

City on Highway 28.

Research Reveals Still Another Version Of How Squaw Valley Got Its Name

(Editor's Note: Leonard Davis of Roseville, an authority on Placer County history, has discovered the following account of how Squaw Valley received its name. Davis is a high school instructor and the author of many articles on the various phases of Placer County History.)

By Leonard Davis

With all the excitement generated by the coming Winter Olympics, Squaw Valley, California has become as familiar to millions of Americans as the names of their own home towns.

Literally hundreds of thousands of words have been written describing this beautiful mountain valley; its early history as a mining community; and its development into Northern California's foremost winter resort area.

Yet, within the myriad of printed material which has appeared in recent months in books, magazines, and newspaper accounts, little or nothing has been written to explain how and why this pretty little valley, nestled in

the majestic pine-covered forests of Northern California's rugged Sierra Nevada range received the appellation, Squaw Valley.

The generally accepted belief of how Squaw Valley was named is based upon Indian legend which states that the Valley was settled by meek Washoe Indians who were driven from the Nevada plains by the fierce, war-like Paiutes. During the summer months. With only squaws and papooses remaining, the valley soon became known as the Valley of the Squaws.

While this account seems entirely plausible and is the generally accepted version, an entirely different story has been uncovered by the writer in recent months which presents a still different version.

According to an obscure article in the long defunct Iowa Hill Weekly Patriot of August 13, 1859, Squaw Valley was named in the summer of 1852 by members of an immigrant train who camped in the Valley preparatory to ascending the rough, tortuous Placer County Immigrant Road which extended from Lake Bigler, (Lake Tahoe,) through Squaw Valley, over the summit of the rugged Sierra, along the course of the Middle Fork of the American River, and on to Auburn. Included in the group was a young man described as being "wild, reckless, and dissolute," and "belonging to that class of human beings who think bravery and courage lie in feats of treachery and fool-hardiness." This unnamed individual had vowed to kill the first Indian he came upon along the long, arduous westward trek. On the site of Squaw Valley he saw a squaw whom he brazenly shot through the head.

When word of this deed reached the Indians, they swarmed down upon the wagon train and demanded either the surrender of the culprit or the destruction of the entire party. The outnumbered immigrants yielded the guilty person who was immediately stripped of his clothing and literally flogged to death by the Indians with switches cut from the willows which grew along the banks of Squaw Creek.

From this time, according to the account, the valley was called Squaw Valley.

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