



SPRING DOINS' TREK

TOLLHOUSE AREA

APRIL 4-6 2025/6030

Good Morning! Welcome to the Jim Savage Mariposa Battalion 1852 Spring Doins' Trek.

We start our trek today at Warren Pannett's Old Crow Valley Ranch...a beautiful foothill location for our Doins.' This area was once inhabited by native Americans, as proven by the numerous grinding stones found in the area. Arrowheads have also been found nearby. Warren and Catherine have owned it since 1994, and we are happy that they let us hold our Doins here. Thank you to the entire Pannett family!

As we leave the Old Crow Valley Ranch take a look at the hills around you, It is so sad that Warren has to live here day in and day out!!! We will drive back out on the dirt road to Nicolas Road. We'll turn right on Nicolas Road and head to Highway 168. At 168 we'll turn right again, headed toward Prather. Highway 168 at this point is first Millerton Road and then becomes Morgan Canyon Road. There has been an incredible amount of development in this area over the past 30 years.

Once we get to Prather, the highway crosses over the road grade of the old San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad. The SJ and E began at a place called El Prado on the Southern Pacific Friant Branch (near Willow and Copper Avenues) and headed uphill to the town of Auberry. That portion of the railroad was mostly handled by rod locomotives. But past Auberry the grade got much steeper, and required the use of geared locomotives, like Shays, Climaxes, and Heislars.

The railroad also got extremely curvy past Auberry, at one point being labeled the crookedest railroad in the world. After a time, some of the curves were straightened and trestles were filled. But it always kept and lived up to its other name: The Slow, Jerky, and Expensive. The last section of the railroad was called the Million Dollar Mile because it cost a million dollars to build that section. It was literally hung on the edge of the San Joaquin River Canyon just before the town of Cascada, today known as Big Creek.

The SJ and E hauled all the materials and workers used to build the Big Creek Project, the massive hydroelectric project undertaken by Southern

California Edison in 1912. The railroad endured until 1934, by which time most of the Big Creek Project was complete. Several powerhouses were built by Edison, as were Huntington Lake, Shaver Lake, Florence Lake, Edison Lake, Ward Lake, Portal Forebay, Mammoth Pool, and Redinger Lake, and miles of pipes and tunnels. Most of this was built between 1912 and 1929, making it an incredible engineering feat for its time.

Auberry was the midway point of the SJ and E, and they had offices and a large yard here. The locomotive facilities were located in New Auberry, north of Auberry. After Canyon Fork at Prather, we get on Lodge Road. We'll pass by SJ and E Road, which is actually the roadbed of the railroad which has been paved over for use as a road. If you follow SJ and E Road into Auberry, you will get an idea of where the rail yard was located. It was directly across the street from where SJ and E Road intersects with Auberry Road.

The railroad grade continues past Auberry, disappears for a bit and then resurfaces as Wish-i-aw Road. Then it curves around and eventually becomes Jose Basin Road and then Old Railroad Grade Road. Italian Bar Road, Dawn Road, and several of the other side roads were also railroad grades leading to other places where Edison built facilities and powerhouses.

If that isn't enough history for you, the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company flume from Shaver Lake passed through this area beginning in 1894. Lumber was rough milled at the lake and was sent down the flume to the finishing mill in Clovis. The Clovis mill was approximately where the rodeo grounds is located today. The Shaver Lake mill site is underwater in Shaver Lake, just southeast of the dam. The mill's boiler, a small boat, and several concrete foundations are still there, ready to snag more of my damned fishing lures.

Our first stop is the **Eastern Fresno County Historical Museum**, located on Lodge Road just past Sierra High School. They have a caboose from the SJ and E Railroad and lots of other cool stuff. They are staying open late today just for us, so please be generous when you pass the donations jar.

After our visit to the museum we will proceed down Lodge Road to Tollhouse Road. Along the way will pass through some beautiful scenery, so enjoy it.

In the mountains above Tollhouse, from 1856 to 1899 there were something like 27 lumber mills operating in this area, and after 1900 75 mills were in operation. They stretched from Pine Ridge to Shaver Lake and back to Dinkey Creek. There were logging railroads on Pine Ridge and at Shaver Lake. Lumber was sent downhill by flume, wagons, and trucks. The Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company alone milled somewhere near 17,000,000 board feet of lumber from their 600 acres of forest at Shaver Lake.

Tollhouse was an important point along the way up or down hill. In 1866 the Woodson brothers began a shake cutting operation on Pine Ridge. They used wagons and oxen to haul their shakes downhill, unloaded them at the steepest points, hauled them further downhill on the backs of local Indians, and then reloaded them onto wagons. A better way was needed, so they began construction of a road to reach from the timber to the valley below. The road was started in 1866 but not completed until 1868. It would be a toll road, and anyone using it would pay the Woodsons the fixed rate. Upon completion, the road was sold to Henry Glass who then sold it to M J Donahoo, who continued to use it as a toll road. Fresno county bought the toll road from Donahoo in 1878 for the sum of \$5,000,000 and made it free for anyone to use. But the small town that was created at the bottom of the steepest part of the road was where you would pay your toll. Thus, the town of Tollhouse was born.

Many loads of lumber were hauled down the Tollhouse grade. Most were successful journeys, but the road was so steep that unfortunate events occurred with regularity. Oxen were the main source of power. When the railroads were built at Pine Ridge and Shaver Lake, oxen carried the disassembled locomotives and cars from the railhead in Fresno to Pine Ridge and Shaver Lake. Nearly every piece of logging and mill equipment was hauled uphill in this manner.

When the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company began construction of their mill and logging operation, they were their own first customer. As the lumber was cut and milled at Shaver, it was then sent to the flume construction site and pressed into service. The plan was to send milled lumber down to Clovis, which they did, but also to send irrigation water down the flume as well for use as farm

irrigation water in the valley below. But the water was so contaminated with pitch from the wood that it would poison the plants, So, that idea was scrapped. And to be honest, there wasn't that much water left in the flume when it reached Clovis, due to spillage and leaks.

So, let's take a look at the Tollhouse Monument:

In the early 60's Elijah Sarvers, a solitary goatherd, was the first non-Indian here. In 1866 the Woods Bros. began making shakes on Pine Ridge, hiring Indians to carry them down the mountain. In 1867 the county granted them a franchise to build a toll road and fixed the rates. As more mills sprang up a village grew around the toll house. The county bought the road in 1878 and its use became free. It was so steep that despite the great skill of the long line teamsters, an occasional outfit would be lost, yet most of the lumber to build early Fresno came down it. It was replaced by the present road in 1923. Now the new Freeway nears completion.

***Jim Savage Chapter
E Clampus Vitus
October 19,1969***

We will head now for **Humphrey's Station** at the intersection of Tollhouse Road and Pitman Hill Road. Take your time again to soak in the beauty of the area as you pass through it. This has always been one of my favorite areas to drive through, even before I had my driver's license.

Remember that the toll road located here was filled with workers and equipment headed to the lumber camps that were so prolific during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Oxen, horses, mules, and people needed a place to stop for a while and rest. Typically there would be many stopping points along the way for stages and freight wagons where horses, mules, and oxen would be changed for fresh mounts. Humphrey's Station would have been one of those.

After the Civil War, the Humphrey brothers (John, Miles, and James) opened a store here. They sold food, wine, beer, and hard liquor. It was said that John and Miles didn't drink alcohol, but James did. (He must have been a

Clamper!) Some said that it was James who actually owned the store, but the facts have been lost to time.

So, the brothers made money selling such necessary supplies to the many loggers and others headed up hill. After a time, a restaurant popped up. A small community also grew up nearby. That seems like a natural progression, as people headed uphill and down might want something to eat or other services. This wasn't a short trip like it is now in a car. The modern version of Tollhouse Road is much easier than the old freight and wagon road. It took hours if not days to get your goods uphill or down.

The restaurant, called Humphrey Station, became popular and that name stuck to the area. At one point there was a small school in operation near here.

Let's look at the Humphrey Station monument:

This site was originally called Mechanicsville, gradually changing to Humphrey Station after Miles Humphreys' store. Miles Humphreys came to California to join his brother John after the Civil War and saw an opportunity by opening his store at this crossroads. Although not an official stage stop, the Butterfield Stage dropped off passengers at Humphrey's store to get "refreshed". Passengers included for the most part working class men from the lumber industry.

Thus, Humphreys is the only location in California where "station" stands for a former stage stop rather than a train station. The store was located in the depression at the intersection 80 yards to the right of this monument. Miles Humphreys' better known brother John Humphreys is often referred to as the namesake. The Humphreys family was held in the highest regard during this period of Eastern Fresno County's History.

***Dedicated this 16th day of January, 2010
Jim Savage Chapter 1852 E Clampus Vitus
Celebrating 50 years 1959-2009***

If you look closely at the inscription, it lists the numbers of distinguished XNGHs who were present that day. Mo Joe, Dave Dickens, or Lester might be able to tell you who XNGH 37, 42, and 46 are.

It is also cool that we were celebrating the 50th year of Jim Savage Mariposa Battalion Chapter 1852's existence at this dedication!

Now we will head back on Tollhouse Road to the Old Crow Valley Ranch. HOCO and Dinner will be coming up shortly.