

CHAPTER 10

THE OUTSIDE WORLD: TRAVEL, TRADE, AND COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Since the first occupation of the Lake Sonoma Area, trade and travel have linked residents with outside groups. Imported materials present in the 5000-year-old archaeological deposits indicate the beginnings of trade. Over the centuries, trade items increased, reflecting an ever-growing interaction between prehistoric groups. After the first years of Euroamerican settlement, goods and information were reaching the area from throughout the world.

For groups to interact, they need to reach each other; trails, messenger systems, roads, railroads, telephones, and automobiles closed the gap between communities. As technology aided contact between groups, the recognized community became larger, and the outside world was continually being redefined and growing in importance.

TRADE AND TRAVEL

Native American Trade

Few locations in the world have matched the California North Coast Ranges' diversity of human groups at the time of Euroamerican contact. In this 150-mile stretch of coastal mountains and valleys, four separate language families were represented, and 11 distinct languages were spoken. Within the area of the seven Pomoan languages, there were an estimated 75 tribelets—each a separate autonomous political unit. Although anthropologists have recognized a great similarity in the cultures of these groups, each tribelet saw its way of life as unique and was acutely aware of the many subtle differences between peoples in the area. Differences were more marked between Pomoan tribelets and neighboring groups speaking unrelated languages, like the Coast Miwok to the southwest and the Wappo to the east. Thus after a few hours walk in any direction, one crossed the border of a new "nation."

The North Coast Ranges also provide an extraordinary diversity of ecological zones, so that each small group usually had proprietary access to chaparral, riverine, oak woodland, and coniferous forest communities. But never did one tribelet have

all the resources its members considered necessary for survival. Basic food items were the most broadly distributed: every tribelet territory held acorns, green plants, fish, and game animals, but a temporary surplus in a neighboring territory was often the occasion for trade. The Makahmo often traded for tan-oak acorns with the Danokeya Pomo of Yorkville and occasionally traveled further, into what is now Mendocino County, to collect army worm caterpillars in the Ukiah Valley. Trade was more important with groups who controlled the unique resources of the Clear Lake area and the coast: sea salt, seaweed, marine fish, and shellfish were restricted to the coast, and certain kinds of fish were available only at Clear Lake (1).

Nonfood resources were more geographically restricted. Chert could be quarried within most territories, but materials of special texture or color might have made one region's source more valuable. Far more limited was obsidian, one of the most broadly traded items in central California. For people in the Lake Sonoma Area, quality obsidian was found only at three locations: Annadel Mountain near present-day Santa Rosa, Napa Valley, and the Clear Lake area. A major change in the use of these obsidian sources occurred during the long occupation of the area.

Lake Sonoma Area archaeologists found that chert was the primary stone tool material during the Skaggs Period, the first occupation of the area beginning about 3000 B.C. Most obsidian dating to the Dry Creek, or intermediate, Period was from Mt. Konocti, a major obsidian source on the southern shores of Clear Lake. Mt. Konocti continued in importance in the early Smith Period, beginning about A.D. 1300. A decided shift occurred in the late Smith Period, perhaps as late as A.D. 1800, when obsidian was predominantly from Napa Glass Mountain. This shift reflected a major change in social interactions, probably linked to population changes resulting from the arrival of Euroamericans. Nineteenth-century Euroamerican trade was primarily oriented toward the region due south of the Lake Sonoma Area: the lower Russian River Valley, the Santa Rosa Plain, and the San Francisco Bay Area. In contrast,

archaeological evidence shows that prehistoric occupants traded to the east and north. There was a remarkably small quantity of Santa Rosa area obsidian found in project-area sites, while artifact styles were shared with people to the north and east, not with the Santa Rosa region.

The Cloverdale and Dry Creek tribelets controlled no rare commodities, but the abundance and variety of their food resources were often sought out. Their most valuable trade asset, however, was their skill as craftsmen: Southern Pomo groups, along with the Coast Miwok, were the primary manufacturers and traders of clam disc beads in north-central California, and the chert and obsidian drills they made—considered exceptional—were also widely traded. Disc beads, made from the shell of the large Washington clam, served as currency throughout central California. The shells were broken up, ground to a disc shape on sandstone, bored, strung, and then finished by being rolled on a slab. The value of disc beads was based on their diameter and thickness—the larger the bead, the greater its buying power—as well as on their degree of polish:

Old strings were prized highly. The handling of a lifetime imparted a gloss unattainable in any other way, and was appreciated as fully by the natives as by any ethnographic collector (2).

Beads were used to purchase goods within and between groups; they were also wagered in gambling, given as gifts at weddings, and worn as attractive ornaments and displays of wealth.

Like obsidian, beads are a major indicator of trade in prehistoric archaeological sites. Clam disc beads were found at several Lake Sonoma Area sites, as were some early historic glass trade beads. In addition, there was ample evidence that the people of the area engaged in the Southern Pomo specialization of bead making. In one large village site (CA-Son-593/H on upper Dry Creek), 140 clam disc bead drills were recovered during excavation, while 35 drills were discovered in a single housepit at another upper Dry Creek site (CA-Son-568). Even in this outlying area, bead making was clearly important.

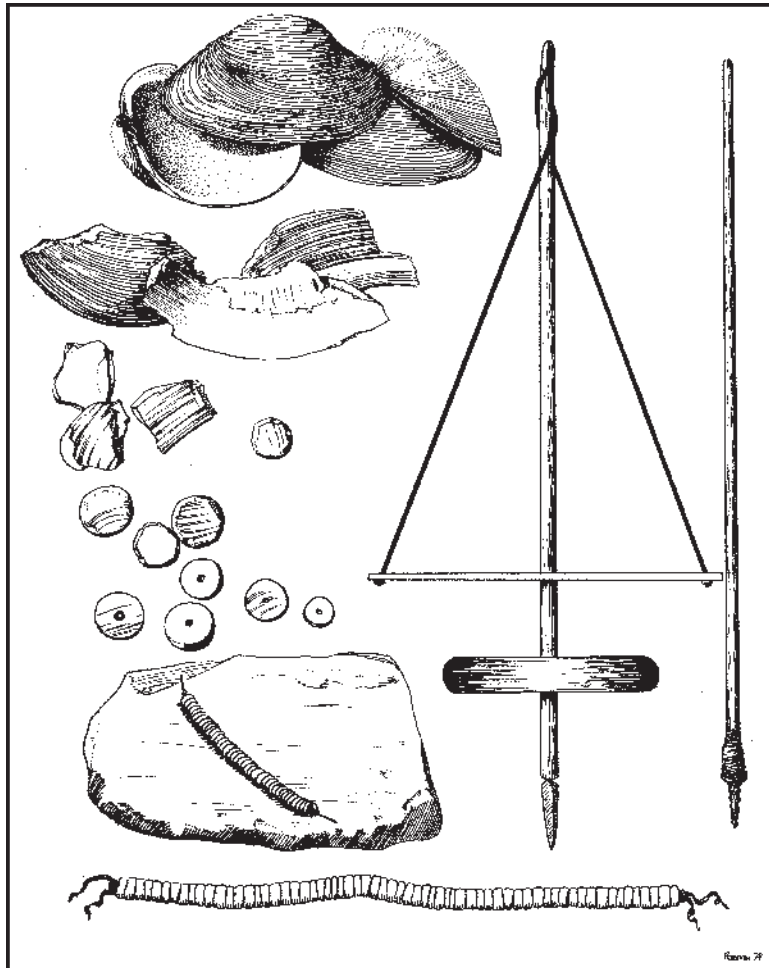
Trade trips were sometimes quite formal, sometimes relatively casual, affairs. Individuals made two or three trips a year to the coast near Stewart's Point, where they collected abalone and mussel meat,

seaweed, and salt, packing them home in large burden baskets. Trips to Bodega Bay were of a different nature: they served as a vacation for the whole family as well as a food-getting mission. The journey took two or three days, and the families remained at the coast for a week or two, camping with friendly groups and spending the evenings in entertainments. Some seafood was eaten while camping, but the majority was dried in the sun and packed home. Bodega Bay was also the source of the thick Washington clamshells that were used to make beads. The Coast Miwok who controlled Bodega Bay allowed inland groups free access to gathering areas. In return, they could freely collect food that was not available on the coast within Dry Creek and Cloverdale territories. At least once a year, small groups of men traveled from Cloverdale to Clear Lake to collect obsidian. Visitors were free to mine their own materials, although it was appropriate to offer a gift for this privilege.

Other trading expeditions were much more formal, involving trade specialists and complex agreements between the two groups. A trading captain, chosen for his fluency in languages as well as his physical stamina, made the arrangements. He determined the needs of his people, then visited the group to be traded with to arrange for the trade items and set a date for the exchange. The exchange itself was carried out by the trade captain and a small group of men who represented those left at home.

The most formalized and entertaining exchange activity was the trade feast, held when one tribelet experienced a superabundance of a particular food item. If the chief of the invited tribelet accepted the invitation, he brought together the men in his village and asked each to contribute clamshell beads to the common fund. On the appointed day, the whole group traveled to the host village and presented their beads. Several days of festivities preceded the trade, with guests freely fed and entertained.

Anthropologist Andrew Vayda described one such trade feast in the Clear Lake area, involving two Pomoan tribelets. On the day of the trade, men of the host village brought extra fish from their individual stores, taking in exchange commensurate shares of the accumulated beads. Once this exchange was completed, the guest chief distributed the fish equally among his people. Vayda emphasized the outcome of this system: while each guest had given different quantities of beads according to his wealth, each received an equal portion of fish in return. In this way



Steps in making clamshell disc beads; after contact, the Spanish drill (shown here) replaced the traditional chert drill (drawing by Rusty Rossman)

differences in wealth within the guest community were temporarily equalized. Within the host community, however, differences in wealth were maintained. Since each fisherman gave the surplus from his particular sector of the creek, the men controlling the more valuable fishing areas received more money. They had “banked” their surplus with the neighboring community.

By accepting an invitation to a trade feast, the Pomo Indians who had previously “banked” food would be getting food back, and they might be doing this at a time when the food would be more needed by them for consumption than had been the case with the goods that they had traded earlier to other communities (3).

Gambling, an essential entertainment at all such gatherings, provided an interesting twist to the assembly’s main economic function—the trade. Since winning was primarily based on luck, and great quantities of shell beads and other wealth items were wagered, a second flow of wealth could pass unpredictably within and between groups.

Ease of travel in this rugged region was of primary importance in trade relations. Throughout the North Coast Ranges, the land was crisscrossed by a complex network of trails. In the Lake Sonoma Area, 14 trails, with an additional 10 alternatives, led south through Sebastopol, north to the Ukiah and Redwood valleys, and east and west to Clear Lake and the coast. These were the major trade routes; in addition, there were numerous paths linking villages to hunting and collecting areas. The ethnographer and journalist Stephen Powers, who traveled on foot

through northern California in the early 1870s, was frustrated by the road system, which seemed to favor the highest, steepest mountains in any area. American roads followed native trails, he learned, and Indians had good reasons for preferring ridges in rugged terrain:

When the whole face of the country is wooded alike, the old Indian trails will be found along the streams; but when it is somewhat open they invariably run along the ridges, a rod or two below the crest—on the south side of it, if the ridge trends east and west; on the east side, if it trends north and south. This for the reason . . . that the west or north side of a hill is most thickly wooded. The California Indians seek open ground for their trails that they may not be surprised either by their enemies or by cougars and grizzly bears (4).

Such routes were also preferred because a ridge line often extends for miles through mountainous terrain with relatively little variation in elevation, providing an easy walk. Powers' observation that American roads followed Indian trails is borne out in Sonoma County as well; most county roads today follow the routes of the earlier system.

These routes were always traveled on foot—often at a run, especially if important messages were to be relayed. The Russian Baron von Wrangell related the response of a group of Indian men near the Russian River when he requested that a message be sent to their village:

The eldest among them immediately chose a young man as deputy. The latter fastened his light cloth around his hips, took his bow in hand, and disappeared so fast from view that we had no time to reward him with a small gift for his readiness to serve (5).

The young man may have been an official messenger, a specialist position among some Southern Pomo groups.

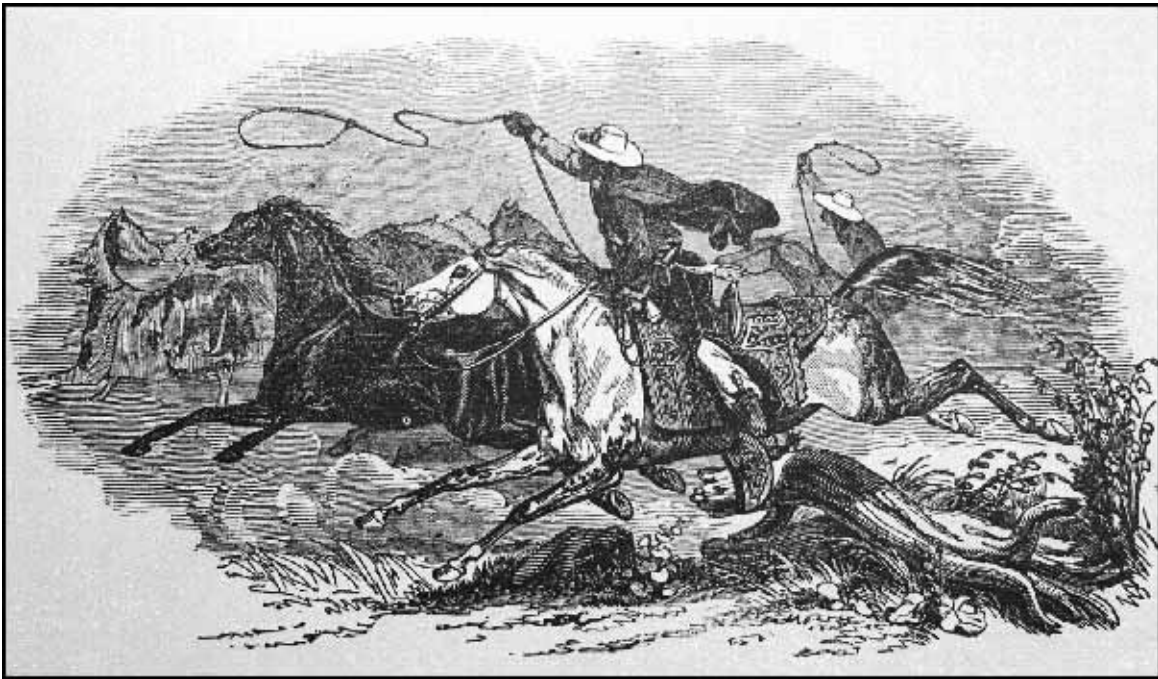
Mexican Period Trade and Travel

Unlike the good access to food, technological items, and luxuries in precontact California, few goods were manufactured in the Mexican period of California, and there were numerous limitations on trade. These restrictions led to a lifestyle of high contrasts, with even the wealthy often living under crude conditions. An account by an American who

visited several ranchos in the 1840s describes the legendary hospitality of the Californios, who insisted on heaping luxuries on their guests. The traveler was fed a sumptuous meal, lavishly entertained, and encouraged to stay indefinitely. "At the same time, you are offered a stool or beef's head, as a substitute for a chair, if there happens to be one convenient, if not, you are expected to sit upon the ground." Peña's Rancho Tzabaco adobe in the Dry Creek Valley provides another example; described as "substantial" by his neighbor Cyrus Alexander, Peña's home had only a piece of rawhide to serve as a door-covering (6).

The hide and tallow trade reigned for more than 20 years as the major economic pursuit in Mexican California. Demand for hides was insatiable on the East Coast, while tallow was especially desired in Peru for making candles and soap. Even cattle horns were exported and turned into shoe buttons. Due to the dominance of the trade and the virtual absence of cash, hides came to be known as "California banknotes." What rancheros could buy with these banknotes was almost entirely at the mercy of the traders and the stock of the last port they had entered. Traders were after hides, and they would get them by catering to the Californios' reported vanity: while farm implements, furniture, and food items were often scarce, there was usually an abundance of Chinese silks, tassels, stockings, and silver spurs. Goods were taxed with enormous and constantly fluctuating duties, as much as 80 to 100 percent of their value, figured on the high cost of transportation across the Pacific Ocean or around the Horn. Traders offered a system of extended credit as an enticement, keeping rancheros in constant debt (7).

Just east of the Lake Sonoma Area, Peña and his two northern neighbors, Berryessa and Feliz, had taken up the most outlying lands in the Mexican land-grant system. In fact, the area was of so little importance to the Mexicans that the Russian River is not shown on an otherwise detailed 1845 map; in another 1840s account, the river was said to issue more than 100 miles north of its actual headwaters, indicating little knowledge of this region (8). Despite their location on the fringes of Mexico's northern frontier, Peña and his neighbors did have access to trade goods. Traders, well adapted to the problems of a thinly spread population, employed horses, mules, or boats to reach the most remote rancho. These traveling merchants announced new goods and



California vaqueros with their legendary horses (from R.R. Olmsted's *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity from Hutchings' California Magazine: 1856-1861*, 1962)

services, delivered merchandise ordered the previous year, and took orders for the next.

Transportation was difficult in Mexican California, with rough, often useless, wagon trails and the clumsy caretta, a cart with two crudely cut stone wheels. These conditions made moving goods and groups of people a slow process, but the speed at which an individual could travel drew raves from American visitors. One traveler claimed:

One hundred miles a day, are as frequently driven by the Mexicans as fifty are by our people, in truth, with them, it is but an ordinary day's ride. . . . The gait at which those horses are driven is at a fast gallop, at which gait they are frequently kept, for many hours in succession, with very slight intervals of rest. . . . I have frequently ridden those horses, over the plains of California, upon a fast gallop, for five or six consecutive hours, without the least intermission (9).

With such remarkable steeds, Peña and the other northern frontier residents could have ridden to San Pablo Bay, where numerous embarcaderos lined the northern shores, in half a day. The most important of these stations was St. Louis, a town south of Sonoma consisting of little more than docks and a saloon,

where boatmen waited to hire out their services, and goods ordered from San Francisco were unloaded.

Some trade centers were present north of the bayshore: we know from Peña's will that he traded with Nathan Spear, the former San Francisco merchant who was then operating a grist mill and sawmill and dispensing medicines and other goods from a Napa rancho. The account books of Jacob Leese, another major North Bay trader, show the purchases of Peña's neighbor, Henry Fitch of the Rancho Sotoyome (10). While Fitch did not live on his rancho, his overseers—first Cyrus Alexander and later Moses Carson—bought goods for the ranch in his name. Leese, like all resident traders during this period, served as accountant, banker, and business representative for his customers. Fitch's personal debts were paid by Leese, his workers were advanced cash when necessary, and transportation of his hides and tallow was arranged "to the beach." Most of Alexander's and Carson's purchases consisted of items necessary for running the ranch: livestock, saws, sheep shears, large kettles for rendering tallow, and barrels for transporting it. Other purchases were apparently made to maintain the Indian workers on the rancho: 10 blankets, 7 shirts, and 4 pairs of corduroy pantaloons were bought during one three-day period, while 11 pounds of beads were also

purchased during the same week. Accounts could accumulate unpaid for months; they were eventually offset by goods, rather than cash. Indians on the Sotoyome Rancho must have engaged in soap production and milling, as soap and boards were the most frequent means of payment to the merchant.

To offset the limitations of trade in Mexican California, the wealthier Californios participated in a wide-ranging network of exchanges. The population of rancheros was small, and at least some of the activities of most land-grant holders have been well documented. Because there is so little information on Peña, we can infer that he was neither a wealthy nor a influential man. Yet his 1847 will (one of the very few available documents regarding him) gives a fascinating glimpse of his participation in the network. In addition to his debt of “one hundred Dollars in wheat” to Nathan Spear (“Don Natan Espear”), Peña listed the following account of his debtors and creditors:

Also, I declare that I am debtor to Don Manuel Torres [Rancho Muñiz] to the amount of [not specified].

Also that I owe Moises [perhaps Moses Carson, caretaker of Sotoyome Rancho] thirty dollars in produce.

Also, that I owe to Marcos West [Rancho San Miguel] Ten dollars in same.

Also, that I have in my possession one hundred mares of Don Mariano G. Vallejo for the term of ten years, which when concluded we were to divide the halves of the increase.

Also, that if I die my Executor may deliver the one hundred mares to said Señor Vallejo, retaining in his possession for the benefit of the heirs the increase that belongs to them.

Also, that Don Gupe Vallejo owes me Sixty Seven Dollars; and that I have received Seven; remaining in my favor Sixty Dollars.

Also, that Sebero Alviso owes me twenty dollars for a horse.

Also, that Don Manuel Torres owes me four picked colts for two horses that I sold him.

Also, that Juan Bojorques owes me two young Bulls.

Also, Ignacio Balenzuela owes me one wild mare.

A final statement is appended to this document:

Note: There are in my possession Eighteen colts belonging to Don Juan Cooper [Rancho El Molino] to break them to reins at a rate of six dollars each, which my Executor will deliver if I die, excepting those colts that may meet with accidents, which will be for account of said Señor Cooper (11).

We can see that Peña traded throughout the northern frontier with some of the area’s most prominent figures, and that he may have been a specialist in horses; perhaps he had unusually adept vaqueros or was himself a proficient horseman. A symbolic, as well as economic, significance of horses in Mexican California is suggested in one of Peña’s last requests: “Also, that those commissioned with the burial of my body pay with the horses that are used in my hearse.”

Local Development

Ever since hunters and trappers first traveled through northern California, small groups had used the Russian River Valley as a trail to the north. This trail jogged into the Dry Creek Valley for a short distance, following the route of an Indian trail. An 1851 map shows the trail crossing the Russian River at “Fitch’s,” traveling up Dry Creek to “Pinos,” then returning to the river just north of “Berryessas,” probably along the route of the present-day Dutcher Creek Road (12). As it was more common for traders and families to take steamers up the coast to Union (later Arcata) and Eureka, the nearest early northern settlements, the overland route would have been little used.

A picture of the remoteness of the general area emerges from population figures presented in the 1850 federal census, which counted only the non-Indian residents: 32 adult males, 8 adult females, and 11 children lived in eight dwellings between present-day Ukiah and Healdsburg, a distance of about 50 miles. Many of the single men must have been hunters or trappers, while others may have been testing the mineral potential of this region. The families may represent the area’s first squatters, who hoped to obtain possessory rights to land-grant lands.

A stage stop was established in Geyserville in 1851, signaling the first major step in connecting the Lake Sonoma Area with the outside world. Shortly thereafter, the first general store north of Sonoma was established in an adobe on Fitch’s Sotoyome



Camping out in 1850 near Mill Creek, just south of Dry Creek Valley
(drawing from Marryat's *Mountains and Molehills*, 1856)

Rancho, while a trading post was established by Harmon Heald in 1852 between Dry Creek and the Russian River. Then, in 1854, a trading post was set up in Cloverdale. Clearly the squatters had arrived in relatively large numbers by this time to warrant so much activity.

Just what was available at these early stores is not recorded. Some goods might have been especially procured for the Indian trade, while nonperishable staples, such as sugar and flour, and consumable necessities, such as lead and powder for firearms, would surely have been available. But it is unlikely that many of the needs of the new families were met. Immigrants were usually advised to bring most items from home—even window glass from one report—to start their new life; the Millers, whose granddaughter married Sylvester Scott, brought their tombstones with them across the Plains.

Certainly little variety would have been available at the trading post and small stores. For farming equipment, boots and shoes, household utensils, and fabric for clothing, the settlers had to travel to St.

Louis—a two-day trip on foot—or do without. Lumber was hewn from the trees nearby or purchased from March's Mill on Mill Creek. If seed was not brought from home, the cost of putting in crops could be crippling; in the first years, seedling fruit trees sold for as much as \$1.50 each; a decade later, 100 trees could be had for that amount. Even those able to buy expensive seed found it was not readily available; a ride to Sonoma or Stephen Smith's Bodega settlement was necessary in the first years. The town of Santa Rosa, later an important trade center, was no more than "a cluster of houses with neither doors nor windows" in 1851 (13).

Then, in 1856, a general store joined Heald's trading post, and the focal point of the area—originally called Stringtown—had its inception. This was a year that marked new activity throughout the county. The autobiography of a pioneer women who had settled about 20 miles south of the Lake Sonoma Area in Green Valley near Graton in 1850 tells of the change:



An overloaded wagon brought across the plains (photo from National Archives)

in 56 our country around sonoma county begins to improve, towns spring up all over & the people building houses & leaving old cabbins to be used for outhouses. & the people beginning to talk county fairs & improve their stock. & farms improveing more & better fences & more useful emplements to work with (14).

That year also brought the first long-term settlers to the Lake Sonoma Area: William and Mary Board and James and Elizabeth Pritchett, who claimed tracts of Dry Creek bottomland near the confluence of Warm Springs and Dry creeks. It may not be a coincidence that 1856 was also the year that Dry Creek Indians were removed from their homes and land and taken to the Round Valley Indian Reservation in Mendocino County. Santa Rosa had become the county seat only a few months before, and this shift from Sonoma must also have been taken as a sign that the west side of the county was worth developing.

In 1857 Heald laid out the first town lots for sale, and the town grew rapidly thereafter. At first it appeared that Healdsburg might become the county's

leading community: in 1858 the town was chosen as the site of the first Sonoma County agricultural fair. By the 1860s, many needs could be met within the local community. Healdsburg supported a newspaper, a fire department, a concert hall, several stores, and fraternal organizations.

Cloverdale, the nearest town for the upland Dry Creek settlers, also offered multiple services. Nonetheless, many Dry Creek people traveled to Donahue's Landing on the Petaluma River to buy supplies in the 1860s and 1870s: the savings in freight was apparently worth the more than 100-mile round trip (15).

For several decades, settler families remained relatively self-sufficient. Most plant foods were grown in the family garden, livestock was raised for milk, meat, and lard, and hunting provided variety for the table. Root crops could be stored in the stone-lined dugouts that were identified by archaeologists at several Lake Sonoma Area historic sites; canning sheds were also features on some homesteads, indicating that people here, as in other rural areas, put away supplies of fruit and vegetables for winter

use. Men repaired and fashioned simple farm implements themselves; some settlers had worked at the blacksmith's trade before moving to the area, and at least two blacksmith shops have been identified on project land. Women knitted or sewed all clothing for themselves and their children; only shoes and men's trousers and overalls were bought in town. This pattern was shared by rich and poor alike, for self-sufficiency was as much an ethic of 19th-century rural America as it was a necessity.

Despite the self-sufficient lifestyle, many items could only be obtained in town, and credit—rather than cash—was necessary for people whose incomes varied throughout the year. Before the turn of the century, bills were cumulative, listing the purchases made from month to month. After six months to one year, usually when crops were in and sold, the bill could be paid off in farm or ranch products, with any balance remaining paid for in cash or extended to a later date. Customers of a Healdsburg store in 1870 used a variety of goods to pay their bills: eggs, butter, meat, and lard headed the list; wool, wheat, sacks, and shingles were not uncommon, while one customer even paid with a piece of embroidery (16). There was an additional advantage to having good credit at a store: personal debts could be paid by offering credit on one's account. Thus goods and services could be obtained throughout the year, even at times of no income, to be paid off only when money was available after harvest. The store also served as a bank, loaning money when necessary and holding cash for customers who felt uneasy keeping large sums at home.

The barter system was prevalent beyond the local store as well. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, local boys gained entrance to the circus in Healdsburg by bringing wheelbarrow loads of crushed tanbark, and similar practices must have occurred throughout the town (17). The *Sonoma Democrat* of Santa Rosa offered subscriptions in exchange for firewood in 1863. This was apparently more reliable than credit, which the paper seemed unusually tolerant in extending: "Some of you who have had our paper for several years without paying for it—give us an agreeable surprise by paying up" (18).

Early American Travel

The earliest settlers claimed the most accessible tracts in the Lake Sonoma Area, but even the most conveniently located homesteads were 12 miles from Healdsburg or 8 from Cloverdale. Access to goods

required more than mere proximity to trade centers; a means of transportation was needed, and there was a variety:

Missourians were happy to have their 'jacks' [the stubborn, but hardy, mule] as transportation. Others walked or rode as funds allowed. Those who came overland had ox-teams ready to do service both as farm labor and transportation (19).

The settler with a fine team of horses had far greater access to town than the man on foot or one who possessed a single old horse. Once there, it mattered little how much the growing town had to offer if all that could be conveyed home were the most vital necessities. Trips to town, therefore, were rarely taken. Also keeping people home were the innumerable chores about a ranch or farm, especially for those who could not afford a farmhand and whose children were too young to help. Most of the children listed on the 1860 census of the Lake Sonoma Area were young, and no hired hands were counted.

The inadequate road system was an additional deterrent to travel. Although the road to the Pritchetts was described as a "fine carriage road" in 1863, the way past this point was rough and steep. Mid-19th-century travelers, who were used to shifting their mode of transportation several times mid-journey, "had to leave [their] buggy and take to the saddle" at the Pritchetts' farm (20). For ranchers living near the Skaggs Springs resort, the way to that point was clear riding—sufficient for a stagecoach. Beyond there were little more than narrow, rocky trails leading to isolated homesteads, and the trip on horse might take as long as the first leg from Geyserville to Skaggs. For settlers living in Cloverdale Township, a road scaled the steep divide west of the Russian River, then followed Yorty Creek to Dry Creek and jogged from ranch to ranch; an alternative route was labeled on an early map as "Trail from Scotts to Cloverdale." It was also possible to travel from Cloverdale Township to the city of Healdsburg by following the route of the old Rockpile Road. (Early maps of the project area depict the road system; see Chapter 7).

The road to Skaggs Springs was probably the best maintained in the Lake Sonoma Area, at least during the summer when crowds flocked to the resort. The country vacation began for guests when they left Geyserville via special stagecoach for the eight-mile ride to the springs. Most accounts of early visits to



The Skaggs Springs stage in 1913 (photo from the Obed Bosworth collection)

Skaggs included a description of this experience. Country stagecoach drivers were notorious for their lively rides, and the trip up the narrow, winding route had its daring curves to excite urban passengers.

Even with good access to a road, trips to town were undertaken only with difficulty when the weather was fine and stopped almost entirely in wet weather. While some routes were passable in winter, they were usually avoided. When an emergency, such as riding to town to fetch the doctor, required a trip in the rainy season, it was made on horseback, since iron buggy or wagon wheels created deep ruts in the road.

Problems with roads were not limited to this remote area. In the winter of 1865, the local newspaper claimed that “there is scarcely a road in the county passable for a distance of ten miles without liability to accident to person, or machine being stuck in the mud” (21). Even in summer the roads around the early prosperous city of Healdsburg were hard to navigate. On the main route just outside Healdsburg, a traveler in 1859 noted that “our wheels sank into a foot of dry, black powder” (22). Continuing northeast towards Knight’s Valley, he found conditions worse:

More than once, the road was arbitrarily cut off, and turned from its true course, by the fencing in of new fields. This was especially disagreeable where a cove of level bottom land had been thus inclosed, and we were forced to take the hill-side, where the wheels slipped slowly along, one side being dangerously elevated above the other. . . . The course of the highway is wholly at the mercy of the settlers, each of whom makes whatever changes his need or convenience may suggest (23).

In addition to fencing off roads, farmers were said to have dismantled bridges for use as lumber, thus constantly undermining county improvements.

To deal with the problem of maintaining roads, county supervisors passed a law in 1864 which required each able-bodied man between the ages of 21 and 50 to work two 10-hour shifts per year building or repairing roads in his district. Those who were unwilling were fined \$3.00 for each day they refused to work. Over the years, the system was altered: general property taxes included funds for roads, and road work was done by paid, part-time county employees. Each district had a roadmaster, whose job was to regularly maintain roads and to hire and

oversee a crew of local men when larger projects were necessary. Around the turn of the century, rancher George Matthews was road tender in the Dry Creek uplands, while farmer Edwin Higgs held the position in the upper Dry Creek Valley. Higgs and his team of horses became a colorful feature of the valley, with the bells on his gravel wagon announcing his presence.

Gates across county roads were legal, a stipulation of right-of-way deeds to the county. They required the traveler to stop frequently, dismount his horse or wagon, and open the gate before going through, closing the gate after him to prevent straying livestock. There were 14 gates between George Matthews' ranch and the town of Cloverdale, a distance of only as many miles. Other obstacles slowed travel. Anywhere between grazing country and market towns one might turn the bend and find the road clogged with slow-moving cattle, sheep, or hogs. To cross the river near Healdsburg in the early days, one had to holler for the ferry boatman, who as often as not had docked his craft on the opposite bank.

Given the problems with the road system, San Francisco was little more accessible to local settler families than it had been to the fast-riding Californios. Coaches left daily for the docks on San Pablo Bay in good weather, but all movement was halted in heavy rains. There was also no adequate transportation for heavy, bulk goods at a time when farms and ranches had vastly outgrown the local market and needed to move their produce and livestock greater distances. The solution to these problems was a railroad. Rivalries between competing companies, however, slowed the progress, and San Francisco was connected by railroad to the eastern United States before it had developed a system north of the bay (24).

Californians had anticipated a financial boon following the transcontinental connection in May 1869, expecting that goods shipped from the Orient to the West Coast would be in high demand in the eastern states. Instead most of this trade passed through the Suez Canal, which had been opened the same year. The effect of this new East Coast-Orient trade was crippling to California traders and manufacturers, but many other people benefited from the new railroad. Suddenly there was virtually no restriction on the availability of goods; the markets were glutted with eastern products at prices that the middle class could easily afford. Woolgrowers were

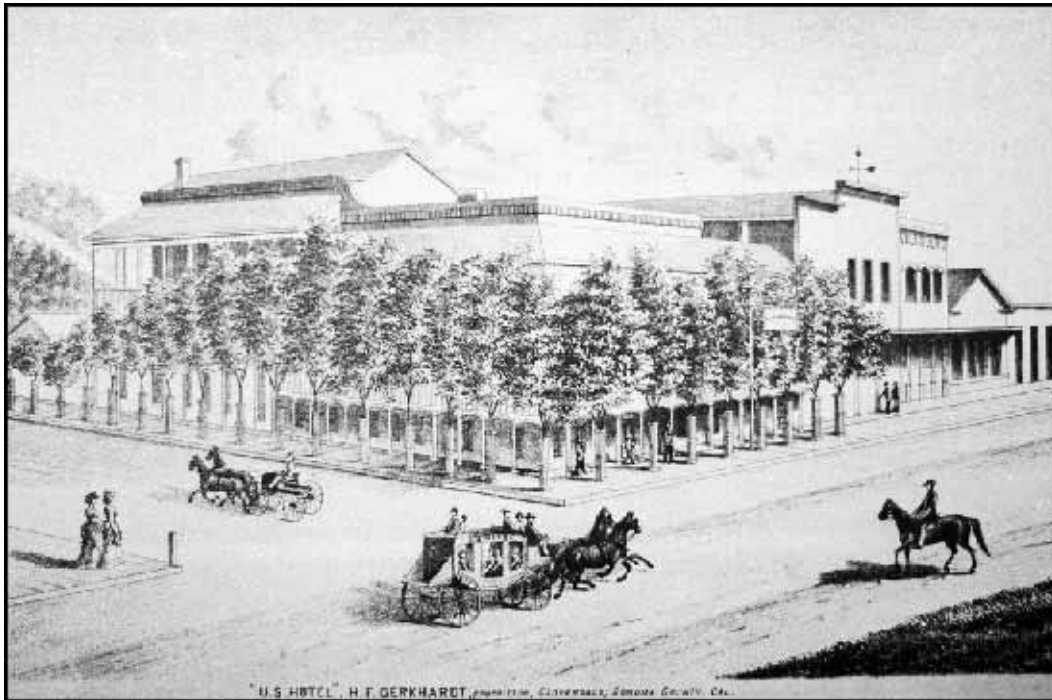
among those who profited; before the railroad, eastern buyers bought most of their wool from the sheepraising regions of South America, Africa, and Australia, since California was little more accessible than these countries. Afterwards, eastern buyers came to San Francisco, and California production soared (25). The new connection must have had a positive psychological effect as well: Californians were no longer living in an isolated backwater—they communicated with the whole nation.

Construction of the railroad track in the North Bay was finally completed in the spring of 1872, and Cloverdale became the northern terminus of the San Francisco and Northern Pacific Railroad. The position was an enviable one, suddenly making this small town of major importance for miles around. The station became the point to which all trade from Mendocino County, western Lake County, a large portion of Humboldt, and the upper part of Sonoma came for shipping. The editor of the *Sonoma Democrat* wrote enthusiastically of the changes the railroad brought to Cloverdale:

Business had been at a stand-still for many years and it was thought by many here that it would never amount to much, but the completion of the railroad has stirred the people up again, and everybody is up and doing and business has assumed a lively air (26).

Scores of new buildings were being constructed, and the newspaper reported that only a scarcity of building materials prevented more construction.

In the same decade that other parts of California and the rest of the United States were experiencing a depression, Cloverdale, Healdsburg, and the areas surrounding them were economically vitalized. Now there was an immediate shipping point for the wool, wine, and tanbark of the area. Cattle and sheep were driven the relatively short distance to the cars and transported to markets in the south. Lists of railroad exports from Healdsburg and Cloverdale in 1876 reflect lively commerce in the area (27). There was variety—grapes and other fruits, vegetables, wool, tanbark, hops, hides and tallow, wine, grain, lumber and livestock; there was also considerable quantity in some categories, such as the 1-1/2 million pounds of wool from Cloverdale—more than the entire wool clip for California in 1858 (28).



The prosperous town of Cloverdale in the 1870s (from *Thompson's Historical Atlas Map of Sonoma County*, 1877)

Passenger travel also increased once the trains started running. Cloverdale was the point from which all the travel to the Geysers Hot Springs—considerable traffic in those days—left the cars. Skaggs Hot Springs, served by the Geyserville Station, also saw scores of guests arriving each day by railroad. Every day two trains made the round trip between Cloverdale and Donahue's Landing. The trip to the landing once took four-and-a-half hours; the train cut the ride to only three. The trains had speed, but this was only one of their advantages. More important, they were reliable. Major storms might wash out a bridge or a section of track, but usually the trains rolled. And trains were comfortable; the cars were enclosed and the ride was smooth. Stages were hot and dusty in summer, cold and often wet in winter, and they always provided a jostling, bumpy ride.

Coaches will be overloaded, it will rain, the dust will drive, baggage will be left to the storm, passengers will get sick, a gentleman of gallantry will hold the baby, children will cry, passengers will get angry, the driver will swear, the sensitive will shrink (29).

After experiencing these discomforts, travelers took enthusiastically to the trains, and even residents in the Lake Sonoma Area began to travel to “the metropolis” frequently.

In the late 1880s, this network of trade and travel began to change and expand. Cloverdale lost its position as the northern terminus of the San Francisco and Northern Pacific Railroad when the tracks were forged through to Hopland and finally on to Ukiah in 1889. The Cloverdale station was still the center of shipment for northern Sonoma and southern Mendocino counties, but Cloverdale was no longer a focal point for a broad region, and what had promised to be a bustling community reached a plateau and grew no more.

To the west, a new link to the coast was opened up in 1890 by the county extension of the Skaggs Springs Road to Stewart's Point. The road followed an Indian trail that had been used for foot travel for centuries, and Native Americans were among the beneficiaries of the route: Kashaya Pomo families near Stewart's Point could now travel by buckboard to seasonal field work in the Russian River Valley, while Dry Creek and Cloverdale Indians used the route for their regular summer trips to the coast. The



Checking the tracks on the local railroad (photo courtesy of Edwin Langhart Museum, Healdsburg)

Skaggs Springs resort could now advertise that they were 20 miles by road from the coast, allowing guests excursions to the seashore. Of more economic importance to some of the western residents of the area, the new road gave access to the coastal landings around Stewart's Point and Gualala, where ships carried timber and tanbark to San Francisco. Given the poor roads in the area, one old timer stated, "If you could get it on a ship, you could haul it across the Pacific cheaper than you could haul it to Healdsburg by team" (30). We have no record of how much the coastal route was used by area residents, but there is no doubt that for ranchers living near the Gualala divide, shipping goods to the west would have been the easier route.

A third major change in the travel network was a shift in the southern terminus of the railroad, which reduced the San Francisco-Cloverdale ride by a full hour. The bay steamers had plied between San Francisco and Donahue's Landing until 1884, when the railroad was extended to Tiburon, and the steamer trip to San Francisco then took only a mere half hour. With fast trains and the new steamer connection, it took little longer to reach San Francisco from Healdsburg or Cloverdale than it did a century later.

EARLY COMMUNICATIONS

Changes in communications kept pace with those in transportation. With the coming of the first stage stops in the early 1850s, mail was delivered by Wells, Fargo and Company to Healdsburg, Geyserville, and Cloverdale. Most early mail from the rest of the United States came to San Francisco by ship. Carried around the Horn, the mail from the East Coast was painfully slow, taking as much as eight months to arrive. It is easy to imagine the anxiety of separated families, when the "news" in a letter might have been completely reversed by the time of delivery. With the establishment of overland mail service in 1858, letters took only 25 days from posting in midwestern cities to delivery in San Francisco.

The transcontinental railroad made an enormous difference in communications speed: an express train from New York to the West Coast took only seven days. With two trains leaving San Francisco for Cloverdale daily, mail from the border states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri—the previous home of many Lake Sonoma Area settlers—could be in the recipients' hands within a week, on a par with pre-airmail delivery in the 20th century. Since some settlers rode to town only every few months, however,



The Cloverdale post office in the early twentieth century (photo courtesy of the Sonoma County Room, Sonoma County Public Library, Santa Rosa)

the last few miles between post office and resident could be the longest.

Mail was more readily accessible to lowland residents in 1877, when the little settlement of Cozzens was established in Dry Creek Valley about two miles downstream from the present dam. Mail was delivered daily to the Cozzens store, where there was also telegraph service and, after 1890, a telephone. From directories of the area, we can see that some residents took advantage of this new service. Mail service was also instituted at the Skaggs Springs resort and at Throops on the Rockpile Ranch, bringing even remote ranches into closer contact with the outside, although some residents still preferred the trip to one of the three towns to retrieve their mail. There were ways to speed up communication: when expecting an urgent telegram, rancher Orville Baldwin relates that he asked the post office to deliver

it promptly to a Cloverdale livery stable, which sent a rider with the message immediately upon arrival.

Without telephones, and with the long rides between houses, neighbors often communicated by letter. Messages were usually hand-delivered, presumably by a ranchhand, another family member, or a settler who happened to be riding that way. In the Matthews collection, the majority of these messages alerted the recipient that his livestock had strayed onto the writer's property. For more complex messages, the writer would suggest a meeting "at the usual place," no doubt some point on the range midway between the two homesteads. Many letters between neighbors, however, were delivered through the mails, so that a message generated only a few miles away might take a week or more to be received.

CHANGING TIMES

The Lake Sonoma Area was constantly reacting to changes in the outside world and changing itself in the process. The pace accelerated toward the end of the 19th century, and soon it became difficult to distinguish between the local community and the outside. Clearly the area retained its identity, but it was rapidly becoming assimilated into the rest of the world.

In 1896 a simple but important change in mail delivery was instituted in the country. That was the year in which rural free delivery was established, and people no longer had to hitch up their horses and leave their property to send and receive mail. Mail was left by the resident in a sack hung from a wire by the roadside in front of his house. The sack was picked up by wagon on one leg of the trip; on the return trip a sack containing mail for the resident was left on the wire by the wagon driver.

A decade later, a revolutionary change occurred with the coming of the telephone. Telephone service had connected major towns since the 1880s, and residents frequently made calls when in town. In 1905 this service was brought to the resident's door, when a main line from Healdsburg was extended to the Higgs house at the head of the valley, while an intermediate line left Hendricks place on the slope overlooking Warm Springs Creek and connected with Geyserville. Cloverdale Township joined the system in 1909. Rural service carried as many as 15 customers on one line, each with a distinctive ring. In addition to its function of transmitting messages, the telephone came to be used as a kind of community entertainment. When receiving a call, it was understood that neighbors might also pick up the phone, and it was not uncommon for three- and four-way conversations to ensue.

The advantages of the telephone were great enough that service was quickly adopted. Acceptance of the automobile into the area came more slowly. While some automobiles were available well before the turn of the century and the first Model T Ford was introduced in 1909, use of these machines was initially restricted to urban areas. In 1913 Albert "Mug" Pritchett, son of one of the area's original settlers, became the first Ford dealer in Healdsburg. But poor roads in the Lake Sonoma Area made the automobile of questionable use. Upper Dry Creek resident Orville Baldwin described the problem:

We did not begin using cars until about 1917 and then only Fords and Chevrolets. We had seen too many of the heavier cars bog down in our roads in the winter time. Even in the summer few cars could make the last mile from the Benson land up to our house, parts of which rose four and one half feet to the road [16-1/2 feet] (31).

Outsiders, however, wanted to make the trip to Dry Creek by car: George Matthews received more than one letter from city friends querying, "Can I bring my machine?" Skaggs Springs guests also came into the area by machine—in this case a Mooreland truck, which replaced most of the horse-drawn stages by 1912. Slowly local residents purchased automobiles. Edwin Higgs, the Dry Creek roadmaster, first purchased an automobile in 1921 and sold most of his horses. Horses remained the only transportation over the range, and they were still needed to pass storm-damaged roads. In the uplands bordering the Lake Sonoma Area, the ordinary automobile is still no match for winter roads, and the four-wheel drive, not the sedan, has replaced the horse.

Another innovation entered the area at about the same time as the automobile—the radio. According to Baldwin, both the radio and the automobile had a negative effect on ranch life, speeding the pace and making residents dependent on their new conveniences:

The radio tempted men to stay in the house for some special program or to hurry away from work to be on time for it. When any trifling article was needed, forty minutes took one to town in the car, whereas by team of horses all day was consumed on the round trip (32).

The Skaggs Springs resort, always quick to offer the latest conveniences and entertainment, announced in a 1925 advertisement that the hotel had "a Modern Radio receiving set." In the late 1920s, electricity was brought in to most of the Lake Sonoma Area, a final link to the outside which brought refrigeration, care-free lighting and heating, and numerous other conveniences.

The demise of the Skaggs Hot Springs resort was another major change to affect the area, dramatically reducing the number of people in the Lake Sonoma Area. The hotel had shifted its emphasis several times in its history, first catering to the health conscious,



The automobile comes to the Skaggs Springs resort (photo from the Obed Bosworth collection)

then to the social elite and the socially ambitious who wanted to be seen vacationing in the right company. Competition among resorts after the turn of the century led Skaggs Springs to promote its recreational advantages, leading to a more active, family clientele. The introduction of the automobile, in part, led to the decline of the resort and its closing in the early 1940s. With the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 and widespread road improvements, the resort was within a two-hour drive of the city. But many other vacation possibilities were open as well. Travelers were no longer forced to follow the most popular paths, and drives could be taken in virtually any direction. Other factors also acted to reduce the resort's popularity. The quicksilver mining operation at Skaggs in the 1930s, while perhaps interesting to a few industrial buffs, could not have added to the resort's appeal. More important, the Great Depression of the 1930s sharply reduced the number of people who could afford resort life. Then, America's intervention in World War II further sobered the nation; men were needed in the armed forces, women were needed at home to work in the war effort, and vacations were a thing of the past. In 1942 the last daylight passenger train ran through

Cloverdale, the same year that Skaggs Springs closed. A brief attempt to revive the resort in 1950 failed.

One proposed change which would have made an immense difference in the area never materialized. Beginning in 1903, plans were made to forge a railroad through the Dry Creek uplands. In that year, the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad consolidated with six other carriers to form the Northwestern Pacific Railroad. Two of the goals of the new company were a direct line from San Francisco to Humboldt County and construction of several new spurs from the main line, including a proposed route from Healdsburg up Dry Creek, past Yorty Creek, and on into Mendocino County. A railroad stop in this remote region would have been an economic boon to most of the area's residents: wool and sheep, tanbark and timber, could have been directly exported. A station in upper Dry Creek would likely have stimulated the establishment of a small town, significantly raising land prices. As one local landowner wrote in 1903, "we will be in the swim very soon" (33). But the railroad plans were slow. An "electric road" had been surveyed through Matthews' property by 1910, a fact which he offered as an

enticement in a San Francisco advertisement for his property. The company went so far as submitting a surveyed route map to the General Land Office and the Secretary of the Interior, who approved the railroad right-of-way through public lands. Several rights-of-way were purchased from local landowners, but little more was heard of the project. Then, in September 1925, the group relinquished their claims and deeds to the rights-of-way. The plans of some speculators were certainly dashed.

The events of the 1960s to the 1980s perhaps represent the most extreme case of the outside's effect on the Lake Sonoma Area. During these years, hundreds of people—engineers, construction workers, geologists, fish and wildlife advisors, archaeologists—worked daily in an area which once had only a few score residents. The creation of the Warm Springs Dam and Lake Sonoma will doubtless have many profound effects, both planned and unforeseen, on the region. In the immediate area, roads had to be relocated, and mountainous land, once good enough only for grazing sheep, now has the potential to be developed into home sites. Canyon and Dry Creek roads, narrow country ways, carry vacationers and busloads of school children, who

come to view the Visitor Center displays and the Fish Hatchery. The nearby towns of Geyserville, Healdsburg, and Cloverdale, strategically located along the freeway, cannot be left untouched by the new attraction. Municipal leaders have expressed determination to control their future, with those in Healdsburg hoping to remain oriented toward agriculture. As a flood-control device and water source, the Warm Springs Dam and Lake Sonoma will no doubt stimulate growth along the lower reaches of the Russian River.

In addition to these large-scale material effects of the conversion of the upper Dry Creek Valley to Lake Sonoma, the studies that have been done of the area's culture will affect the public at large. At the damsite, displays interpret the area's history and prehistory. Plans have also been made to bring information about the area's natural and cultural history out into the community in the form of teaching materials, movies, and booklets. The interchange between this small, once remote area and the rest of the world has increased, and the Lake Sonoma Area continues to affect, and be affected by, the outside world.



The Lake Sonoma Area, 1985

WARM SPRINGS CULTURAL RESOURCES STUDY

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