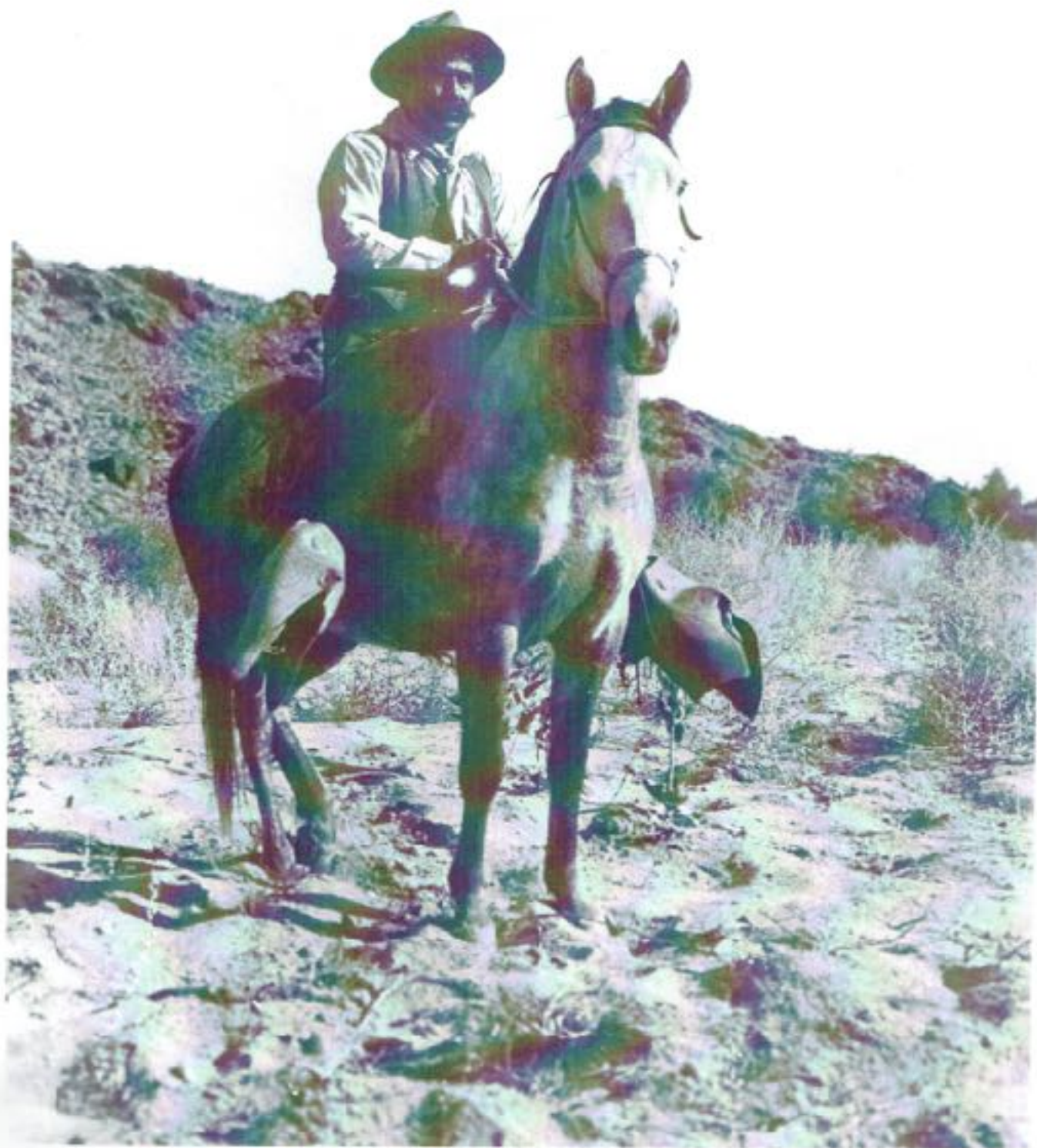
1880's. In 1893, Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani was overthrown by the U.S. and after much legal debate in Congress, formal annexation took place in 1898, and two years later Hawaii was made an official U.S. territory, and it remains as the nation's western most state.

The rapid and aggressive expansion and exploitation of the West by the United States generated incredible wealth and fed Industrialization. In no small measure, the economic growth and settlement of the West was the base for the development of the United States as an empire. However, this rapid growth came at a price, as a dearth of environmental regulations permitted virtually unchecked forms of mining, agriculture, animal husbandry and urban growth in some of the most arid and consequently fragile ecosystems in the western hemisphere. Had it not been for the establishment and continued growth of the National Parks, even greater exploitation may have taken place. Also, the social conflicts between settlers and the Native Americans went unresolved and widely ignored until nearly the end of the 20th twentieth century. However, by the end of World War I, most Americans' view of the West was a romanticized land of opportunity and progressive thought, and of incredible physical beauty and sunshine; and in many ways, there was some truth in this quixotic vision of a modern Eden.

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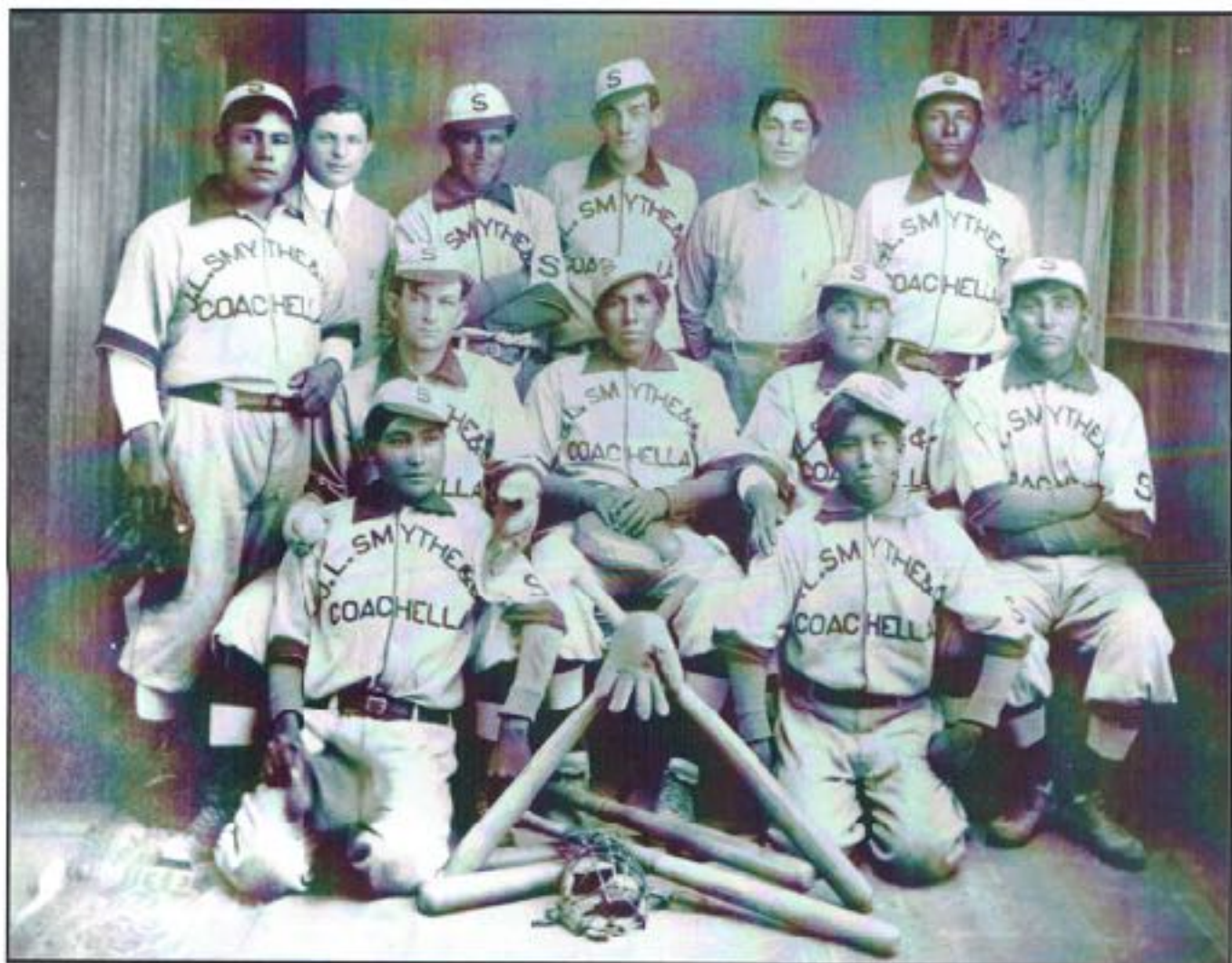
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Miguel Saturnino on horseback, Agua Caliente Band of Mission Indians. *Courtesy of the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.*





This photograph was taken in 1913 of an early baseball team comprised mainly of Cahuilla Indians.

Pictured from left to right:

Back row: Albert Augustine, Agent from Modesto Clothing Co., Bill Callaway, Lorenzo Collins, John Smythe and Marcus Avaldo.

Sitting: Oscar Cheetam, Alex Jim, Manuel Lopez and Harry Pachacha.

Kneeling: Jeff Boniface and Harry Jim.

*Courtesy of Coachella Valley History Museum Collection*

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## Current Resident or

The "Smiley House" (shown below) is the former residence of Dr. Harry W. and Nell Smiley and later of Dr. John C. and Margaret Tyler. It is located on the campus of the Coachella Valley History Museum.

