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McARTHUR MEMORIAL STATE PARK #31

Shasta County

by

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McARTHUR MEMORIAL STATE PARK

The McArthur Memorial State Park, also known as Burney Falls, is in Shasta County. It is one of the scenic beauty spots of California and is different from all other State Parks.

Its unusual feature is the twin falls. Divided by a rock island at the crest, the water drops in two huge ribbons of flashing silver, a verticle drop of about 165 feet. It falls into a wonderful pool, which constantly changes color, and it breaks into foam over the rocks in the bed of the canyon through which it flows.

And there is mystery here. The falls are fed by a "lost" river whose source, disputed by scientists, has never really been found. The hidden stream leaves its underground channel only a few hundred yards from the falls, to dash in spreading curves or to gush from the porous rock. Water pours from the rock itself. Giant springs augment the flow of Burney Creek and help to provide constant volume of water over the falls. The white crest of the ripples, the blue of the water in the pool and the green of the forest which covers the side of the canyon makes this one of the most beautiful scenes imaginable. And it changes constantly with the sunlight in the canyon.

This area came to be a State Park through the

generosity of two people. On May 11, 1920, Frank McArthur and his wife Ethel McArthur, residents of Fall River, Shasta County, deeded to the State of California 160.79 acres of land. This is described as Lot 1, the S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Township 36, North; Range 3 East, Mount Diablo Meridian. This deed was recorded on June 9, 1920, Page 447 of Book of Deeds No. 138 of Shasta County. It is this area which includes Burney Falls.

The terms of this deed which conveyed this unusual property to the State, provide:

1. That this conveyance is made by the grantors as a tribute to the memory of John McArthur and Catherine C. McArthur, the parents of Frank McArthur, one of the parties of the first part, and is made upon certain conditions; and should all or any of said conditions be broken or violated, the title granted by this deed shall cease, revert to and vest in the parties of the first part, their heirs or assigns, said conditions being as follows:
2. That the grantee [the State of California] shall preserve and care for said land as a park for the use of the public and shall not permit the cutting of the timber situate thereon, except as may be necessary for the proper care of the land and for the preservation of the timber thereon.
3. That the grantors reserve to themselves during their lifetime and that of their survivor, the use and control of a tract, not exceeding five (5) acres, to be selected by them, on the west bank of Burney Creek for the

purpose of a residence, together with a right to use water from said creek for domestic and irrigation purposes on said tract so reserved.

4. That the object of the grantors in conveying this property to the State of California is to preserve for all time to the people of the State of California, the beauties of that certain waterfall situated on the granted premises and known as "Burney Falls." It is therefore understood that the State of California, in accepting this conveyance, shall retain the title to the lands herein granted in perpetuity and shall not permit the use of the waters of Burney Creek as in any way to impair its flow over said Burney Falls.

Action was taken toward administration of the area on October 21, 1920, when former Governor Stephens wrote to the State Board of Forestry requesting that they take charge of the property. This they did, under authority of Chapter 705 of the General Laws of California as approved June 2, 1921. Arrangements were made with a local resident to look after the property and to prevent any depredation during the winter months. The McArthur Memorial State Park is not a winter resort and when the last hunters have gone home after season, the place is given over to "King Winter."

Besides the 160.79 acres given by the McArthurs, the Mt. Shasta Power Corporation, in 1923, donated 174.46 additional acres. This adjoins the McArthur tract on the north. It consists of land in Sections 20 and 29 in Township 37N., Range 3E. Both of the above areas, the McArthurs

and the Shasta Power Corporation lands were an out and out gift to the State. So there are 335.25 acres in the McArthur Memorial State Park and the value of the area is approved at \$50,000.

This remarkable scenic spot, set aside for the people to enjoy, is only sixty-four miles northeast of Redding on the Alturas Highway. It is situated near the junction of State Highway 89 and the U.S. Highway 299 at Lake Britton,¹ ten miles north of the town of Burney. The park lies along Burney Creek and it touches Lake Britton and the Pit River. Pit River, according to Drury,² "received its name from the savages who once dwelt upon its banks ... trapped their game and sometimes their human enemies by means of deep covered pitfalls.... The spelling Pitt, sometimes seen is an error." The beautiful lake was formed by damming the Pit River just below Burney Falls. This was done by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company during the 1920's.³ Lake Britton and Lake Britton Dam are not in the park, yet they are a feature of this section of the country. This stored water forms an exceedingly beautiful lake and the main road runs over the top of the dam. On the shore of

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1. Official road Map for Shell Oil Company of California, 1939.
 2. Aubrey Drury, California: an intimate guide, 5-15.
 3. H. L. Hintz, "Beautiful Burney Falls," Sacramento Bee [no date given] from clipping file at office State Division of Parks.

Lake Britton, CCC boys have cleared a beach and there is provision for bathing and boating. Here too, is the Pacific Gas and Electric hydro-electric development. There are also recreation facilities within the park itself, picnic sites and places to camp being available.

It is a beautiful drive from either Burney or Cassel to McArthur Memorial State Park and Burney Falls. Entering the park the motorist is greeted by a fine highway and a view of the tall pine trees between which are hundreds of young protected trees. Further in, the greenery along the creek bank shows up on the left and you can hear the distant rumble of the falls. This becomes a roar when the falls break into view. From the road one looks across the canyon to the falls, almost on a level with the eye, where the water plunges to the deep blue pool below. A trail leads down from the road which gives the visitor a chance to see the falls through pines and firs from several different places.

Burney Creek, foaming over rocks and dashing along to the crest of the falls, is also a beautiful sight. Trees and foliage line the banks and the hills above. The creek rises to the north and west of Lassen Peak and flows for about twenty miles northeast to join the Pit River. Burney Creek is also known as "Lost River." It sinks into the ground near the town of Burney. It reappears as large springs a short distance

above the falls. The entire Burney Creek area of the park is covered with a fine stand of timber.

When John Muir walked through the vicinity of what is now the McArthur Memorial State Park he said:⁴

... Nowhere within the limits of California are the forests of yellow pine as extensive and exclusive as on the headwaters of the Pit. They cover the mountains and all the lower slopes that border the wide, open valleys which abound there, pressing forward in imposing ranks, seemingly the hardiest and most firmly established of all the northern conifers.... The banks are fringed with rose, azalea, elder, aster, golden rod, beautiful grasses, sedges, rushes, mosses, and ferns with fronds as large as the leaves of palms - all in the midst of a richly forested landscape.

It is believed that the first party of white men to explore the southern region of the Pit River country, and to observe and carefully chronicle the habitat of the native Pit River Indians within the area of the present McArthur Memorial State Park, were the scouts of the Spanish expedition in May 1817. The expedition was under the command of Lieutenant Don Luis Argüello, and the two mission padres Ramon Abella and Narciso Duran.⁵ With their two primitive boats, San Rafael

4. John Muir, Steep trails, 102.

5. "Diary of Fray Narciso Duran, expedition on the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers in 1817," edited by Charles Edward Chapman, Publications of the Academy of Pacific coast history, II, 341.

and San Jose, the Argüello-Duran party paddled more than forty-four leagues up the Sacramento River, north of what is now the capital of California, towards the present Shasta Dam site.

During their eight-day journey they explored the upper Sacramento Valley along the river and its tributaries, as far north as "a certain large oak tree" at an approximate point near the junction of the Pit and Sacramento rivers, near the present town of Redding. Of this day Father Duran records "... upon a large oak-tree, seeing that no one was near we carved a cross ... and this having been blessed and adored by the people, marked the end of our ascent."

During the 160 mile river journey Fathers Duran and Abella made friends with the various primitive Indian tribes encountered along the southern tributaries of the Pit River. These tribes according to Kroeber, were the original Achomawi and Atsugewi nations.⁶ Their friendliness for the white men continued until about 1845, when the inroads of the emigrant trains began to crowd the native territory. Prior to this date the wild frontier of Upper California was not overrun with selfish foreigners, "renegades, reckless and irresponsible white men who do more to promote quarrels with the Indians than all causes

6. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 305.

combined."⁷ The Indians were also friendly with the lone fur-trappers who followed the Duran expedition.

In his diary for May 20, 1817, when he carved the cross on a large oak tree, Father Duran said in part:⁸

May 20. - We started up the river at six o'clock in the morning, intending to look for an open place, in order to put up a cross ... We had gone three leagues when upon the launches touching the western bank, some rafts were descried in a nearby tule-patch. Some neophytes went to inspect them and found a village of natives, who came toward them armed and with a fierce shout, as is their custom. Presently the commandant went with the soldiers and the other neophytes to talk to them, and they became pacified and made an apology, saying that they had armed themselves in the belief that we were a hostile people. They gave us Torous, which is a kind of pounded soaproot, and they went away in peace ...

... The course of the river from here on could be followed better by land than by water... Once the pass in the Sierra is discovered, which the said end seems to offer, we would be able to ascertain the truth of what the Indians have told us for some years past, that on the other side of the Sierra Nevada there are people like our soldiers. We have never been able to clear up the matter and know whether they are Spanish from New

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7. "Shasta County," Report of the Commissioner of Indian affairs for the year of 1856, 260.
8. Diary of Fray Narciso Duran, 341-343.

Mexico, or English from the Columbia or Russians from La Bodega ... At about ten leagues to the northwest of this place we saw the very high hill called by soldiers that went near its slope, Jesus Maria. It is entirely covered with snow. They say that a great river of the same name runs near it, and that it enters the Sacramento River....

The Achomawi nation of Indians were a "stream" people. It is said their villages were all on Pit River itself or on the lower courses of its tributaries. The back country within the confines of the present McArthur Memorial State Park was visited and owned, but not settled. The mouths of Burney Creek, Hat Creek, and Horse Creek like all the banks of the Pit River itself, were in Achomawi territory. Kroeber said that "the rather unfavorable stretches between the three creeks; the territory to the region of Eagle Lake; and the higher country south to Lassen Peak and to the watershed between the Pit and Feather rivers were used by the Atsugewis for hunting and the collecting of vegetable foods."⁹ The present McArthur Memorial State Park or Burney Valley people were the Wamarii tribe of the Atsugewi nation. According to the census of 1910, almost a century after the Duran expedition, nine-tenths of the remaining two hundred and fifty native Pit River Indians within the vicinity of

9. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 316.

the park were still full blooded Atsugewi. "This purity," Kroeber explained "has been maintained through the fortune of a sparse American settlement,"¹⁰ which still exists (1939) throughout eastern Shasta County. McArthur Memorial State Park, this northeastern gateway to California, played many a dramatic chapter during the early historic episodes of the new country, and the history of the state to the closing period of the bloody Modoc War in 1873.

Following the Spanish expedition into the then unknown Shasta County territory (1817), came the beaver trappers of the combined Hudson Bay and Northwest companies; consolidated in 1821.¹¹ Their parties of trappers and traders traced the branches of all the important rivers to their utmost limits from British Columbia on the north to the Sacramento and Pit rivers on the south. One of the earliest trapping expeditions to reach the unexplored regions of northern California was the William H. Ashley Company. General Ashley of St. Louis became active and prominent in the fur trade along the lower Columbia River country about 1825. He organized the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, which before his retirement, passed into the hands of William Sublette, Jedediah S. Smith, David E.

10. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 316.

11. Z. S. Eldredge, History of California, II, 311.

Jackson, James Bridger and others.¹²

The second expedition into the vicinity of what is now McArthur Memorial State Park occurred in 1827, about a decade after the Father Duran expedition of peace and goodwill among the northern Indians, when Jedediah S. Smith, one of the proprietors of the former Ashley Company, started west in August 1826. The party consisting of fifteen men took a southwesterly course to the Colorado River. After some legal difficulties in San Diego, Smith and his small band of beaver trappers were next heard from some months later in the country east of Mission San Jose,¹³ where Father Duran was then stationed. From this mission settlement Smith with two men, leaving the remainder of his party in California, crossed the Sierra Nevada by way of the Mt. Lassen foothills, (then known as Mt. St. Joseph) northwest of Eagle Lake to the Pit River country during the spring of 1827, en route to their Utah Lake base for supplies. Smith again traveled this Pit River route when he returned in the fall. The trail led south of Goose Lake along the present United States Highway 299. They then cut southwesterly near the junction of the two present roads near the town of Burney.

12. Eldredge, History of California, II, 313.

13. Ibid., 318.

Sutter's Fort was the objective of nearly everybody who came to California during the pioneer days. From the start of the American emigration (1841-1843), to the gold strike of 1848, the number of Americans in California did not exceed one hundred.¹⁴ Among these early pioneers only a few were instrumental in the opening and settlement of Shasta County and Burney Valley. They were Joseph B. Chiles, who blazed the trail through Pit River in 1843, following information derived from the Smith trapping expedition of 1827; Pierson B. Reading who first saw the rugged Shasta country during the Chiles expedition; Peter Lassen, who opened up the lower Pit River country during the early 1850's; and Samuel Burney who followed the Lassen trails and settled near the present site of McArthur Memorial State Park in 1857.

Reading, Lassen, and Burney were all seasoned fur-trappers. Trappers of those days "would let their beards grow down to their knees, and wear buckskin garments made and fringed like those of the Indian, and who considered it a compliment to be told 'I took ye for an Injin.'"¹⁵

Very little has been recorded concerning the

14. J. Bidwell, Echoes of the past, 8.

15. Ibid.

history of Samuel Burney the pioneer of Shasta County in northern California. Samuel Burney did not have the fortune to become a land agent for the railroads as did Reading, Lassen and several other former fur-trappers. He was the first American settler within the region of Burney Valley, and located more than fifty miles northeast of Reading's ranch, at a time when the latter's settlement was considered the northernmost ranch above Sutter's Fort. One authority said:¹⁶

... Burney came to the valley early in 1857 and built a log cabin, barn, and corral about a mile north of the present town of Burney. Although friendly with the Indians and speaking their language, he met death at their hands in March 1859.

Even during the mining period of California's history when Burney settled, and as late as 1880, the territory then known as "Shasta County" was considered too wild and mountainous to compete with the agricultural districts of the Sacramento. However, it excelled in timber resources.¹⁷ Agriculture did not properly start till 1852. Samuel Burney, killed by the native (Achomawi) Pit River Indians, who were friends of the Father Duran expedition (1817), was also deeply

16. Rensch, and Hoover, Historic spots in California, valley and Sierra counties, 376.

17. Bancroft, History of California, VI, 493-497.

regarded as a friend by the Indians. Hence, it is believed that Samuel Burney's death was instigated by bands of white-renegades, selfish squatters and settlers. Jealousy, animosity, and selfishness prevailed from 1850 to 1870, particularly within "the last frontier of the west" between Redding and Oregon line. This same feeling which led to the untimely death of Samuel Burney only two years after he had located on the site of Burney Falls, eventually led up to the Modoc War (1872-1873) among the historic lava beds between Clear Lake and McArthur Memorial State Park.¹⁸ The southern part of the famous Modoc lava beds are located about twelve miles north of where Burney Creek emptied into the Pit River.¹⁹ Near the present site of McArthur (formerly known as Burgettville),²⁰ a few miles east of Lake Britton, along the western bank of Fall River stood old Fort Crook.²¹ During the Modoc War, wherein the country surrounding McArthur Memorial State Park was involved, Fort Crook was the only fortification in the region northeast of Fort Reading for the protection of the incoming settlers against the then hostile Pit River Indians. This old fort

18. Bancroft, California inter pocula, 500-501.

19. Reconnaissance map; "California: Lassen Peak," United States Geological survey, edition of November 1894, reprinted February 1914.

20. E. Denny, Denny's map of Shasta County, California; 1915. Berkeley Library.

21. "A pony ride on Pit River," Overland monthly, XII, October 1874, 350.

was abandoned in 1874. What was first called the "Pit River Trail" (1827-1843), became known as the "Old Fort Crook Road," from Redding to Alturas during the 1870's after the closing period of the Modoc War. In recent years it has become known as the "Yellowstone Cut-off," the scenic United States Highway 299 of the Shasta Wonderland Country.

The vicinity of McArthur Memorial State Park reached its peak of prosperity when the first large deposits of copper and iron ore in California were discovered around "Copper City," between the present site of the Lake Britton Dam and McArthur in 1897. The smelting furnaces were located at Heroult. The damages done by the fumes from the smelting furnaces in which the ore was treated resulted in litigation and the resultant closing down the plants. Thus sprang up the colorful ghost towns around McArthur Memorial State Park. Among them were: Pecks Bridge, Carbon, Dana, Cassel, Glenburn, Clayton, Bully Hill, and Copper City. The branch line of the Southern Pacific which reached Bully Hill, Copper City, and Pecks Bridge was finally abandoned in 1920. It had left the main Shasta Route at a town called Pit, near the present "new ghost town of Toyon."²²

Nature has given to Shasta County a wealth of mineral resources, including copper, gold, chrome, lime,

22. "A newest town," Oakland Tribune, May 1, 1939, 28.

coal, quicksilver and many others. In the general mining industry of the county gold holds the center of the stage. "It has been estimated that one million dollars worth of the yellow metal was mined here in 1938, with about five hundred thousand dollars worth of other minerals."²³ The county is rich in its actual and potential hydro-electric development.

To the tourist, the sportsman, the lover of nature, McArthur Memorial State Park has much of sheer beauty to offer; a marvelous panorama of rugged mountains, deep canyons, giant forests of pine, beautiful sparkling waterfalls and historic streams. Thus, when California in 1920 made a state park out of the area surrounding the Burney Falls, there was set aside for preservation and for public enjoyment one of the state's outstanding scenic spots. It is administered by the California State Division of Parks, Department of Natural Resources.

California's state parks have all been acquired either to preserve examples of the state's natural varied beauty or to keep historic sites for the appreciation and enjoyment of this and future generations. The State Park System is composed of seventy areas with over 300,000

23. California, Shasta County, [Folder], Chamber of Commerce, Redding, Fall River Mills, and Anderson, California, 1939.

acres. They have a valuation of more than fifteen million dollars.²⁴ Fourteen historic sites, some with their original buildings, are included in the system. There are fine examples of the California landscape, such as big trees, the twenty-five beach and seacoast parks, the various mountain and desert parks, and a State Elk Refuge. McArthur Memorial State Park is a memorable tribute to Samuel Burney, one that people of generations to come will enjoy.

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