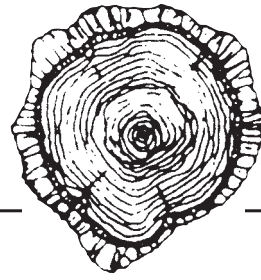
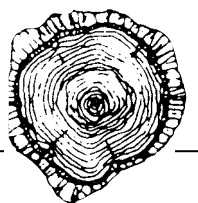


Tree Rings



Tree Rings



Fall 2012 Number 24

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Countless thanks to all the knowledgeable and imaginative writers who have filled these pages with stories of settling and building homes in the Sierra Nevada foothills. And many thanks to the artists and photographers who contributed their exceptional work to this issue: Randy Griffis, Jennifer Rain, Sam Dardick, Bob Erickson, Hank Meals and Bruce Boyd. Thank you to the Searls Historical Library and to the Doris Foley Library for their expert assistance in the use of their archives. And a special thanks to Masa Uehara Design for generously providing graphic design and layout for this issue.

Maria Ryan: editor; associate editors: Liese Greensfelder, Marc Ryan, Jeff Adams, Kurt Lorenz
Masa Uehara: design, layout and production

YWI, BLM and the 'Inimim Forest

The YWI is dedicated to the ecologically sustainable management of the Yuba River watershed on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. Since 1990 we have worked with the Bureau of Land Management on joint management of the 'Inimim Forest, 1,813 acres of federal land on 10 parcels on the San Juan Ridge.

Our agreement calls for restoration of the forest to an old-growth condition; management of its timber on an ecologically sustainable yield basis; and protection of its wildlife and cultural, historical, recreational, educational and scenic values.

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Cover art credits: Rainy Days No. 1, 1979, Sam Dardick. Courtesy of Caleb and Carolyn Dardick

“Dad designed the cabin to look like a spaceship. Mom thought it would be romantic if there were no walls. On some rainy days, before cabin-fever set in, it was.” —Caleb Dardick

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HABITAT AS CONCEPT

Notes From The Director

By Maria Ryan

September 22, the first day of fall, was still very warm as I stood in a dry foothill meadow baked by the long summer and listened to the seasonal calls of sandhill cranes on their fall migration. Despite the lack of rain and the warm temperatures that are now lingering into late October, sure enough, this truest sign of fall appeared like clockwork telling me it was time to begin preparing for winter and with that another issue of *Tree Rings*. But first, an announcement. It is with this issue, number twenty-four, that I step away from my post as executive director of the YWI and turn the reins over to Melony Vance. It's been a great experience and I will miss the work and all of you, but I know that Melony will do a wonderful job in steering the YWI through our ever-changing times. Be sure to introduce yourselves to Melony the next time you attend a YWI event.

Historically, *Tree Rings* has provided a collection of scientific essays and naturalist observations on the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada foothills. This year we are turning our attention to our own role in natural history; because clearly, as one of many elements that make up a thriving ecosystem, we humans are living as part of, rather than apart from, our surroundings. One of the most defining features of our species is that we have the ability to consciously create and sculpt our habitat. Every day the way in which we choose to inhabit our surroundings creates a palpable impact.

When the YWI set out to compile *Tree Rings* 24, a few ideas about the conscious lifestyle fostered in the foothills rose to the surface. Questions like: How did a culture that regards home and place as one and the same develop on the San Juan Ridge, and how does building shelter relate to this culture, to community and to human nature? So in this issue we are looking to the history of settlement and hand-built homes as a way to explore our presence here.

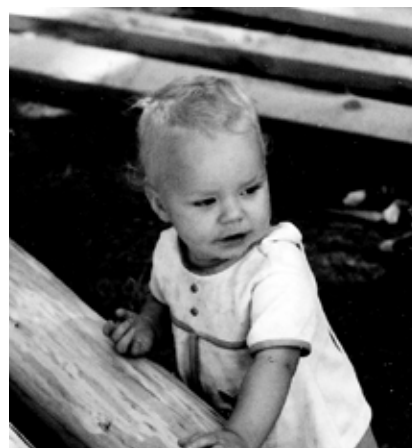
Scratching the surface of these topics it becomes clear that our community's current earth-friendly attitude toward land stewardship was birthed not so long ago, in a place with the

right socio-economic conditions to welcome a wave of novice homesteaders. This and other histories are expressed through local building traditions in which we find a visible relationship between intangible ideals and the tangible environment. Questioning and scrutinizing handmade homes and settlement choices informs our social history and our cultural legacy.

So, for those who staked out a plot for shelter, those who were raised skinning pine poles to build rafters, those currently breaking ground on a second or third generation homestead, and those who arrived long after the brunt of the labor was completed, this selection of writing will serve as testament to the heart behind hand-building on the San Juan Ridge. Our handmade homes are symbolic of a path to life with a deeper connection to our surrounding ecosystem.

I would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to all the gifted contributors to this edition of *Tree Rings*; with special thanks to Jeff Adams for his thoughtfulness and insight on the study of how we inhabit and create our environment, to Liese Greensfelder for generously lending her talent to the editorial team, to Masa Uehara for her lasting creativity and design of this issue, and to the sculptor Mark Dion whose work inspired me to consider my role in natural history.

Maria Ryan served as executive director of the Yuba Watershed Institute from 2011 to 2012.



Maria with cedar poles, 1980 *Diana Pasquini*

DWELLING ON THE RIDGE

By Marc Ryan

Part One: Red Forebears

Chipped and ground stone tools found on the San Juan Ridge reveal that several sites were coming into intensive, habitual use by hunting and gathering people by around 3,000 years ago. Before patterns of seasonal residence were formed, forerunners of these people had hunted and fished this ridge from time to time, and evidence suggests they arrived from points east in the Great Basin, where similar stone artifacts are dated beyond 6,000 years BP (before present).

The earliest scouts found a lush site whose gradually descending, broad ridge top flowed with springs and creeks, while abundant forests dominated by incense cedar, sugar and ponderosa pines, Douglas fir, madrone and black oak spread down deep river canyons. This virginal ecosystem was thick with herds of deer, while salmon and steelhead ran in the streams and rivers, and herbs and grasses grew among huge nut-bearing trees and game birds thrashed through the brush or wheeled through the blue sky.

The aboriginal forerunners quietly observed the fulsome balance that Mother Nature had struck. They would find a place here without disrupting that balance. These forebears, whether of Martis, Nisenan or Maidu designation, left a legacy that reveals an adaptive genius for balancing human needs with the natural essence of the place.

Seasonal cycles determined where on the Ridge the original Nisenan located. As spring ripened into summer, they moved upslope from the lowest ridge elevations near the Yuba River beds to the highest regions beyond Snowtent Springs, enjoying the company of deer and birds doing the same thing. Near a spring or stream, amongst groves thick with great black oaks, using cedar bark and branches, with short young tree trunks for poles, and with vines of wild grape or nightshade, pieces of moss and dabs of mud, they created the first human dwellings here. They usually spread them in clusters of roughly three to seven units across ridge tops close to granite outcroppings where they could process the acorns, pine nuts, wild grasses and grains they would harvest. Since their intention was always to keep moving with the seasons, there was no attempt to refine these dwellings into permanent structures. Nevertheless, they were durable and waterproof, with suitable light and airflow established by manipulating the coverings.

The most substantial of these dwellings featured a pole-framed cone, often set in a shallow circular or oval depression, excavated to a depth of from one to three feet, and about seven to 15 feet in diameter. An earth ramp was graded up from within to meet the entrance. For this task, stone tools with honed edges worked well on the moist soil of a good site. Poles were harvested, probably from the best dead and down specimens in the vicinity, and burned off to



Cedar round house

tintype, c.1850

Collection of the Searls Historical Library

the proper length; the charred ends effectively sealed off the wood from termites and rot. They were set in holes below the floor grade at intervals along the perimeter, and sometimes in the center. Three to six long poles four to six inches in diameter would have been sufficient for the simpler homes.

The frame was covered with cedar bark and a

Two such [Nisenan] village sites were thriving for thousands of years on the Ridge: one at the present location of Olala Farms off modern-day Robinson Road, and the other at French Corral.

fire pit could be located along the perimeter or in the center. Stones might be used to line the fire pit and hearth, while smaller holes within the circle might be dug to house baskets, tools and food.

The thick bark (six inches or more at the base of a mature tree) peels easily off a dead cedar trunk that has aged for a year or more, curving in sheets as large as several feet wide and 15 or 20 feet long and stiff enough to stand on their own, yet light enough and brittle enough to be sized and worked by hand. Thus the time required for a Nisenan family to assemble a new covering for an old frame, or even a whole new structure, would have been relatively slight; an accomplished crew of three or four could have built and moved into new digs within a week.

Groupings of 15 to 20 people in small seasonal villages featuring this kind of home were sprinkled over innumerable favorable sites along the Ridge starting as high as Snowtent Springs at 4,500 feet elevation.

By the time of the acorn harvest in the fall, the scattered groups gradually started gathering together at the lower elevation camp sites, where larger settlements featured larger structures for social and religious use. Here some would spend the winter while others moved on to far-flung hunting grounds, as individual needs dictated. Two such village sites were thriving for thousands of years on the Ridge: one at the present location of Olala Farms off modern-day Robinson Road, and the other at French Corral.



The same basic elements that made a site central, and therefore sacred, to the Nisenan are still evident today at the Olala Farms site. Nestled atop a domed hillock among several springs that are part of the headwaters of Clear Creek, the largest Nisenan structure on the Ridge once stood. A flat round area about 60 feet in diameter accommodated a roundhouse of poles and bark which is estimated to have been 30 feet in diameter.

An abundance of stone tools and other artifacts, such as pipes and bowls along with the instruments used to craft them have been unearthed here, leading to the conclusion that one of the main activities at the roundhouse was toolmaking. Its function as a men's lodge site for generations and through many centuries meant that its religious, social, and utilitarian potentials were all repeatedly tapped.

A few hundred feet to the west, across a shallow spring ravine on a similarly flattened domed hillock, was another central site for women, where evidence of food preparations, basketry tools, and decorative pendants has been found. Up the grade behind these two centers smaller groupings of bark huts probably sat near the host of grinding holes that can be found along the waterway there.

It is easy to feel the intrinsic appeal of this place: a gentle southwestern slope, giving it ample winter sunlight; a modest elevation at around 2,100 feet; free-flowing perennial springs running along granite slabs perfect for acorn grinding and winding gently through the small broad valley between the sloping ridges; all along the way, a generous array of huge black oak, cedar and pine as the waters pulse steadily toward the Middle Yuba River where salmon spawn all the way upstream to Clear Creek. Here was a place to abide, a spot sacred because it gathered and balanced all the natural elements needed to sustain in earthy comfort whatever life could attune to its mysteries. This the Nisenan did religiously, revering these hills as an awesome Mother who shared her secrets willingly to those who were patient enough to sit at her feet.

As the centuries rolled along, the grinding holes deepened and myriad generations lived and died on this ridge—continuity only made possible by virtue of the natural balance that had been struck. A burial site higher up the hill past the roundhouse site is marked with boulders moved thoughtfully over the graves of the dead. So, along with the cougars, bears, raccoons and rabbits, as cohabitants with the hawks and ravens, and as fellow lodgers with the foxes, snakes, and newts, human beings became Ridge dwellers.

Charley Cully was one of the few local Nisenan who adapted to life on a rancheria in the years following the gold rush.
c.1890 Collection of the Searls Historical Library

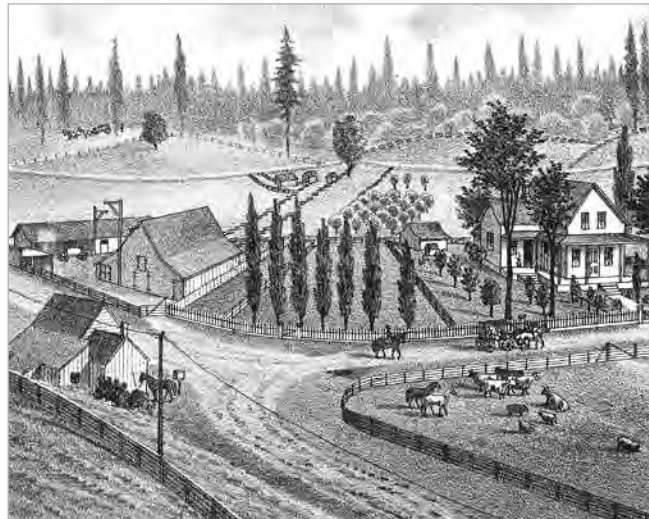
Part Two: Crazy White Men

When Gold Fever hit Nevada County, it utterly obliterated the pre-existing native culture of dwelling on the Ridge, and it did so with speed, ferocity, and a frightening and total disregard for both Nisenan and natural history.

In their hell-bent quest for golden riches, the forty-niners gave short shrift to Indians and their ways, and only a few individuals paused to glean anything at all. These new arrivals would have to start all over again learning how to adapt to this place if they were to abide here. They brought tents, metal tools, whiskey and bibles from the Sacramento Valley and began clustering around the most gold-laden streams on the Ridge.

One of the first of these sites, near the junction of Sage's Road and Tyler Foote Crossing Road on Shady Creek, was a traditional Nisenan camp. It was originally worked for gold by a small band of Cherokee Indians in 1849-50 who brought with them placer mining know-how learned back in Georgia. Apparently moving on after a few seasons, they left a log structure, referred to as a stockade in a journal of the time, which stood for a while and inspired ensuing miners to name the camp Cherokee. Perhaps it reminded them too that in order to last beyond fall on the Ridge, they would also need to be building homes with logs.

Like the earliest Nisenan forebears, the new inhabitants brought tools and techniques inherited from their culture. A photo taken in Nevada County in 1852 provides a glimpse of one early miner's solution to the housing problem. Here stands Harry Stryke, from all appearances a converted frontier yeoman farmer from the hills of Tennessee or Mississippi, before his own split log cabin. Logs have been sawn, split, notched, stacked on a rough, loose stone square foundation, and probably chinked with mud. The four walls taper or list inconsistently. The building rests on a sunny, rocky flat enjoying some



Cherokee Ranch 1880

Thompson and West

By 1867 Cherokee Camp ... had its own post office, blacksmith, two hotels, a Catholic church, several stores, and a sawmill cranking out the boards to build it all.

shade from the surrounding conifer grove. A sizable stone oven butts against one end, a wooden gate and low shed roof suggest chickens or pigs may live around the corner of the other end. Some kind of heat stove sits near the oven wall inside, with its tin stovepipe protruding through a split-shake, pitched roof framed with thin split poles and shedding to front and rear. The floor is laid with planks suspended a few inches above the earth; the unseen door probably resembles the entry ramp.

The basic tools Harry needed to build his cabin were few: maul and wedges, handsaw, axe, chisel and hammer, and a froe for the shakes. The time involved was considerable, particularly given the every-man-for-himself mentality of the first wave of gold diggers. Instead of working with a trusted group of relatives and old friends as the Nisenan might, Harry had the choice of trying to engage other irascible rookie miners who would always rather be prospecting, or of building it himself. Either way, it was tough work, as his body language seems to suggest.

For those who could muster a crew, a similarly built cabin using whole logs of greater length could be assembled; extant photos of such early cabins in Nevada County reveal that unpeeled pine logs were the favored material. No doubt many Ridge miners erected log cabins. Until local sawmills began to proliferate, Harry's route was the most direct one to an abode that would, if favorably sited, last quite a few seasons.

With dizzying rapidity, clusters of buildings framed and sheathed with milled local woods



Methodist Church in North San Juan, 2012, still serving the community
Bob Erickson

sprung up around the busiest mining sites. A couple of miles further down the gentle ridge slope from the Olala roundhouse site, a town dubbed San Juan was emerging near an old Nisenan site, and by 1852 a row of edifices had mushroomed along the main road that hugged the ridge near its northwestern rim for more than a mile before wending down to the Middle Yuba crossing. Burgeoning around the main stem, scores of small boxy cabins with shiplap or board-and-batten siding stood on stumps and flat rocks. Trees were being felled at preposterous and unsustainable rates as the first generation of white

presided over the place for more than 20 years, dispensing various legal services and eventually assuming duties as postmaster. He used the building as a post office and telegraph office and as the Wells Fargo stage depot, making it quite a hub at the time. The pit privy in the back yard of the small lot was relocated periodically along the perimeter. One hundred fifty years later, resident Kenny Newell dug up the old pits to find hundreds of whiskey and patent medicine bottles from the Sherman era. With Sherman's passing, the post office was moved and his old headquarters again became a private residence. Aside from the later refinement of running water, which led to an added plumbed bathroom and kitchen, the building has never been changed. Homes of this stature were standouts here in their day, and nearly all have since perished. Judge Sherman's old place stands today as the earliest surviving unaltered example of a wood-frame Ridge dwelling.

Back at the Cherokee mining camp that same year of 1852, more than 400 miners had already moved in and were claiming, if not gold, at least residence. Women eventually followed, families were established, and a few of the less fevered gave up mining in favor of work in the other services and needs of a new community. As will happen, women started to bear children, and by 1867 Cherokee Camp had been renamed Patterson (to honor the founder of the Patterson Mine just up the creek), and had its own post office, blacksmith, two hotels, a Catholic Church, several stores, and a sawmill cranking out the boards to build it all.

At the heart of town a row of four commercial one and two-story ship-lapped wood-frames were lined up along the Cherokee-San Juan trail without even an alley to separate the structures. In this they imitated an old urban design pattern that, for all its



Harry Stryke's cabin, 1852

Collection of the Searls Historical Library

settlers fed the mills and the stoves of their drafty cabins while they staked out personal claims on the streams, rivers, forests and rocks of the ridge. A walk north along this dirt street (present-day State Highway 49) in 1852 would have taken you past several freshly erected red brick structures selling goods and services, past a two-story wooden framed hotel, and then a few hundred feet onward to the newest and biggest home of the moment, an imposing 20' x 30' rectangular, two-story house featuring five rooms, large sliding casement windows, a roofed front porch, a molded polished hardwood banister leading upstairs, large sliding doors between the two downstairs rooms, which featured 10-foot ceilings, and a brick chimney. Six-inch-thick curved molded redwood trim sealed the eaves along the roof's edge. This was on a grand scale compared to Harry Stryke's, but this house too sat on flat rocks and sawn stumps.

According to original documents, it appears to have been purchased pre-cut and brought here by train and wagon. By the early 1870s, the residence had become home to Judge Sherman, who



Wooden flumes carry water for hydraulic mining through North San Juan c.1870 *Collection of the Searls Historical Library*

convenience, would eventually doom the entire row to destruction by fire. This happened so often that all of the comparable original buildings save one are long gone. Today, only the old Catholic Church, fortuitously sited on its own cleared knoll top, has survived from the days when Cherokee was called Patterson. Similar stories played out all along the Ridge at Columbia Hill, Humbug and French Corral—all near or on traditionally favored Nisenan sites.

Keying off impulses, perceptions, and desires that bore the hoary imprint of an inscrutable Western civilization, the white men who invaded the Nisenan's world displayed curious, destructive behaviors unknown to the old Ridge dwellers. The crazy ones seemed unable to restrain themselves from trouncing all over the awesome Mother Ridge, stabbing the river and stream beds with picks and

shovels, tearing down the banks with water cannons, boring huge holes deep into the rocks and earth, slicing the land with rutted roads and water ditches, dumping poisoned mud into the waterways, and dropping an entire virgin forest within a generation.

For good measure, they ridiculed and attempted to banish or murder any red person they encountered, eventually earning government bounties for their scalps. Finally, once the worst had happened, the fevered ones began to leave down the same trails they had come. As the 20th century progressed, the population of the Ridge steadily dwindled, until by mid-century only a thin assortment of loggers, cattle ranchers, sawyers, a few dogged miners, and the shopkeepers to serve them, remained.



Hand-built detail
Collection of Hank Meals



Curved room in progress near Cherokee-San Juan Trail, 1985 Diana Pasquini

Part Three: The Hip Thing

Another wave of nomads arrived on the Ridge in the mid 1960s. Seemingly united only by a hip disillusionment with the currently modern lifestyles, and possessed of a sort of intuitive homing instinct, immigrants came to the Ridge from points all over America, Europe and the Pacific Rim of Asia with a common agenda: to learn to inhabit the place on its own natural terms. This would involve listening as the Nisenan had. And it would involve healing the scars left by those who hadn't.

Nearly every site on the Ridge had felt the lash of the miners, loggers and ranchers; nearly every new settler had to deal with some mix of erosion, overgrown fields of brush, choked thickets of saplings, degraded meadows, exposed vertical mine shafts, mine tailings, tainted water, diggings that resembled a moonscape with bonsai pines, and washed-out wagon trail accesses with clouded titles not just for water rights but mineral rights too. The homes they crafted tended to incorporate much of the surplus timber that came with the necessary thinning of a recovering forest, either directly as skinned poles, or as milled cedar and pine boards sawn by Clarence Sage and Don Scott at Sage's circular sawmill at the old Cherokee site, an approximate mid-point on the Ridge.

Smooth gray-blue granite and black basalt rocks from the South and Middle Yuba, chunks of brilliant white or rosy or blue quartz from the diggings, exploded granite hunks removed from mine shafts a century earlier, all found their way into foundations, stove hearths, fireplaces and chimneys; one small home built near the old Purdon-North Columbia stage line by Richard Sisto around 1972 had walls made entirely of rock and mortar. Most of

the Ridge homes built from 1967 through roughly 1987 fell about equally into two categories: those predominantly owner-built and those professionally

Early settlers of the third wave, Michael and Charlotte Killigrew began around 1971 by inhabiting a 19th century miner's cabin near China Flat at the far end of what is now known as Jackass Flats Road.

designed and built. Those who mastered the first category often proceeded to work in the second, so the professional products shared the styles and indeed the craftsmen of the earliest work, although they were usually bigger and more expensive than the originals.

The craftsmen often had learned to use the native materials in assembling their own homes and in trading labor on their Ridge neighbors' projects. Pole framing was a popular method, with milled frame elements; siding was most often the old standby: rough-cut, one-inch stock either lapped horizontally or battened vertically. Corrugated galvanized metal sheets left over from mining operations made a fine fireproof roof or exterior wall. While some homes were sited in ravines or on barely accessible slopes, the most favored sites enjoyed the same mix of southwestern sun, available water, and gradually sloping, cool forest groves that Ridge dwellers had always loved.

Early settlers of this third wave, Michael and Charlotte Killigrew began around 1971 by inhabiting a 19th century miner's cabin near China Flat at the far end of what is now known as Jackass Flats Road. Starting with the original wooden and corrugated metal structure set on flat boulders, the couple gradually added on in a similar style to create a family-sized home. A handsome porch with pole rails, a facing of mined-rock around the foundation pe-

rimeter, a lush garden and a few outbuildings among the great black oaks, all gradually transformed the old prospector's shack into an abiding homestead for coming generations.

Design patterns of the new wave were as eclectic and eccentric as the builders, and it is impossible to find any one characteristic shape or size in all the newly created spaces; no one home much resembled another in design. A fondness for hexagonal, octagonal or curved rooms centrally placed with high ceilings and generous window light is often in evidence.

Automobiles gave the new residents easy access to the entire Ridge, but where the roads stopped the trails began and a healing and rejuvenated Mother Nature burst forth on all sides. Walking and hiking were once more in fashion when the fair seasons arrived, and river bathing and forest camping again became experiences shared by nearly all Ridge denizens.

The circular wanderings of the Nisenan throughout the watershed were mirrored in the bustling new community that began to assemble itself in a familiar pattern around a few social sites that offered facilities for social and religious needs as well as commerce. Down the hill a mile or so from the Olala roundhouse site, a new primary school was built in 1975 on a sunny knoll near Clear Creek, designed by locals with much community labor donated. The old schoolhouse in North Columbia, built in 1875, was reactivated as both a school and community cultural center. The original Catholic Church at Cherokee was also used for a while as a schoolhouse. In North San Juan, a wood-framed Methodist Church built in the early mining era continued to serve a devoted flock without benefit of a remodel, while some of the town's original brick structures from 1851 now housed bars, heavy equipment repairs, a grocery and a soda fountain.

Using the leftovers of one wave and the wisdom of another, these new Ridge dwellers settled into the bosom of the Ridge and set a tone of environmental awareness, hands-on ecological land management and an individually sensitized relationship with this place that has continued to inform those who have followed up to the present day. ■

Special thanks to Arlo and Robyn of Olala Farms, Kenny and Wanda of Judge Sherman's, and all you Ridge Dwellers who helped show me the way.

Marc Ryan is a forty-year Ridge dweller whose journalism has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Blues & Rhythm* and *California Tour & Travel*. His book "Diamonds On Farish Street" is available from the University Press of Mississippi. He helps maintain Ooti Wildlife Preserve at the headwaters of Clear Creek, which encompasses original Nisenan campsites.



Third wave homesteader's cabin, 1974 Collection of Marc Ryan

UNIN KUKAN NISEM

“This is how we are” —Mountain Maidu

By Alicia Funk and Farrell Cunningham

In the early 1850s, a campoodie (village) located just outside the town of North San Juan reportedly was home to about 250 Maidu. The abundance of grinding holes scattered between the middle and south forks of the Yuba River, however, indicates that at least several thousand Maidu inhabited the entire San Juan Ridge prior to contact.

Unlike current house construction that is built to last as long as possible, the Maidu home was based on a principle of continuity with nature and was expected to biodegrade into the landscape within 10 years. The Maidu designed their homes to be appropriate to the seasons. The ground-level entrance typically faced east to receive heat from the warm morning sun and served as a place to stay warm in the winter.

“In the summer, a bark house feels like going into a cave, and in the winter it is so insulated you just need a very small fire to keep warm,” said Don Ryberg, chairman of the Tsi-Akim Maidu tribe, who has constructed several bark homes at the Burton Ranch in Nevada City. “It is very efficient.”

The dwelling was made of materials readily available near the desired home site. It was subterranean, dug about three feet into the ground, with a roof made of the bark of incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) pitched at a 40-degree angle and supported by oak rafters. Any holes in the roof were filled with moss and the bark was covered by mud to provide added insulation. Native plants such as mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*) and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*) were placed inside the edges of the house to repel bugs.

In the summer, Maidu people living throughout the foothills would often move to higher country to hunt and collect higher elevation plants. They slept outdoors or built temporary summer homes out of woven branches. Bark house locations were often moved to a neighboring hill every 10 years or so. The previous home site was burned to help restore the habitat and allow the site to “air out.” Villages generally

consisted of five to 25 bark houses, with three to five family members living in each home.

Each dwelling was easy to construct and could be assembled by a single family member if necessary. Beds were made of animal hides or woven out of bulrushes (*Schoenoplectus species*), cattail (*Typha latifolia*) or Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). When the woven beds became too dry to be comfortable, they were used as kindling and a new bed was made.

For meals, the bark house had a central fire pit as well

as a nearby rock slab used as a cooking surface for meat or fish. (Each family member was expected to bring a handful of wood for the fire when returning from the bathroom, which quite conveniently consisted of the great outdoors.) Bread was often wrapped in big-leaf maple leaves (*Acer macrophyllum*) and baked in the coals. Acorn mush or stew was cooked in baskets woven from maple or Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*). Round rocks were heated in the fire, quickly rinsed in a basket of clean water and then placed into a cooking basket filled with mush. The mixture was stirred continuously to prevent burning the basket.

“The bark house takes me back to my ancestors,” said Ryberg. “Every part of it comes from the land and it feels closer to the earth.”

Alicia Funk is a YWI board member and co-author of *Living Wild—Gardening, Cooking and Healing with Native Plants of the Sierra Nevada*.

Farrell Cunningham, Mountain Maidu, lives on the San Juan Ridge and teaches Maidu language.



Cedar Bark Home

Randy Griffis

Cedar Bark Dwellings The Original Sustainable Design

- 100% local materials
- insulation made from native moss and earth
- semi-subterranean
- passive solar
- biodegradable, leave-no-trace construction
- cool in the summer, warm in the winter



Stories in the Night

by Gary Snyder

In Native California the winter was storytelling time

*Y*esterday I was working most of the day with a breakdown in the system.
Generator 1, Generator 2, old phased-out Generator 3,
the battery array, the big Trace inverter—solar panels—
they had all stopped—cold early morning in the dark—
back to the old days, kerosene lamp—candles—woodstoves always work—
the back up generator #3 Honda, cycles wrong? Tricking inverter relay that starts the
bulk charge?

Big Green Onan—fueled by propane—wouldn't start—
(one time turned out there was a clogged air cleaner; oil-drops blow back up from deep inside.)

(I try to remember machinery can always be fixed—but be ready to give up the plans that were
made for the day—go back to the manual—call up friends who know more—
make some tea—
relax with your tools and your problems, start enjoying the day.)

First fifteen years we lived here, kerosene lamps. Heavy tile roof in the shade of a huge pre-con-
tact black oak;

Cheri, Siegfried's long-time woman friend and partner, is due at any time with a 9-ton truck of
3/4 inch crushed rock. Wet dirt every winter eats up gravel,
keeping a few hard roads for drenching winter rains and melting snows
takes planning. You have to ditch them too.



In 1962 going all through Kyushu with Joanne, walked around Nagasaki. Busy streets and coffee shops, green leafy trees and gardens, a lively place.
But at Mt. Aso, great caldera in the center of the island, crater fifteen miles across, saw sightseers from Nagasaki with the twisted shiny scarred burn-faces of survivors from those days. And then read Barefoot Gen.

What got to me about the Bomb was too much power.
And then temptation there to be.... the first.
The first to be "The Emperor of the World."
Yet to be done: So change our course around, or there we head.

I could never be a Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew because the Ten Commandments fall short of moral rigor. The Bible's "Shalt not kill" leaves out the other realms of life,

How could that be? What sort of world did they think this is?
With no account for all the wriggling feelers and the little fins, the spines, the slimy necks,—
eyes shiny in the night—paw prints in the snow.

And that other thing, can't have "no other god before me"—like,
profound anxiety of power and jealousy and envy, what sort of god is that?
Worrying all the time?
Plenty of little gods are waiting to begin their practice and learn just who they are.

In North India, Fourth Century AD, some Buddhist Tantrick Teacher Lady said,
"That God called Yahweh to the west, he's really something. But too bad,
he has this nutty thing that he's
Creator of the world."
A delusion that could really set you back.

But returning to energy. I'll fix the Onan, give up on # 3 it's too far gone
and next time get a backup with a cast iron block and water cooling
and a warranty good for centuries—put in a bunch more panels for the sun—

The old time people here in warm earth lodges thirty feet across
burned pitchy pinewood slivers for their candles,
snow after snow for all those centuries before —
lodgefire light and pitchy slivers burning—

don't need much light for stories in the night.



Off the Grid

Do-It-Yourself Infrastructure, A Recent History

By Kurt Lorenz

Beginning in 1968, and over the next 10 years, most of the folks I like to call the “Whole-Earth-Catalog-Back-to-the-Landers” arrived on the San Juan Ridge. By choice we were moving away from it all, beyond the reach of city streets and city services. We wanted to get out of the Bay Area, to not be part of the Vietnam War and what supported it. We were running to something mythical, and simpler, and to a kind of freedom. We thought so anyway. We also were a splinter group of the “manifest destiny” that brought so many internal American immigrants to the West in waves from 1849 on.

When we discovered that there was such a thing as a refrigerator that ran on propane, we bought these old Servels and lived in the lap of luxury.

Figuratively speaking, we arrived in Berkeley in a beat up, green VW with a “Live Free or Die” New Hampshire license plate and when we left the Bay Area we scattered in old school buses and pickups looking for a return to mother earth. I think our

goals, loosely stated, were to be able to work naked in the garden and to live with friends and lovers like a pile of over-age puppies. Of course it didn't turn out quite like that.

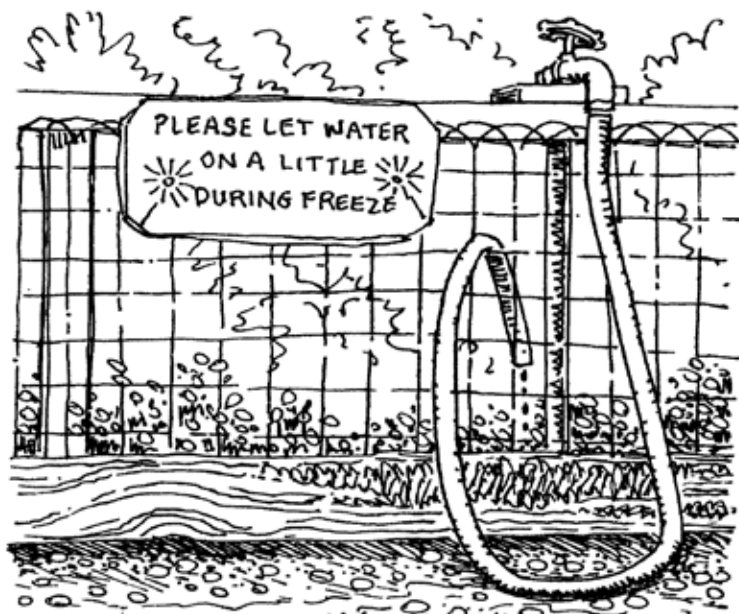
As late as 1969 the extension of Tyler Foote Road called Cruzon Grade was not paved. Log trucks in summer churned it into dust three inches thick and the first rains of fall left it a quagmire. But property had already been subdivided up on Cruzon as well as many other places on the Ridge. And the new wave of back-to-the-land settlers, every one of us a refugee from something, was beginning to arrive.

So, where was the water going to come from? How do you build a shelter? Why did the coyote eat my chickens, and whose fault was that? Are we going to survive without recorded music, our refuge in college and beyond? How can I call my neighbors, or my mom back in Vermont? How in the heck are we going to live anyway? The questions were infinite. The hardware store, plumbing supply, grocery and a movie for the kids were 25 to 30 miles away. In winter the garden was a frigid wasteland. Firewood had to be found and kept dry.

It wasn't easy, and partnerships were sorely strained. But it was also incredibly fun and fulfilling for many of us. We washed dirty clothes by hand or at the laundromat behind SPD. We washed and cooked with water hauled in from the Coughlan Ranch in North Columbia. Our first carpentry project was sometimes a small tent platform or perhaps a shelf nailed to a tree to make cooking on the Coleman stove easier.

It didn't take us long to figure out that land without water was worthless. The quest for water of our own was the earliest example of infrastructure development in our new lives in the foothills: no water, no living here. Hauling water from the Coughlan Ranch spigot was no long-term solution. A well had to be drilled, our first really big investment. Old cast-iron hand-pumps were installed, and guests for an afternoon sauna had to contribute a hundred strokes.

This got old in a hurry. We learned that we could add a 1920-style pump jack and let a small wheezing gasoline motor do the pumping, and pretty soon we discovered that a noisy generator could run a submersible pump, and maybe run a washing



Coughlan's Water

Jennifer Rain Crosby



Lanterns Jennifer Rain Crosby

machine while it was at it. Suddenly we were back in the mainstream a bit. Some of us learned how to install those pumps and to wire those generators and do the plumbing to move the water around. Specialist skills emerged. History repeats itself.

Many of us went through a re-creation of 100 years of Western U.S. water technology in just a few years. (This wasn't good windmill country, so we ignored that phase.) We soon realized that we were not leaving the modern world of industrial plastics behind; pipe, we quickly discovered, was made of PVC plastic and glued together. Panicking over the plastic and the smelly glue, we agonized about carcinogens. And worse than that, to make our well pumps run we had to learn about electricity. Most of us couldn't have told you the difference between DC and AC—direct current and alternating current—and knew nothing about wires, circuit breakers, voltage or amperes. We thought we weren't going to need this stuff in becoming new age frontierspersons.

Electricity in our first houses appeared in the form of 12V DC wiring, imitating our vehicles. Old car radios (in some cases powered by newer car batteries) nailed to a rough-sawn wooden shelf brought some music and news. Then the first miracle happened. The CB radio! Powered by a car battery, a CB got us in touch with neighbors and helped us organize the morning carpool to school. We took a page from truckers and each of us came up with a "handle" to go by during our CB chats, which were scheduled at regular times morning and evening when everyone tuned in.

The CB was a party line that bound us together as a neighborhood. There was even one couple who

owned a real phone, yet they stayed connected primarily through CB. We gave their number to our relatives in the greater world, so along with local gossip during our CB sessions, we sometimes received urgent messages from anxious parents. On occasion the phone folks even placed calls for CB neighbors, saving us a long drive to the nearest pay phone. Eventually telephone wires were extended and most of us got a phone, but I miss those CB days for the group process they encouraged.

In the heady early years of our electrified lives, some of us had tiny black-and-white TVs that ran on 12V DC. On Cruzon Grade there was a wide spot in the road looking out over the valley that earned the name TV Turnout. On weekends with compelling sports events, cars and trucks would park there with their television sets balanced on the dashboard or hood where we could get a good signal from the Bay Area. Add a beer and you had a tailgate party.

The batteries that gave us a light or two, some music and the precious CB had to be charged. Some folks put an extra battery in their vehicle; just by driving around the batteries got charged and then when we got home, we plugged the house into the truck. Or you could charge the battery while the generator was running and at the same time power the pump and do laundry.

For a while refrigerators were out of the question because they required more electricity than our jury-



School Bus Living Jennifer Rain Crosby

rigged systems produced. So when we discovered that there was such a thing as a refrigerator that ran on propane, we bought these old Servels and lived in the lap of luxury. Problem was they heated up our houses so much that we put them on the porch where the local bear soon discovered them.

In our first cabins most lighting was still from the murky rays of kerosene lanterns. But then another



By the mid 1990s, many homes had grown and morphed into something less like a forty-niner's cabin and more like a competent functional homestead with a serious solar electric system driving purpose-built, deep-cycle batteries.



discovery led us to propane-powered illumination, which meant that the 5- and 25-gallon LP tanks in our houses or just outside the door cooked our food as well as provided three times more light than we were used to.

Right about then, in the late 1970s, the solar electric panel appeared. They were expensive and didn't produce a lot of power, but we scrimped and saved and bought them. A new age was dawning. I put my house battery in a wheelbarrow, hooked it into two solar panels, and wheeled the assembly around into sunny patches during the day. At night it would run a few lights for a long evening of reading. Eventually many of us had a few solar panels permanently mounted in a south facing spot, with a primitive charge control. We wandered through various solar-powered DC well pumps. Terrible at first, they eventually became very successful designs and would go mainstream.

Finally we graduated to inverters to turn DC into AC. Inverters became more common as solar panels multiplied, and as time passed DC lights in our houses gave way to plain old AC. I saw my first inverter in 1977. It was military surplus and ran on 36 volts DC. Its DC motor powered a small AC generator and put out 120 volts AC. It was another miracle! But my enthusiasm died when I tried to create 36 volts DC from three 12-volt batteries in series, and then tried to charge those batteries. This was hopelessly impractical and the machine was noisy anyway. By the next year I had purchased a small, buzzing, square-wave, 12-volt inverter for the princely sum of \$50. It did the most wonderful thing; it ran my

electric portable typewriter! Now that was just like being a real person.

It is hard to remember that except for transistors in battery radios, small TVs and pocket calculators, back then there wasn't anything digital in the world. As a teacher I saw the first commercial computers: first the Commodore Pet and then the amazing Apple II-e. And suddenly escapees to the mountains—having discovered the value of wires—were talking electricity and expanding their meager knowledge. Now those valuable wires had to somehow be retrofitted into our hand-built homes that had never had any, and weren't supposed to need any. Handypersons who could make this stuff work were in demand. The community developed homegrown plumbers and electricians. The evolution of those wiring projects in the beginning would require a whole chapter of its own in the book of our re-inhabitation of the ponderosa pine and black oak country. Mostly we did a lot of things wrong in those years, and often had to re-do the project several times in subsequent years.

By the mid 1990s, many homes had grown and morphed into something less like a forty-niner's cabin and more like a competent functional homestead with a serious solar electric system driving purpose-built, deep-cycle batteries powering conventional AC appliances through a large and efficient DC to AC inverter/charger. A backup generator tided us over the cloudy winter days and powered larger tools and workshops. Internet service came over the phone line for a while, but quickly changed to satellite dishes and radio links. Cell phones appeared everywhere. Four-wheel drive trucks and cars became ubiquitous, and unpaved roads were much improved with expensive crushed rock and grading. The same individuals who once ran an old pickup on nearly bald tires now had a decent truck and a small family car.

An irony of all this development was that in 1972 it was difficult to tell a relatively well-off family from a relatively poor one. But by 1992 that division was obvious. There was a brief time on the Ridge when everyone lived in a similar world of poverty by U.S. standards. Our lives were little different from those of homesteaders in previous generations. But that lasted only a few years and the real world of consumerism and comfort quickly penetrated our Shangri-la. For a while we saved nostalgic remnants from those early years, but now most of us use kerosene lanterns only for ceremonial purposes.

If you own and live in a country homestead you built yourself starting with bare land, you have learned that you are your own electrician, plumber, carpenter, architect, building contractor and maintenance

person. You provide your own water and sewer, fix the road, and keep the place supplied with all the things you need to do the work. You may hire out some of the jobs, but you still have to carry the ideas and plans for the development in your head, and in lists and notes over years. It comes down to this: You name it—you do it.

Your taxes may pay for the paved county road, but the services stop there. When you turn onto the gravel and dirt, you're on your own, and it's a very satisfying feeling for just about all of us. ■

Kurt Lorenz is a YWI board member, a retired teacher and now a school board member. He moved to the Ridge in 1976.

SMALL HOUSE

By Bruce Boyd

*W*e recently hosted a dinner party as a fundraiser for the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center. We moved some furniture and placed a table 30 inches wide by 16 feet long down the middle of our main room. There were 17 of us at table. We could have sat 20 without much trouble.

The table looked grand—even when set with pretty much all of the cloth napkins, dishes, flatware and glasses that my wife Holly and I have accumulated over the last 30 years of living on the Ridge. Looking down the table I was reminded how adaptable we have become in using our small house to accommodate functions we never dreamed of hosting when we started building it in 1978. And I was thankful that the combination of our desire to live lightly on the land, our deep commitment to this particular bit of ponderosa forest, and our limited resources had all led to the creation of our small owner-built home. In turn, that solid home base—rooted in the soil of Wepa Land Association¹—has allowed Holly and me to develop deep ties to the Ridge Community.

Our house has served us as a young a family, as a stage for a busy community life, as an empty



Main room looking east

Bruce Boyd

¹Wepa is the Nisenan for coyote. We started as 12 partners owning a single parcel. This evolved over the years into a limited equity cooperative with five families. This form of land ownership allows us to own and manage the land together without subdividing, while permitting each of the five memberships to create a small private homestead, including a residence.

nest, and now, we hope, it will serve us well into old age. It might also provide a useful illustration of the virtues of the small house and touch on some of the compromises and lessons we learned building and living here on the Ridge.



One of the wonderful things about our neighborhood has been a long tradition of workdays to help each other over the difficult jobs.



Building Our House

Toward the end of 1970, some of the people who had spent the year helping Gary Snyder build his home, Kitkitdizze, here on the Ridge decided to buy the adjoining 117-acre parcel with the intention of communally sharing ownership and stewardship of the land and forest. We had vague plans to homestead and create a life on the Ridge. Most of us were very young with commitments to finish college or start professional careers, or we had already established ourselves in other places. Eight years passed from the time we bought the land before Holly and I were ready to move to Wepa with the intention of building a home, starting a family and beginning an architectural and construction practice on the Ridge.

We spent those intervening years working and saving to pay off the land. We walked and camped on the land many times and found many potential house sites. Three families chose to build very near each other at Wepa to share common resources like driveways and water wells and to share in gardening and child rearing. The first buildings here were a tent platform and a woodworking shop built by Bob Erickson, one of our land partners. The shop became headquarters for the three families as we worked to set up our own home sites. During summers while building our various homes, we ate in a communal outdoor kitchen and shared in the many chores of rural life. Like many recent refugees from the suburbs, we reveled in the back-to-the-land idealism of a hand-pumped water well, no power, no phones, living off our garden and orchard, and instead of indoor showers and toilets, using saunas and outhouses.

When Holly and I returned to Wepa to build, we had already made some decisions. One: we would build

on level ground near a campsite that I had used a few years back. This house site was near our neighbors and within an area that had burned in 1971. The site had a good southern exposure for passive solar heating, plenty of level ground for a garden, and a big night sky unlike the more heavily wooded areas of the land. Two: we knew we wanted our house all on one floor and on a slab so that we could have tile floors and some mass to moderate the heat of summer. Three: we decided to build with conventional wood frame construction, mostly to save money on the framing of the house. Later we would incorporate timber framing and pole rafters into the house design. (While building Kitkitdizze we had learned to work with poles from trees felled on the land and lumber from local small mills.)

During the winter of 1977-78 we went through many different designs: from a house arranged around a courtyard, to a design based on a simple box, to our final design. We started with the idea of a three-room house. One room would function as the public space for family and guests. At either end of this central room would be a space for each family member where we could establish some privacy and isolation. In the design we called the rooms the main room, the library, and the weaving room. These names expressed some idea of their functions, but every room had a multiple list of uses. The main room housed our kitchen, a kitchen table, and a sitting area centered around a wood stove that is the only heat source in the house. The library originally served as Holly's and my bedroom, and the weaving room quickly became our daughter Eva's bedroom. We also included a small entry area, a greenhouse extension, covered entry porch, a compact bathroom and a pantry. Later we added on a new bedroom for Eva, and the weaving room became a home office and library. The original library officially became the master bedroom when it acquired a door and a closet.



Roofs and fences

Bruce Boyd

The house started at 1,200 square feet. With the bedroom addition it now comprises 1,400 square feet. The main room measures 27 feet long and 14 feet wide running east-west with a cook stove at one end and a wood heat stove at the other. While not really a “great” room due to its overall size, this room is the center of our house. The sitting area is at one end and our kitchen and dining table at the other. There is no separation of functions, yet many activities can go on simultaneously: cooking, homework, reading, conversation, sitting and looking at the warm flames of a wood fire while a storm blows through. On the south side is a greenhouse now filled with semi-tropical plants. We had hoped that this greenhouse would provide a significant portion of our heating needs only to discover that it is actually not large enough to add a lot of heat in the winter. Fortunately, it also is too small to add unwanted heat in the summer. And we do enjoy the wonderful lush greenery during the winter, while the plants help humidify and clean the dry, heated indoor air throughout the cold months.

Our 80-foot-long house serves as a wall for the northern side of our homestead compound and garden. To this compound we have added a storage building, carport and wood shop, which we have interconnected with sections of fencing to enclose an area free of those “rats with antlers” as John McPhee called them in his book “Coming Into the Country.” This enclosed area is our outdoor living space, outdoor workspace and domestic garden. Outside the compound we maintain a buffer zone of cut grass and native trees thinned to fire-safe standards.

Some Lessons Learned

I think we did well siting the house on precious level ground. Access to the site and ease of moving around here made it easier to build. It also allowed us to



Clay tile roofing *Bruce Boyd*

add all those other structures that you discover you need once you actually start living in the country: wood shed, tool shed, shop, laundry, battery room and storage. Over time we have also populated the site with various landscape elements including a photovoltaic solar array, fruit trees and a garden. By building in an area already cleared by fire, we gained daylong sunlight and, after years of clearing brush that regrew on the burned-over land, a site that is now fairly protected from fire.

The downside has been an increased exposure to southwest storms and a slightly more extreme microclimate. A friend pointed out this exposure to storms to me before we started building. He recommended putting the entry on the north side of the house to shelter it from driving rain. Not following his advice has meant that our front porch can get wet during windy storms.

We also do not get the evening breeze that drains off hillsides; and on some days cold temperatures sit in place on top of us until the sun is up. Our growing season is slightly shorter than other gardens in the neighborhood. Orienting the long side of the house to the south has added only marginally to our winter heating, but the windows facing south do flood the house with light all winter long. We manage the summer sun with our generous roof overhangs and by opening windows at night and closing up during the day.

Building our house together (with our daughter in the oven) was a wonderful experience. Holly and I spent over a year doing the planning before building. This included scrounging for materials and working



The library *Bruce Boyd*

on infrastructure: water lines, gas lines, drains and the driveway. Scrounged items included redwood staves from old soy sauce fermenting tanks that we used to make our windows and doors (see Gary



I continue to believe that wood stud-frame construction is a fine and noble way to build. Wood framing is light, flexible, easy to alter, and sustainable. Heavier forms of construction have their place, but if you think about housing the world, then high energy and/or heavy, non-renewable materials will not do the job.



Snyder's poem *Soy Sauce* in his book "Axe Handles") and ceramic tile roofing that we took off a house in the Bay Area. That Spanish tile was 60 years old when we got it. Its timeless beauty, fireproof quality and mass give us pleasure everyday. Ten years from now we will need to renew the underlayment, but the tile itself will last at least another lifetime².

Being hard strapped for cash, Holly and I did most of the work on the house. Occasionally a friend would offer a day or two of help and sometimes we hired specialists. But one of the wonderful things about our neighborhood has been a long tradition of workdays to help each other over the difficult jobs. We relied on friends to pour the concrete foundation, lift the stud walls and pole rafters, and to set the roofing tile. These days were the highlights of the summer—with friends, good food and a sense of accomplishment after a day of hard work. I still feel a deep debt toward my friends and gratitude toward this hardworking community.

If I Had to Do It Again

Blissful ignorance and inexperience can really be useful in getting a roof over your head. It is knowledge of place and hard-won experience that helps you repair, replace, renew and remodel those elements of a house where you originally cut corners just to get it done or where you worked beyond your skill set. We have now replaced almost all of the original plumbing (which was damaged by our acidic water), much of the electrical wiring that we first installed

for low voltage DC power, and some of the windows and doors. Building on a slab has made this work very difficult. In hindsight, a crawlspace would be a really good thing to have. We recently replaced our handcrafted and leaky greenhouse doors, windows and skylights with tight, double-glazed units, and we insulated the roof. The doors do not look as romantic as the original handcrafted sliders, but I do not miss the cold draft that blew across me as the wind sucked the heat from the house. More insulation is a good thing. The new doors, windows, insulation and skylights mean we burn less wood—a very problematic source of fine particle pollution—to heat the house.

I continue to believe that wood stud-frame construction is a fine and noble way to build. Wood framing is light, flexible, easy to alter and sustainable. Heavier forms of construction have their place, but if you think about housing the world, then high energy and/or heavy, non-renewable materials will not do the job. In learning about where I live, I have come to appreciate the forces that act on a building. Heavy snow and earthquakes have been a part of this place for a long time. You must do your engineering—you must build to resist wind, snow and the earth moving. Having said that, I would now look at using reinforced brick, stone, mud or one of the rigid foam, concrete and stucco systems if I had to build again. I would consider them for their fireproof and vermin-proof qualities and energy efficiency. But I would be giving up on the easy reparability and remodeling that comes with wood frame. Even with a masonry system, I would never give up on pine-pole rafters, purlins and posts. When used as a rafter or post, a pine tree trunk debarked with a drawknife is a work of natural sculpture and structural efficiency that I never tire of looking at. Remember to set them, like bones, inside your house skin. They will last forever, as long as water and carpenter ants cannot reach them.

Our house is not finished. I doubt if it will ever be finished. I look forward to aging gracefully with my home with gratitude for all. ■

Bruce Boyd is an architect whose work ranges from residential to commercial projects, including award-winning historic restorations in Nevada City.

² While building Kitkitdizze we experimented with clay tile and cement tile roofing by throwing some sample tiles of each into a campfire. In the morning the clay tile was unchanged while the cement tile crumbled into sand. The ceramic roofing tile we ultimately used at Kitkitdizze came from Gladding McBean in Lincoln, Calif.

News from the YWI

It has been a strong and successful year for the institute. The weightiest work was hands-on and done in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management and community volunteers. On a chilly day last fall some three dozen people showed up at the Shields Camp parcel to protect the old-growth forest there by clearing brush and fuels from around the largest trees. This workday was followed by many more days of clearing by Americorps and California Conservation Corps crews, overseen by Brian Mulhollen of the BLM. In addition, the YWI hired a crew to remove Scotch broom from the parcel. More than 30 acres were treated in this way, reducing fire hazard and promoting remnant old growth habitat at the headwaters of Spring Creek.

While working in this area, we became aware of a proposal to reactivate a mining claim on the creek. With the price of gold at record highs, mining pressure is going to be increasing in sensitive areas. In order to protect the quality of the streams in Spring Creek, Holden Spring and the larger Yuba watershed, we worked with Sierra Streams Institute on developing and implementing a water-monitoring program on Spring Creek. Neighbors are funding this project and trained volunteers will be helping to gather data.

As usual, the YWI hosted a variety of fun and educational community events and field seminars, including a drawing class in the field with well-known artist Tom Killion. Inspired by our many years of such programming, the YWI applied for a Teichert Foundation grant in 2010 to develop a teaching curriculum for place-based field science studies. We received the



The rarely-seen phantom orchid, *Cephalanthera austinae*. Found by Jerry Tecklin on the Shield Camp parcel, spring 2012
Bob Erickson

grant and the project was spearheaded by board member Alicia Funk. YWI collaborated with Sierra Streams Institute to produce the resulting state-certified document, *The Nature of This Place Curriculum Guide*, which was published this spring and includes lessons on natural science for kindergarten through eighth grade. Nevada County Superintendent of Schools has strongly promoted it countywide.

Our **Wildlife Project** is also making great progress. We have been processing the data harvested from our fleet of remote cameras to establish a database to be used to further our studies on wildlife presence and habitat in and adjacent to the 'Inimim Forest. None of these endeavors would be possible without you our members, and for this we offer you our heartfelt appreciation and thanks.

—Bob Erickson

The Yuba Wildlife Project Gift Cards



BLACK BEAR



BLACK BEARS



BLACKTAILED DEER

This set of note cards from the YWI contains intimate images of San Juan Ridge wildlife. Packs contain 10 cards with three images in black and white (left) and seven in color. Profits from card sales support the YWI's Yuba Wildlife Project. To order online, go to yubawatershedinstitute.org and click on the "shop" link. \$20 per set.

Join the YWI Today!

The YWI welcomes new members and volunteers. We need your support and involvement. Members receive Tree Rings, timely announcements of Institute events and activities, and discounts on most YWI events. While donations of any size are welcome, annual dues are:

- \$100.00 Business/ Forest Steward
- \$50.00 Family
- \$35.00 Individual
- \$25.00 Student/low income

Send your check, name, address, email & phone number to the Yuba Watershed Institute, P.O. Box 2198, Nevada City, CA 95959. Dues and other donations are tax deductible.
yubawatershedinstitute.org
info@yubawatershedinstitute.org
 530.264.8897

Why Your Support Counts

The help you provide allows us to pursue our dual mission of shepherding the ecologically sustainable management of the 'Inimim Forest, 1,813 acres of federal land on the San Juan Ridge, and of broadening the public's appreciation and understanding of the subtleties of the natural world.

Volunteer for an Event or Program

Help is always needed at our many events for setup, cleanup, ticket taking, refreshment sales, baking, etc. Even volunteering just once a year is a big help. Executive director Melony Vance is working hard to build a volunteer list. Every little bit helps!



YWI Names New Executive Director

Melony Vance has been chosen as executive director of the Yuba Watershed Institute. "Melony brings experience in producing interesting and diverse programs and a great enthusiasm for natural history and the outside world," said board president Bob Erickson. "She has demonstrated excellent organizational skills and is a good fit for our organization." Vance spent her childhood summers on the North Yuba, and her deep connection to nature has led her to work as treks coordinator for the Bear Yuba Land Trust, hike leader for the Sierra Club, and white-water rafting guide for Friends of the River.

She will continue the solid foundation established under past executive director Maria Ryan, as Ryan pursues her graduate school studies.

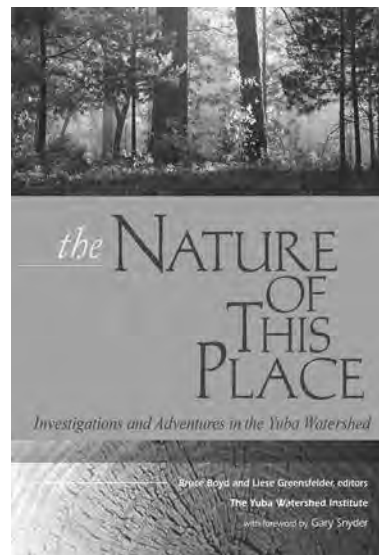
Spotlight on Favorites from the YWI Store at our website

yubawatershedinstitute.org/shop.cfm

Prices do not include taxes or shipping/handling.

MasterCard, Visa and PayPal are accepted.

■ *The Nature of This Place*



Published in 2010 by Comstock Bonanza Press, *The Nature of This Place* is now in its 2nd printing. A treasury of insight and observation about the Yuba watershed, the book has riveted readers from across the country and as far away as Italy who have told us they have been fascinated, charmed and informed by the diversity of thought and information contained within its pages. \$20

"The light from these pages will color the world as fresh and pungent as if you had just engaged your senses for the first time." —Peter Coyote, actor and writer



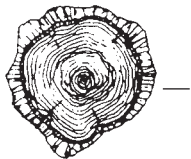
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YWI Fall 2012 Calendar of Events

The 15th Annual Fungus Foray — *Collecting and Identifying*

Sat. Dec. 8 9 AM to 4 PM; Rain or Shine
The North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center
Admission: \$20 general; \$18 for YWI members;
Half day, \$12; Under 18, Free

Our traditional Saturday morning wild mushroom hunt and identification will wrap up with an afternoon of displayed discoveries and educational workshops. Wild-crafted food concessions and mushroom merchandise are available for sale. Bring a lunch and be prepared to walk in the woods. Also useful: collection basket, waxed paper bags, knife and hand lens.

2nd Annual Nevada City Wild Mushroom Exposition

Sun. Dec. 9 11AM to 5 PM
At The Stonehouse
107 Sacramento St., Nevada City
Admission: \$10 general; \$8 for YWI members;
\$5 for students; Under 13, Free

The second annual Wild Mushroom Expo. YWI is bringing the Foray to downtown Nevada City! The Sunday Exposition is packed with presentations, interactive displays, and workshops based on our seasonal Sierra mushrooms. Wild-crafted food concessions and mushroom merchandise are available for sale. On-site parking.

A Presentation by Craig Thomas

Fri. Dec. 14 7 PM *New Date!*
At the Madelyn Helling Library Community Room
\$5-\$7

Craig Thomas is the conservation director and co-founder of Sierra Forest Legacy. Craig has been intimately involved in the protection and restoration of the forests of the Sierra Nevada for over 25 years. He will discuss how the latest thinking by forest ecologists has been applied to mark stands of trees for logging and fuels treatment. The aim of this practice is to replicate the role of fire without the catastrophic effects of a wildfire.

Field Study and Walk with Craig Thomas

Sat. Dec. 15 9:30 AM *New Date!*
Meet at the North Columbia Schoolhouse
Cultural Center
Free

On a walk through the Shields Camp parcel, Mr. Thomas will discuss his recommendations—based on USFS and Sierra Forest Legacy collaborative research—for promoting old-growth conditions by using fuels treatments and logging to mimic natural fire regimes. The focus is on thinking in a more ecological, multi-objective context. Rain or shine. Bring water and lunch.

For more information on events, visit yubawatershedinstitute.org or call or email us at 530.264.8897/
info@yubawatershedinstitute.org.