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Locations Referred to in Text

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Black Rock Desert | 5. Durphy | 9. Golconda | 13. Imlay | 17. Owyhee River | 22. Truckee River |
| 2. Carlin | 6. Elko | 10. Harney Lake | 14. Long Valley | 18. Pit River | 23. Umpqua River |
| 3. Deeth | 7. Fandango Pass | 11. High Rock Canyon | 15. Mary's River | 19. Secret Pass | 24. Valmy |
| 4. Dentio | 8. 49 Lake | 12. Humboldt Sink | 16. Malad River | 20. Soldier Meadow | 25. Warner Valley |
| | | | | 21. Surprise Valley | 26. Winnemucca |

From Pottage to Portage: A Perspective on Aboriginal Horse Use in the Northern Great Basin Prior to 1850

by Thomas N. Layton

ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND HISTORIANS have given scant attention to aboriginal horse use in the Great Basin. Although the northward spread of the horse following its reintroduction into the New World by the Spanish has been described in detail by Haines¹ and Driver and Massey,² these authors were concerned with the broad picture of horse dispersal. Little attention was paid to the northern Great Basin, as it was judged to be an area particularly remote from the changes that affected the tribes of the Columbia River Basin and the northern Rockies following their acquisition of the horse. There are, however, a fairly large number of early explorers' journals and diaries of westward-bound emigrants which definitely show that there were horses in much of northern Nevada by the 1820s. The record of horse use contained in this literature is the subject of this article.

Columbus brought the first modern horses to the New World in 1493. Spaniards soon established horse farms to breed mounts, first for conquest and then for transportation in the vast new lands. In 1609, with the establishment of the Spanish colony at Sante Fe, horses became permanent residents of what is now the American Southwest. The value of horses was not lost on the local Indians, who rapidly acquired them, generally by theft. Horses were disseminated northward over two routes, one east and the other west of the Continental Divide. Receiving horses by way of the western route, the Shoshone of the Upper Snake River were mounted by 1690 and the Cayuse by 1700.³

Peter Ogden's Snake Country Journals are the earliest written accounts of the northwestern Great Basin and also comprise our earliest record of aboriginal horse use in that region. Ogden, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company and the leader of a brigade of fur trappers, entered Nevada near the present town of Denio on October 29, 1828 (Fig. 1:4). The horse must have preceded him into the area, since we learn from his journal that on that day he discovered and captured three horses which had apparently been abandoned by Indians in their haste to hide from his advancing expedition. Two weeks later (Nov. 16, 1828) on the Humboldt River, approximately sixteen miles upstream from present-day Golconda, he again recorded evidence of horses:

Dr. Thomas N. Layton is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at San Jose State University. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1971, and has been directing archaeological investigations in the Great Basin since 1965. Dr. Layton's "Massacre! What Massacre? An Inquiry into the Massacre of 1850" was published in the Winter, 1977 issue of the *NHSQ*.

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... I fell on a long Indian track and not long since a number of horses have travelled in this quarter, probably not less than four hundred, and if I may judge from appearances in one of their camps there could not have been less than three hundred Indians. In the afternoon eight paid us a visit. An elderly man of the party who understands the lower Snake language, informed me that the distance was great to the sources [of the Humboldt River], not less than ten days march — there we shall find five forks, on three of these beaver, that the river discharges in a large lake, and that salmon does not ascend this stream and consequently has no communication with the waters of the ocean.⁴

Two days later he was still on the Humboldt River, and six Indians visited his camp with a horse they would not sell but which they traded for another. Finally on November 28, on the Humboldt and approximately six miles east of present-day Dunphy, Nevada, Ogden noted that “Three Snake Indians with their horses arrived and informed us they were from the Main Falls of the Snake River . . .”⁵

Ogden’s journal entries following his return to Nevada in the spring of 1829 are again rich in information. On May 2, 1829, on a side trip from the Humboldt due north of Dunphy, and approximately 15 miles south of the Nevada-Idaho border (Fig. 1:17), his men encountered and pursued two Indians and recovered from one of them a horse that had been stolen from one of his winter camps on the Malad River (Fig. 1:16) on the northeastern side of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. This horse was recovered 225 miles west of where it had been stolen. Four days later, while returning to the Humboldt and roughly 30 miles north of Valmy, Nevada, his men again surprised two “Snake Indians” with six horses. Pursued, the Indians abandoned four of the horses, three of which had been stolen earlier from Ogden on the Upper Humboldt. The remaining horse had presumably belonged to the two Indians.⁶ Near this location, on the previous evening, two Indians from the Columbia River, who were attached to his camp, discovered tracks of horses and proceeded on a private horse-thieving expedition. Five days later the two returned and told of finding a camp of Indians with horses but of failing in their attempt to steal five of them.⁷

Back on the Humboldt, slightly west of present-day Imlay, Indians made an attempt to steal Ogden’s horses on the night of May 21, and five days later, slightly north of the Humboldt Sink, the horse of one of his trappers was stolen by Indians while he tended his traps. The climax to these incidents occurred two days later at the Humboldt Sink (Fig. 1:12). The incident is best described in Ogden’s own words:

... the man who had gone towards the lake [Humboldt Sink] arrived and gave the alarm of enemies. By his account he had a most narrow escape, to the fleetness of his horse has his life been preserved. He reports as follows. When rounding a point nearly within sight of the lake, twenty men on horseback came in sight and on seeing him gave the war cry. He lost no time in retreating; one of the Indians had nearly overtaken him, and would had he not discharged his gun at him. He also informed us that the hills were covered with Indians. Strongly suspecting from their conduct on the 26th instant, added to this day, I gave orders to secure the horses and having made all as secure as possible and the place would admit of, ten men, two thirds of my forces, started in advance to ascertain what the Indians were doing, and not to risk a battle with

them as we are already too weak. An hour after they arrived and reported the Indians, upwards of two hundred, were coming to the camp and were within a short distance and it was not their opinion they were well inclined towards us. Shortly after they arrived having selected a spot for them about five hundred yards from our camp I desired them to be seated, this order was obeyed . . . Their language was different from any I have yet heard, but one of them understanding a few words of Snake we received the following information. This river discharges in the lake which has no outlet, in eight days' march there is a large river but no beaver, salmon most abundant, a convincing proof they traded two, which were still tolerably fresh. To the northward of us there is also another river which from the description he gives must be Pit River. On examining these Indians we saw pieces of rifles, ammunition, arms and other articles. This I am of opinion must be some of the plunder of Smith's party of ten men who were murdered in the fall and from native to native has reached this. They would not inform me from whom they had received these articles from, this looks suspicious, on enquiring the cause of their visit the chief answered to make peace which was soon effected.⁸

What generalizations can we draw from these incidents? First, we learn that in 1828-29 horses are present in Nevada from Denio south to the Humboldt Sink and from the Humboldt Sink northeastward along much of the Humboldt River. Secondly, we learn that the Humboldt is a highway, well traveled by horsemen, some of whom are returning to their winter homes at the Main Falls of the Snake River. From the 225 mile displacement of Ogden's stolen horse from northeastern Utah westward to its recovery point near the headwaters of the Owyhee River, we learn that Indians wintering in the Rockies are either themselves moving or passing horses by trade or thievery westward during the spring. From the multiple attempts to steal Ogden's horses, it appears that horse thievery is already a developed art along the Humboldt River.

Finally, there is the curious incident at the Humboldt Sink where 20 mounted Indians pursued one of Ogden's men and shortly thereafter appeared at Ogden's camp armed and with reinforcements totaling 200 men. The fact that neither Ogden nor his men, who were well acquainted with the languages of the Basin, the Plateau, and the Pacific Northwest, had ever heard the language spoken by the leaders of the visitors suggests that they were from California. Moreover, their possession of two "tolerably fresh salmon" from a river they described as eight days march west of the Humboldt Sink strongly suggests that they had come by way of the Truckee River. The Truckee, because of its large trout, was later to be named the Salmon-Trout River by John Fremont. The "pieces of rifles, ammunition arms and other articles" Ogden suspected to be the plunder from Jedediah Smith's party which was ambushed on the Umpqua River near the Oregon Coast in the summer of 1828. This seems to be a wild guess on Ogden's part; however, the Indians' knowledge of what Ogden thought to be the Pit River probably places them in a central or northern California homeland. Their route to the Humboldt Sink must have carried them eastward through one of the Sierra Passes to the Truckee River, where they acquired their "salmon," and then on to the Humboldt Sink.

Although an absolute identification is presently impossible, these mounted Indians may have been Sierra Miwok. Mission records demonstrate that Califor-

nia Indians were sporadically stealing horses prior to the 1820s. During that period horse thefts may have been limited because of the easy availability of herds of escaped animals gone wild. By the 1830s the situation had changed, and systematic, large-scale horse raids by Indians had become a major problem. The available documents make it difficult to pinpoint the specific groups responsible for the thievery; however, Broadbent, who has thoroughly researched the topic, cites evidence that the Sierra Miwok were at least involved in the raiding and may, in fact, have been the principal raiders.⁹ She notes that when the California-bound Bidwell Party passed through Sierra Miwok territory in 1841, a number of their horses were stolen by Indians. Of this incident Bidwell recorded that:

They were known as the Horse Thief Indians, and lived chiefly on horse flesh; they had been in the habit of raiding the ranches even to the very coast, driving away horses by the hundreds into the mountains to eat.¹⁰

As for Ogden, neither the presence of horses nor his encounters with both California and Idaho Indians along the Humboldt River seem to have surprised him. He had seen horses in the Great Basin two summers earlier, in 1827, during a journey northward through the Warner Valley in south central Oregon (Fig. 1:25). On May 23rd of that year, near the present town of Plush, one of Ogden's men saw an Indian on horseback, and three days later when he reached the northern end of the valley, Ogden had to send thirteen men in pursuit of Indians who had stolen fifty-six of his horses. The Indians escaped after a long pursuit in which they abandoned all but two of the animals. Ogden's men, however, discovered the hidden abandoned camp of the Indians which he described as "... consisting of 14 tents but all abandoned and secreted in the mountains, from the number of Bones and Skins it is evident that these villians support themselves entirely on Horse Flesh . . ." ¹¹ Even after recovering his horses Ogden's worries were not over, for less than a week later, and still near the northern end of Warner Valley, he again found fresh tracks of Indians and horses. Finally, on June 4, thirty-five miles southwest of Harney Lake, four Indians stole two more of Ogden's horses.

Ogden's journal raises as many questions as it answers. What, he might ask, could possibly draw mounted Indians from both California and the Great Falls of the Snake River to the lower Humboldt in 1828 and 1829? Were California Indians trading with the Snake River Indians at a central place? Were both groups trading with the indigenous Paiutes? Or were these groups simply passing along a well-established highway across the Great Basin and only coincidentally coming in contact with local Paiutes?

Evidence of travel to California by Columbia River Indians for the purpose of trading and horse stealing may be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Heizer describes a well-documented trading expedition of forty Nez Perce, Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians under the leadership of Yellow Serpent, who traveled from the Columbia River to Sutter's Fort in California's Sacramento Valley in 1844, but intermittent visits by Columbia River peoples to California for trade and securing horses probably occurred much earlier.¹² The same scholar cites evidence that Yellow Serpent himself may have witnessed California horse raids organized by his father as early as 1800.¹³ These long distance expeditions by Columbia River Indians passed south through Oregon

and California, thereby avoiding most of the Great Basin. Ogden's journal entries for 1828 suggest that similar expeditions to California may have been carried out by Snake River Indians via the Humboldt River route.

Another unanswered question is the identity of Ogden's continual plague of horse thieves. Although throughout his travels in the northern Great Basin Ogden reports repeated attempts to steal his horses, and frequent sightings of horse tracks and mounted Indians, he generally beclouds the identity of these horsemen under the umbrella term "Snakes". In his usage this term refers to the "Snake Language" and the "Snake Country" and generally seems to designate Numic Speakers occupying the northern Great Basin, the southern Plateau, and the Snake River Plain of southern Idaho. He does not, however, distinguish Shoshone from Paiute nor any other linguistic or cultural division among the Numa. For this reason we cannot determine from Ogden whether local Indians are achieving a mounted lifestyle, or the degree to which the northern Great Basin is becoming a part of an expanded, seasonally visited territory of mounted Indians from the Snake River and the Columbia Plateau.

Evidence from the Great Plains demonstrates that acquisition of the horse allows a people to occupy and exploit a vastly expanded territory, often at the expense of that territory's unmounted former residents.¹⁴ Likewise, the sparsely settled Great Basin appears to have provided territory for expansion to groups made mobile by the horse, and a vast refuge for predatory groups engaged in large scale horse raiding. Our earliest evidence for a predatory band in the northern Great basin is Ogden's above described 1827 account of his loss and recovery of fifty-six horses in Warner Valley. His remark that "from the number of bones and skins it is evident these villians support themselves entirely on Horse Flesh" is a statement of major importance because any horses eaten in the Warner Valley had to have been brought in from elsewhere. Moreover, his count of "14 tents" suggests a fairly large group of people.

Horses for this predatory band may have been available in very limited numbers from the Klamath to the west, and they evidently were receiving some animals in trade from the tribes of the Columbia River. These horses were obtained in exchange for Pit River (Achomawi and Atsugewi) slaves which the Klamath traded north to the Dallas through intermediaries¹⁵ Since Klamath holdings of horses were minimal, it seems likely that Ogden's Warner Valley "horse flesh eaters" were securing animals not from the Klamath, but by raiding the better endowed mounted tribes to the north.

To summarize this 1827-29 picture of horse use in the northern Great Basin, we may conclude, first, that during the protohistoric period the Humboldt River was a highway across Nevada, well used by mounted Indians from the Snake River. Mounted Indians from California likewise penetrated the Basin, at least as far east as the Humboldt Sink, and quite possibly proceeded farther eastward along the river. Second, Ogden's spring recovery of a horse on the northern Nevada headwater of the Owyhee River, 225 miles west of the Utah winter camp from which it was stolen, suggests a developing pattern in which increasingly mobile, mounted Indians from the Snake River Plain were expanding their seasonal round to include penetration of the northern Great Basin. Third, the Warner Valley episode with the "horse flesh eaters" demonstrates that the pattern of the Great Basin predatory bands of the 1860s was already established in 1827. And, finally, the numerous attempts by Indians along the Humboldt

River to steal Ogden's horses suggests that some utility in horses was apparent to Indians in the area. However, we do not know to what extent these animals were destined for the stew pot, and to what extent as transportation. Moreover, we do not know to what extent these thefts were performed by horse-wise Snake River Shoshone temporarily visiting the Humboldt or by Indians indigenous to the area.

Accounts by travelers following Ogden into the northern Great Basin during the 1830's and early 1840's are scarce and they add little to our knowledge of aboriginal horse use. John Bidwell, writing much later of his 1841 passage across the Great Basin, noted having seen a wild horse at the Humboldt Sink; however, his attribution of the animal to earlier fur trappers was pure speculation.¹⁶

The frequency of travelers' accounts containing information on aboriginal horse use increases after 1845 when overland emigrants to Oregon and California begin to follow the Humboldt River route across Nevada. These accounts reach a peak in 1849 with the rush of humanity to the California gold fields. This gap of twenty years from Ogden's records of 1827-29 to the abundant records of 1846-49 presents an opportunity to measure changes in the quality and quantity of horse use among Indians resident in northern Nevada.

The structure of the mid-nineteenth century overland emigration to California and the Oregon Territory contributed to the production and preservation of contemporary documents recording this massive population shift. Groups of westward-bound emigrants organized into companies for security and mutual aid. In addition to writing rules of association and electing officers, diarists were appointed to record the progress and events of the trip in daily journal entries. The journals of company diarists, together with those of literate fellow travelers, constitute a large and scattered literature, most of which is unpublished. Fortunately, a number of recent bibliographies of this material are available.¹⁷

Most California-bound diarists crossed the Great Basin by following the Humboldt River westward across Nevada to its Sink, and then passed over the Sierras into California by one of several routes near present-day Reno. A lesser number followed the Humboldt River to its Great Bend near present-day Imlay, Nevada (Fig. 1:13) and took a detour leading towards the northeastern corner of California along a trail pioneered by Jesse Applegate in 1846.

A small number of Oregon-bound emigrants followed this route in 1846 and 1847, and the road became heavily travelled in 1849 after Peter Lassen extended it southward into central California and actively encouraged California-bound gold seekers to take what became known as Lassen's Cutoff. The Lassen (nee Applegate) Cutoff proceeded northwest from the Great Bend of the Humboldt, across the Black Rock Desert to Soldier Meadow, thence through High Rock Canyon to 49 Pass into Surprise Valley, California, thence across the Warner Mountains to Goose Lake via Fandango Pass, and finally south along the Pit River to the California gold fields.

Morgan lists thirty-nine diarists who followed Lassen's Cutoff in 1849. These documents from 1849, taken together, with additional diaries from 1846 and 1847, provide a potentially useful source of data to compare with the 1827-29 picture of Great Basin aboriginal horse use presented by Ogden. Although not

all of these emigrant journals refer to aboriginal horse use, many of them provide information on the numbers of cows, horses and mules shot or stolen from a named wagon company on a specific night. The body count is often followed by a description of attempts made to recover the stolen animals.

The journals of emigrants who followed the Humboldt River halfway across Nevada and then took Lassen's Cutoff to complete their journey to California constitute a series of descriptive transects along a single route spanning most of the northern Great Basin. In addition to providing a descriptive cross-section of the northern Great Basin for comparison with Ogden's record of twenty years before, they allow us to compare the incidents along the Humboldt River with those occurring along the Lassen Cutoff leading away from the river towards northeastern California. We are thereby able to isolate and measure the contribution of the Humboldt River highway in the spread of the horse complex.

My approach to the literature has been to read only those diaries of emigrants who followed the Humboldt River road to the Great Bend and then followed the Lassen Cutoff to northeastern California. From these diaries I have recorded all incidents involving the shooting or stealing of emigrants' animals by Indians, all records of emigrants and Indians shooting at each other, and all records of sightings of mounted Indians. Incidents occurring along the Humboldt River and those occurring along the Lassen Cutoff are tabulated separately to facilitate comparison.

The sample of emigrant journals providing information for the present study of the 1846-1849 period includes one journal from 1846, one from 1847 and seventeen from 1849. A small number of unpublished diaries unavailable in the western United States have not been examined and are therefore absent from the present sample, but it is believed that sufficient information has been collected to provide a reliable measure of the quality of horse use for the period in question.

It should be noted that the Humboldt River tabulations include only those incidents occurring along the river between its confluence with Mary's River near present-day Deeth (Fig. 1:3) and the Great Bend near present-day Imlay (Fig 1:13). For the Lassen Cutoff, incidents are tabulated from the Great Bend of the Humboldt River to the Fandango Pass summit in the Warner Mountains of northeastern California (Fig. 1:17). Fandango Pass is an appropriate termination point because it marks the western rim of the Great Basin along the Lassen Trail as well as the western boundary of Paiute territory. The Humboldt River and Lassen Cutoff units of comparison are separate and distinct because the first fifty miles of the Lassen Cutoff involve a crossing of the sparsely-populated Black Rock Desert in which no incidents are recorded. Plotting of the specific locations of incidents along the Humboldt River has not been attempted because of the lack of readily identifiable landmarks along the river. Conversely, the determination of locations of incidents along the Lassen Cutoff is a relatively easy matter because of the numerous distinctive landmarks referred to by the diarists. In the following discussion, locations of specific incidents along the Lassen Cutoff will be presented where relevant.

Incidents occurring along the Humboldt River between Deeth and the Great Bend are tabulated in Table #1. Incidents occurring on the Lassen Cutoff between the Great Bend and Fandango Pass are tabulated in Table #2.

TABLE 1*

Humboldt River, Tabulation of Incidents: 1846-1849

	Horse	Cow		
Stolen	7	17	Indians Shot at by Emigrants	1
			Emigrants Shot at by Indians	4
Shot	0	4	Emigrants and Indians Exchange Shots	2
			Sightings of Mounted Indians	2

TABLE 2*

Lassen Cutoff, Tabulation of Incidents: 1846-1849

	Horse	Cow		
Stolen	3	3	Indians Shot at by Emigrants	3
			Emigrants Shot at by Indians	1
Shot	2	3	Emigrants and Indians Exchange Shots	2
			Sightings of Mounted Indians	0

*Note that these statistics refer to individual incidents recorded in nineteen emigrant journals. They do not refer to absolute numbers of animals shot or stolen. Duplicate recordings of incidents have been deleted.

For the purpose of tabulation horses and mules are grouped together as horses. The stolen category generally refers to animals driven away from emigrants' herds put out to graze at night. The "shot" category generally refers to animals found in the morning killed or wounded by arrows but still within their proper herds. It is assumed that all stolen cattle were eventually shot and even eaten by Indians. In fact, emigrants often tracked their stolen cattle and found the animals shot and butchered along the trail. However, if these animals were originally stolen, they are tabulated as stolen in Tables #1 and #2. The evidence in Tables #1 and #2 suggests that although cows were being stolen and shot along both the Humboldt River and the Lassen Cutoff, horses received a notably different treatment. Our diarists note seven separate incidents of Indians stealing horses along the Humboldt, but none of Indians shooting horses. Conversely, along Lassen's Cutoff the writers record three incidents in which horses are stolen and two in which horses are shot. At first glance it appears that Indians along the Humboldt River steal but never shoot them, whereas Indians along Lassen's Cutoff are about as likely to shoot a horse as to steal one. However, these apparent differences in horse-directed behavior between the Indians of the Humboldt River and those living along Lassen's Cutoff are made clearer when

the details of the three horse thefts occurring along Lassen's Cutoff are examined.

First-person accounts by emigrants on the Lassen Cutoff support the view that in one of the three cases of stolen horses, non-local Indians were penetrating the area on a long-distance raid, and in the other two cases, local Indians were stealing horses for the stew pot rather than transportation. For example, Alonzo Delano's August 19, 1849, account of his arrival at Soldier Meadow (Fig. 1:20) also includes a reference to the first of the "stolen" horse incidents listed in Table 2:

The first agreeable news we heard on getting in, was, that the Indians were very bold and troublesome, having succeeded the night before in killing a horse and mule in the camp, and driving off several head of cattle. The horse lay near the road, and the gentlemen Digger epicures had cut off his head, and taken a large steak from a hind quarter — generously leaving the remainder of the poor, raw-boned carcass for the maws of the white devils who had brought it so far to grace an Indian board . . .

We kept a strict guard during the night, and all the companies were on the alert; yet, notwithstanding our caution, the Indians came down from the hills and drove off one cow and horse, and badly wounded two more horses . . . One of the horses was shot in the side, and died during the day; in the other, the stone-pointed arrow had completely perforated the back bone, and protruded six inches beyond — with such amazing force do they shoot these arrows.¹⁸

The horse stolen from Delano's party was obviously taken by Indians who were regularly eating horses; and his animal almost certainly faced a similar fate. It seems that the primary reason that Indians made nocturnal forays to shoot at emigrants' domestic animals was to injure the beasts sufficiently that they would be abandoned along the road the following day for subsequent recovery and butchering by the Indians.

Analysis of the second Lassen Cutoff horse stealing incident listed in Table #2 likewise suggests that the horse was not stolen for riding. This incident, occurring in High Rock Canyon (Fig. 1:11) on September 15, 1849, is described in P.F. Castleman's diary. A number of animals driven away from the herd during the night were later recovered at some distance, but, one horse had been driven away from this already stolen group of animals by an Indian following barefoot. That the animal was not mounted even after having been driven to a safe location suggests transportation was not the motive of the theft.¹⁹

The third incident of horse theft on the Lassen Cutoff is far different in character from the preceding two, for it was apparently a well-planned, long distance and large scale effort by non-local Indians. Details come from Alonzo Delano who on August 30, 1849, recorded meeting an emigrant party, all of whose horses and mules had been stolen by Indians approximately seven days earlier at 49 Lake (Fig. 1:8). The emigrants had been able to track the animals twenty-five miles north to a freshwater lake where they lost the trail. The identity of this body of water is uncertain, as there are a number of permanent and seasonal lakes of varying freshness between New Years Lake at twelve miles and Crump Lake in Warner Valley forty miles north of 49 Lake. What is notable is that the animals were driven northward towards Warner Valley and the trail was

lost near that valley's southern tip. It was at Warner Valley's northern end, twenty years earlier, that Ogden came upon the abandoned camp of the predatory "horse flesh eaters" who had stolen fifty-six of his horses. It appears that with the summer of 1849 a predatory band, again of unknown cultural affiliation but from the same area, and following a similar subsistence strategy, was turning south to raid emigrants on the Lassen Cutoff.

This circumstantial evidence for the presence of aggressive and predatory Indians in the Warner Valley in August 1849 is strengthened by an event occurring one month later. On September 26, Captain William H. Warner of the U.S. Army Topographical Engineers was ambushed by hostile Indians while leading an exploring expedition south through Warner Valley. In the official report, Williamson states that "a party of about twenty-five Indians, who had been lying in ambush behind some large rocks . . . suddenly sprang up and shot a volley of arrows into the party." Captain Warner and his guide were killed and two soldiers wounded, one of whom eventually died of his injury.²⁰ This incident is unusual because the general pattern of behavior for northern Basin Indians during this period was to keep a low profile and to avoid direct confrontation with Caucasians. Why, then, would Indians risk an attack on an Army patrol when confrontation could have been avoided? The circumstantial evidence suggests that Captain Warner's exploring party unintentionally surprised Warner Valley's long-resident predatory band which only a month before had executed the successful horse raid against emigrants at 49 Lake on the Lassen Cutoff. It may be conjectured that the Indians met what they mistakenly thought to be a punitive expedition with a preemptive strike of their own.

J. Goldsborough Bruff, who met and spoke with one of the wounded men three weeks after the ambush, throws more light on the Warner Valley situation. On October 16, 1849, Bruff examined a small obsidian arrow tip removed from the man's back, but went on to note that most of the arrows fired into the Warner Party were iron pointed. Since this is surprising information, it is important to note that Bruff, a former student at West Point, has a record for accuracy of detail in his daily journal. In September of the following year, Bruff spent an afternoon with Captain Lyon, commander of an expedition just returning from seeking Captain Warner's remains in Warner Valley. Lyon told Bruff that while camped near where Warner was ambushed "a band of about 50 Indians came down from the opposite range of high hills, and formed a line, flanked by two horsemen. One of them fired a rifle several times, with some precision and in good time." This incident led Bruff to write rhetorically, "How can a wild Indian, unacquainted with firearms, correctly charge and fire a rifle? Who instructs them? May not some rascally white men be among them?"²²

It is highly unlikely that white men were directing the aggressive actions of Warner Valley Indians. It is far more probable that by 1850 the area was refuge for one or more mobile, mounted predatory bands with more than twenty years of accumulated raiding experience, dating back to Ogden's visit to the valley in 1827. At the same time it appears that other Indians continued to live in the Warner Valley area following a completely traditional subsistence strategy. Evidence from John Fremont's journal of his passage south from Warner Valley (Oregon) into Long Valley (Nevada) and eventually into High Rock Canyon during December 1843, strongly supports this interpretation. In the southern Warner Valley, Fremont recorded the loss of one horse to Indians on the night of

December 25, and another (belonging to his associate, Kit Carson) the following night. Unfortunately, the absence of details concerning these thefts precludes identification of the lifestyle of the culprits; however, on December 27, while passing from Warner Valley into Long Valley, Fremont came upon Indians following a fully traditional lifestyle. Fremont described the incident as follows:

Riding quietly along over the snow, we came suddenly upon smokes rising among these bushes; and, galloping up, we found two huts, open at the top, and loosely built of sage, which appeared to have been deserted at the instant; and, looking hastily around, we saw several Indians on the crest of the ridge nearby, and several others scrambling up the side. We had come upon them so suddenly, that they had been well-nigh surprised in their lodges. A sage fire was burning in the middle; a few baskets made of straw were lying about, with one or two rabbit skins; and there was a little grass scattered about, on which they had been lying . . . we found that they belonged to the Snake nation, speaking the language of that people. Eight or ten appeared to live together, under the same little shelter; and they seemed to have no other subsistence than the roots or seeds they might have stored up, and the hares which live in the sage, and which they are enabled to track through the snow, and are very skillful in killing. Their skins afford them a little scanty covering. Herding together among bushes, and crouching almost naked over a little sage fire, using their instinct only to procure food, these may be considered, among human beings, the nearest approach to the animal creation. We have reason to believe that these had never before seen the face of a white man.²³

Only two days later as he approached High Rock Canyon (Nevada) from the northwest, Fremont found irrefutable evidence of Indians following an altogether different lifestyle. He noted that a broad trail "entered the valley from the right [south] and a short distance below the camp were the tracks where a considerable party of Indians had passed on horseback, who had turned out to the left [north], apparently with the view of crossing the mountains to the eastward."²⁴

Margaret Weide has postulated the development of a dual occupation of Warner Valley during the contact period, but she has suggested that the apparent differences in lifestyle could have resulted, in part, from the differences in the seasons of the observations.²⁵ Fremont's record of both lifestyles is strong evidence that the apparent dual occupation in the greater Warner Valley area was a real phenomenon and not the result of different seasons of observation.

At this point, I shall summarize what the nineteen emigrant journals of 1846-49 record on aboriginal horse use along the Humboldt River and along the Lassen Cutoff. First, the statistics on horse stealing and horse shooting confirm that by 1846-49 Indians resident along the Humboldt River were actively stealing horses for their transportation value. They were not shooting horses for food. Conversely, away from the Humboldt River along the Lassen Cutoff wagon road local Indians shoot and eat horses, but do not steal them for transportation. Apparently, regular travel by mounted Snake River Indians along the Humboldt River introduced the horse complex to Indians living along its banks, whereas Indians living along the Lassen Cutoff and not exposed to this regular traffic remained provincial and pedestrian.

The theft of horses along the Humboldt River by local Indians in 1846-49 would suggest that Ogden's losses of horses in this area twenty years earlier were also to local Indians. In reviewing his Great Basin experiences, I noted that in May of 1829, some thirty miles north of present-day Valmy, Nevada, he recovered three horses which had earlier been stolen from him on the upper Humboldt River. The 1846-49 statistics on horse stealing by Humboldt River locals would suggest that the horses recovered by Ogden in 1829 were stolen by local Indians rather than by Snake River Shoshone passing through the area. These statistics demonstrate a degree of sophistication in horse use by Indians along the Humboldt, and it might well be assumed that the Indians of this river were similarly sophisticated when he visited there in 1828-29. In addition to a dramatically asymmetrical pattern of horse use by Indians living along the Humboldt River as compared to Indians living along the Lassen Cutoff, the diaries from 1846-49 have reintroduced Warner Valley's mobile, mounted, predatory band last seen in Ogden's journal entries of 1827. This is strong confirmation of a dual occupation in the Warner Valley area by both mounted predatory raiders and traditional pedestrian hunter/gatherers.

The larger picture of horse use in the northern Great Basin may now be summarized. First, it would appear that acquisition of the horse by the Idaho Shoshone resulted not only in a well-documented eastward expansion into the Great Plains, but also in a significant but poorly-documented westward expansion into the northern Great Basin, probably for seasonal foraging and trade. The 225 mile displacement of Ogden's stolen horse from northeast of the Great Salt Lake to its recovery point on the headwaters of the Owyhee River may be an aspect of this pattern. Circumstantial evidence would likewise suggest that the three horses abandoned by Indians and captured by Ogden's party near Denio, Nevada, in 1828, were Shoshone owned. The horse shooting/eating statistics from Lassen Cutoff emigrant journals would suggest that Indians local to the Denio area did not keep horses, and Shoshone ownership of these three animals is a strong possibility. Again, the mounted parties from the Snake River which Ogden met along the Humboldt may be another aspect of Great Basin expansion by mounted Idaho Shoshone.

Second, the evidence suggests that predatory bands developed early among horsemen in the northern Great Basin. The Warner Valley band, which appears in Ogden's journal of 1827 and then again twenty-two years later to raid emigrants on the Lassen Cutoff wagon road and to ambush a U.S. Army patrol, documents this pattern. The origin and composition of this group, situated in a remote corner of the Great Basin, and far from major centers of horse use, is difficult to explain. It may have been composed of warriors originally from the southern periphery of the Columbia River Basin who chose the Warner Valley as a refuge or hiding place between raids on their wealthy northern neighbors. Whether Warner Valley's predatory band was an established kin group made mobile by the horse, or a composite band comprised of the flotsam and jetsam of a variety of groups is not discernible. It is tempting to infer both stability and continuity over twenty-two years for a single predatory band in the Warner Valley; however, the area may have sheltered several such groups during this period. We cannot know, but it is interesting to note that fifteen years later, in 1864, a predatory band again surfaced in Warner Valley. The composition of this group is better documented. It was apparently led by Paulini, a Paviotso from the

Silver Lake (Oregon) area.²⁶ Col. C.S. Drew's 1864 description of one of Paulini's abandoned camps in Warner Valley is more than a little reminiscent of Ogden's 1827 description of "horse flesh eaters" from the same area. Drew wrote that when he reached the north pass up Warner's Mountain he:

... found about sixty new and deserted lodges, evidently left not more than three days before, and in and around them fragments of beeves that their occupants had feasted upon. The tracks of American horses, ponies, mules and cattle, all coming in from the northward, and passing up into the mountain, were numerous and but recently made.²⁷

Third, in regard to the Humboldt River, it would appear that following horse acquisition by the Idaho Shoshone, the river, already a trading route from the prehistoric period, was transformed to a trans-Basin highway. As a highway well traveled by horsemen, the Humboldt became a conduit of the horse complex to the Indians living along its banks. The Lassen Cutoff horse shooting/eating statistics confirm that Indians living away from the river highway were far slower to utilize the horse for transportation.

Before concluding this review of aboriginal horse use in the northern Great Basin, it is necessary to refer to a poorly described and poorly understood class of artifacts found sporadically in the northwestern Great Basin. Fragments of allegedly Shoshonean pottery have been recovered at a number of archaeological sites far from the southern Idaho and northeastern Nevada centers of this tradition. Sites from which these ceramics have been recovered include Catlow Cave in south-central Oregon²⁸ and Hanging Rock Shelter in the northwestern corner of Nevada.²⁹ At Hanging Rock Shelter there is strong evidence that a good quality pottery was manufactured on the site one time only and in a late context. There are, however, no antecedents for a pottery making tradition anywhere in the area. I have argued elsewhere that the Hanging Rock Shelter ceramics may document the visit of a mounted group of Idaho Shoshone.³⁰ More detailed study of isolated finds of Shoshonean ceramics in the northwestern Great Basin may eventually enable us to date it, to identify its fabricators, and possibly thereby learn more about the patterns of Great Basin travel by mounted Idaho Shoshone.

In Great Basin studies, there has been an unfortunate stress on "timelessness." The Desert Culture, characterized by small hunting and gathering bands, is often seen as a "living fossil" form of economic and social adaptation, having existed relatively unchanged from early post-Pleistocene times to the arrival of the ethnographers. In a like manner, the northern Great Basin has been viewed as a province particularly distant and remote from changes affecting the tribes of the northern Rockies and the Columbia River Basin following the introduction of the horse. Yet on the eve of the historic period these changes were felt by the peoples of the northern Great Basin.

This review of aboriginal horse use in the northern Great Basin prior to 1850 is an introduction to the subject which raises as many questions as its answers. For example, we cannot explain why the Warner Valley was repeatedly the refuge of predatory bands in 1827, 1849, and again in 1864. Nor have we explained why Idaho Shoshone were apparently expanding westward into the Great Basin during this period. Again, the elements of Snake River-Great Basin-California trade suggested by the Humboldt River highway remain unstudied. Such ques-

tions will not be answered by plotting dates and numbers of horses on maps. They can only be answered through examination of underlying economic systems. Now that we are drawing away from a static conception of Great Basin lifeways, elucidation of these emergent patterns of the late prehistoric period would seem to be an increasingly appropriate and potentially fruitful field of study for the archaeologist.

Notes

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