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30. Hot Springs and Fumaroles, Early Days at The Geysers

by
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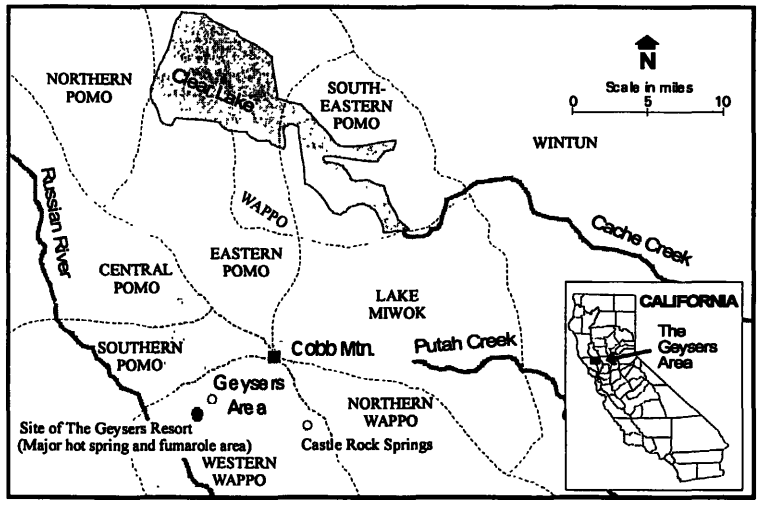
Pomo basketry language for ka teá katip', obsidian chips.

LIKE STRANDS OF GRASSES WOVEN TOGETHER INTO A POMO BASKET, EVENTS AT THE GEYSERS Geothermal Field overlap, shaping each other through time. In the first era of geothermal history at the Northern California site, The Geysers was untouched wilderness. About 12,000 years ago, this era ended and the second began when Native Americans came at the start of what is called the Paleo-Indian period. Now the area was inhabited by humans for the first time. By the mid-1800s when so many settlers came, six Indian tribes lived at The Geysers: the Southern, Central, and Eastern Pomo; the Western and Northern Wappo; and the Lake Miwok. All spoke different languages, had distinct cultures, and lived in well-defined areas of the field (Fredrickson, 1974).



Indian tribes in The Geysers area. *Fredrickson, 1974*

Two views of "The Old Indian Steam Bath" near The Geysers Resort Hotel, 1871, one half of stereopticon views by world-famous photographer Eadweard Muybridge. An animal hide could be thrown over the stick structure, trapping the steam. These are the only known photographs of an authentic Indian structure at The Geysers.

Most likely the steam bath in the photo is the one referred to by Benjamin Avery in 1873 in the following passage. "A ravine [near Big Sulphur Creek] contains a clear hot spring, which was formerly built over with stones and sticks by the Indians, and the steam used as a sanitary agent. It is still known as the Indian Spring."

Robert Thompson told in 1877 how the Indians built scaffolds or gratings over steaming pools, on which they placed the sick, especially those suffering from rheumatism.

Ernest Finley wrote in 1937 that a pool still is called the "Indian's sweatbath," and another steam bath used by indigenous peoples is located about two miles below the first.

Drawing of the Old Indian Steam Bath, published in 1890 by Dr. Winslow Anderson.

Trails open to all the tribes crisscrossed The Geysers. Some trails led to the hot springs and fumaroles, which were used for healing purposes and may have held ceremonial significance (Fredrickson, et al., Sept. 1978). Early writers noted that archaeological sites at The Geysers often were found near hot springs (Meneffee, 1873).

Castle Rock Springs, in the eastern part of The Geysers, was one of the main hot spring areas. It was used for healing, primarily by the Lake Miwok living near Middletown. This use can be traced to at least the beginning of the historic period. An elderly Lake Miwok knew that the hot springs were used before his time and told of a nearby burial ground that he could no longer find (Fredrickson et al., August 1978).

Although Wappo territory included The Big Geysers—the hot spring and fumarole area along Big Sulphur Creek where the Geysers Resort Hotel would be located—the area was open to other tribes (Fredrickson et al., August 1978). Wappo invalids, wrote Stephen Powers in 1871 or 1872, "were accustomed to wallow in the hot, steaming mud and pools, receiving benefit therefrom into their bodies."

An ethnographic field survey indicated that the Wappo collected sulphur salt at The Big Geysers. Sulphur salt is what the Wappo called the mineral-rich residue of evaporated hot spring waters. The Wappo mixed sulphur salt with the ashes of burnt stalks of cow parsnip and ate this with acorn bread, "presumably for medical purposes" (Fredrickson et al., August 1978). The Wappo word, *te'ke*, means "mineral left as a deposit after the evaporation of the water from the springs at The Geysers in Sonoma County" (Barrett, 1908). *Te'ke* may refer to sulphur salt.

A Wappo village called *tekena'ntsonoma* was just north of The Geysers "near the head of the main branch of Sulphur Creek and at a point about 12 miles a little south of east of Cloverdale." Again, the word *te'ke* is defined as above, *nan* means a well or other deep hole containing water, *tso* means ground, and *no'ma* means village (Barrett, 1908).

An ethnographic field survey found that the area around the former Geysers Resort Hotel was held especially sacred, that "its waters were used medicinally to treat a multitude of illnesses. An Indian woman said that her grandmother described the different types of water available near the former resort, saying 'Every kind of water came out of the mountain, ice cold, lukewarm, and boiling hot.'"

The woman said that a Cloverdale man, sick for a year, was cured by the following treatment at this site. Basins were excavated near sources of cold, lukewarm, and hot water, and small channels were constructed leading to each. Proper water temperatures were obtained by opening and closing the channels. On a litter made of willow branches, the man was brought to the area from the Cloverdale Pomo village of Makamo, near the confluence of Big Sulphur Creek and the Russian River. He stayed at The Geysers for four days and four nights, attended by an Indian doctor. At the conclusion, the man walked out without assistance, completely cured (Fredrickson et al., Sept. 1978).

William Bell Elliott, who followed a grizzly bear to Geyser Canyon in 1847, told his grandson, "Pop" McCray of Cloverdale, that the Indians he met at The Geysers had cut shallow niches in the bank of Big Sulphur Creek, which flows on the southwestern boundary. The sick were laid inside the niches on ladder-like stretchers, according to an interview from the late 1920s.

Stephen Powers was a writer and anthropologist who visited The Geysers in his travels among California's Indians in the summers of 1871 and 1872. His account of their lives includes the following legend that he reprinted from the *San Francisco Bulletin.* The truth of the legend is not known, but the seriousness of Powers' project suggests that he thought the legend was important.

A Legend of The Geysers

"In passing up the gorge in which are situated the Pluton Geysers [Geyser Canyon by the former Geysers Resort Hotel], you will notice a human head carved in stone. It bears so striking a resemblance to a half-finished piece of statuary that the most casual observer asks its history. This is the legend as told by the Indians who inhabit the Coast Range:

'The discovery of the Geysers is a comparatively modern event. From the time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, peaceful tribes of Indians inhabited the rich, luxuriant valley of Russian River and its tributaries. With hunting and fishing, with clover, wild oats, and acorns, with the various roots, berries, and fruits provided by Nature, they lived a happy, contented life. The dense chaparral which covers the mountains and lines the cañons of the region surrounding the Geysers effectually concealed these wonderful springs. It was since the

Spaniards and Mexicans began to settle the country and fatten their immense herds upon the rank herbage that the Indians were compelled to put forth greater exertions for food. Two of their young men were hunting on the south side of the river, below where Cloverdale now stands, when they caught sight of an unusually large grizzly bear. Simultaneously they fired their sharp-barbed arrows into the monster's side. He dropped as if dead, but well knowing it to be a habit of the grizzly to fall to the ground upon receiving the slightest wound, they again let fly their flint-headed shafts, and again struck the bear. Sorely wounded, the animal instinctively staggered toward the thick underbrush, leaving a trail of blood behind. Sure of their game, the hunters followed the blood stains into the chaparral and up the cañon....

'The sun had moved far down the heavens, and the lofty western mountain shut out his beams from the gorge. At sight of their dying game, the Indians gave a loud, exultant shout.... In their eager haste they had not noticed the thousand minute jets of steam issuing from the hillside, nor did they hear the hoarse, rushing sound that filled the cañon with a continuous roar, until just as they reached the body.

'Halting, amazed, they found themselves standing on the brink of the Witches' Cauldron, in the midst of the hissing, seething Geysers. One horrified, ghastly look at the smoky, steaming hillside; one breath of the puffing, sulphurous vapor; one terrified glance at the trembling, springy earth, and the frightened hunters darted back down the cañon. With stoical skepticism the aged chief and council listened to the tale the hunters told as the tribe gathered around the camp-fire. Earth that smoked! Water that boiled and bubbled without fire! Steam that issued from holes in the ground with a noise like the rushing of the storm-wind! Impossible! But the two young braves were noted for courage and truthfulness, and at last they prevailed on a score of their fellows to return with them. It was all true. There lay the dead bear by the black, seething waters that were hotter than fire could make them. After a thorough examination, the medicine-men concluded that the strange mineral waters must have rare healing properties. Booths of willows were erected over the jets of steam, and the sick laid thereon. The cañon became a favorite resort, and all the Coast Range tribes came hither with their invalids. Many wonderful cures were effected, and yet, occasionally, things happened that convinced the superstitious medicine-men that the place was under the control of an evil spirit.

'Finally, one cloudy night, a strange, rumbling sound rose through the darkness, and earth trembled violently. After that no one approached the spot for many days.

'It is a common belief among the Coast Indians that evil spirits frequently dwell within the bodies of grizzlies. It was now universally believed that the spirit of the slaughtered bear had charge of the Geysers. There were many sick and dying with a strange plague, or pestilence that had suddenly appeared among the tribe. Something must be done. Many urged a return, at all hazards, to the medicinal springs; others held that the angry demon of the gorge had sent the pestilence upon them. At last a gray-haired seer whose hand was skilled in all cunning craft was persuaded to try to appease the spirit by making a graven image near the Witches' Cauldron. Enough of the idolatrous traditions of their ancestors were remembered to enable them to have faith in this strange attempt at propitiation. Day after day the good old sculptor went all alone to the cañon, and chiseled away the rock until the semblance of a human face appeared. As the work neared completion, he often lingered later, in his anxiety to finish the statue. It was believed that when the task was entirely ended the demon would retire, and let the people be healed. A few more days and the finishing strokes would be made on the figure. Everyone was full of hope. The old man was working at the dawn, and when the evening came and the twilight shadows stole down the mountain and up the ravine he had not returned. Suddenly a weird, hollow moan seemed to tremble on the shuddering air, and at the next instant the earth shook so violently that the cliffs toppled from their base. The terrible shocks were felt several times during the night, and when the sun arose the old seer was gone from earth. The cold, stony face of the image alone remained. Not the slightest trace was ever discovered of the faithful sculptor; yet during the night new springs had burst forth three-quarters of a mile down the river. Here the sick were brought, and from that day to the present time the Indians used only the lower springs. Scaffolds are raised above the steam-jets three or four feet, and willows and brush are laid across. On these the sick are placed, and the mineral vapors encircle and heal them.'

"Years after, the white men came to the great valley of the Russian River, and in due time were guided to the springs. The Indian guides would not go farther than the lower springs, but the pale-faces found the image still guarding the ravine. Enterprise and love of gain have built a beautiful hotel across from the Geysers, and hundreds of tourists annually flock thither.

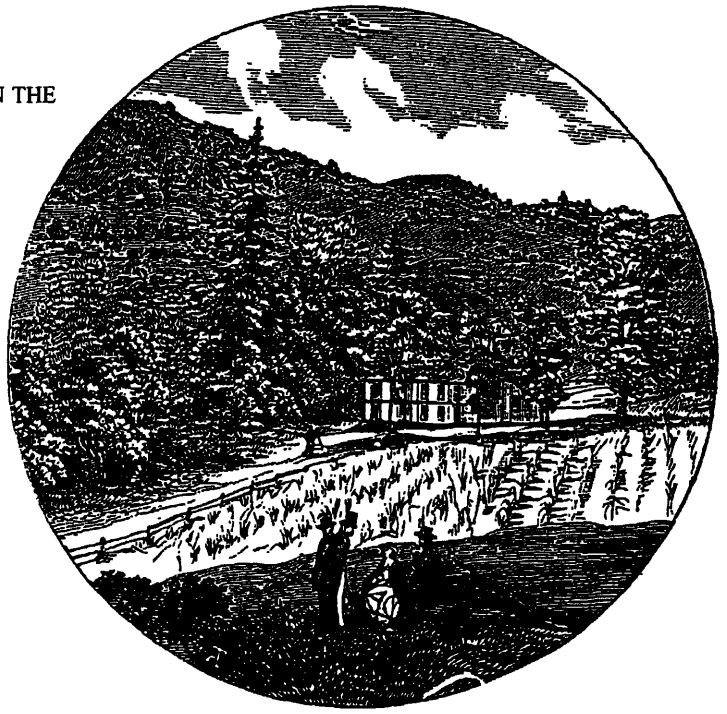
"The Indians, however, firmly believe that the wrathful demon still holds sway, and they can never be induced to approach the gorge of the main Geysers."

It was this "beautiful hotel" that opened the next era of history at The Geysers, the age of organized tourism.

Mountains, in Pomo basketry language.

The Resort

LET US IMAGINE WE ARE SITTING ON THE oak-shaded piazza of The Geysers Resort Hotel, pictured in the corner below in 1870 with the proud proprietor, J.C. Susenbeth. As leaves rustle in the afternoon breezes, we remember the history of The Geysers, the branches of the past weaving through those of the present. We gaze across Big Sulphur Creek at the southern edge of the geothermal field, the same steep canyons crossed by William Bell Elliott in 1847 when, as a member of John C. Fremont's survey party, he tracked and killed a marauding grizzly bear, Old Slewfoot.



Earliest known depiction of The Geysers Resort Hotel. *Hutchings' California Magazine, 1860*

Sources differ for exact dates, but between 1848 and 1854 tourists started coming to The Geysers and lodging was built. Robert A. Thompson wrote that the first was a house called the Old Homestead, built by M. Levy on a beautiful flat just west of Geyser Canyon. This was the first house in the area. Levy's flat, which he later promoted as a "Leafy Dell," was the same spot where Elliott killed the grizzly.

J. C. Susenbeth, proprietor, stands in front of The Geysers Resort Hotel in 1870. His ad read, "A good table is kept at the Hotel, and the best of liquors and cigars will be found at the bar." *One half of a stereopticon view, by Eadweard Muybridge*

Thompson said that in 1854 Major Ewing erected a cloth house across from Geyser Canyon where the hotel would be built. Levy, seeing this as a better location than his own, consolidated his interest with Major Ewing's. Soon a sawmill was brought in and construction was begun on the first hotel wing, which was built by James Alexander Mead.

Geyser Canyon, site of the fabled hot springs and fumaroles, is in the background. Better roads proved the key to commercial success at The Geysers. In 1869, a toll road was built from Knight's Valley (east of Healdsburg) to The Geysers Resort Hotel and a stage line was put on the route. In 1874, a toll road was built from Cloverdale up Sulphur Creek, opening for business the following season, according to Robert Thompson in 1877. In 1871, a stagecoach ride to The Geysers with Clark Foss cost $6. *One half of a stereopticon view, The Library of Congress*

The hotel did not prosper in its first decade. William Brewer, a geologist visiting in 1861, wrote in his journal, "A company preempted a claim of 160 acres, embracing the principal springs and the surrounding grounds, built quite a fine hotel on a most picturesque spot, and at an enormous expense made a wagon road to them, leading over mountains over three thousand feet high."

Brewer adds, "But the road was such a hard one, the charges at the hotel so extortionate, and the stories of the wonderful geysers so much magnified, that in this land of 'sights' they fell into bad repute and the whole affair proved a great pecuniary loss. The hotel is kept up during the summer, but the wagon road is no longer practicable for wagons and is merely used as a trail for riding on horseback or mules."

However, these setbacks proved temporary. "The first hotel register, kept in 1854, had 20 names. From then on the number increased every year, and in 1875 there were 3,500 names enrolled," wrote Robert A. Thompson in 1877.

What was The Geysers Resort Hotel like in its prime, from the late 1860s to the early 1880s? Major B. C. Truman wrote in 1883, "The hotel was so full during June, July, and August 1882, that people were compelled to sleep in bath-houses and on billiard tables. The hotel building is not at all modern in its structure, but is roomy and airy. There are broad piazzas on which the room doors all open; and Mrs. Sherwood, the jewel of a housekeeper, sees that everything is as neat and clean and sweet as a daisy.

"The table is as good as the market can make it; and, in their season, there is fish, and bear meat, and venison. We could recommend no better place for reasonable recreation, absolute *re*-creation, and perfect rest, than the Geysers. Instead of fashion, there is freedom; instead of expense, economy; instead of watering-place luxury, country comfort."

Some found the hotel too rustic. One guest, the beautiful Mrs. Frank Leslie, complained that the hotel was "constructed upon a novel and decidedly breezy plan," with thin board partitions that allowed guests to hear themselves discussed with "frankness and candor."

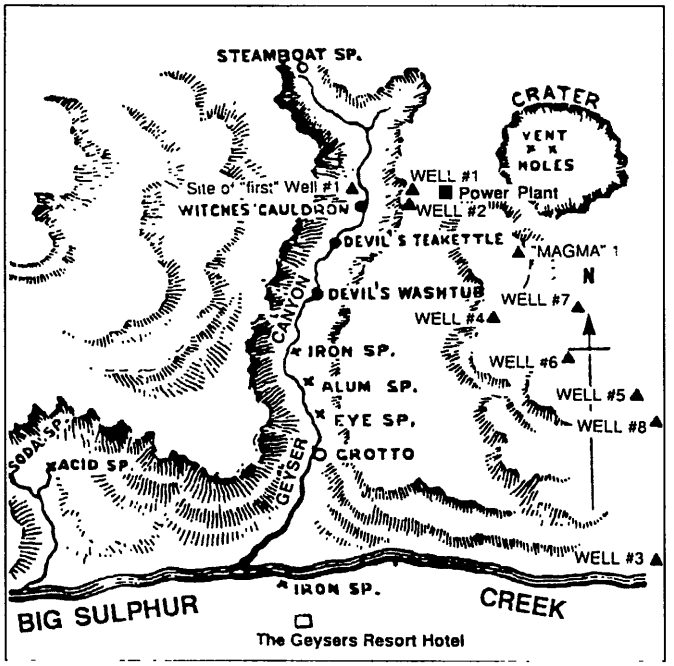
Perhaps neither Major Truman nor Mrs. Leslie knew that rattlesnakes were hung outside the kitchen door, valued by the Chinese cooks for medicine and meat.

When the resort owner's children wished to go on a picnic, a Chinese cook would mix Boston brown bread batter in a coffee tin and give them raw eggs to carry. The children would take these to a boiling spring by the side of the creek and put in the bread to bake. In a few hours when it was done, they would boil the eggs and enjoy a delicious lunch.

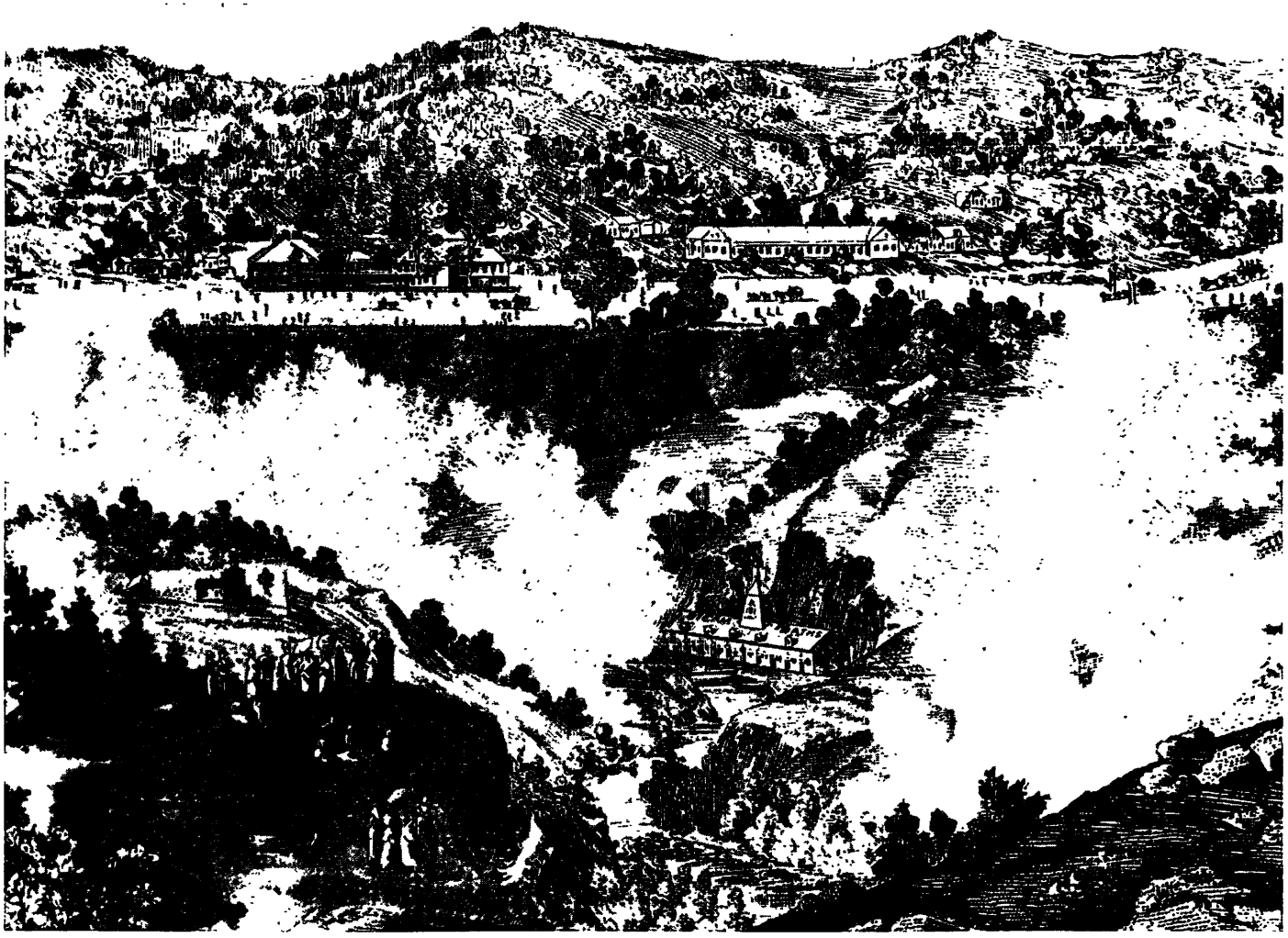
After 1885, the popularity of The Geysers Resort Hotel declined rapidly. During the next decade, unsuccessful attempts were made to maintain patronage with appeals to lower-income vacationers. One ad called the resort "the grandest, most beneficial for health, and cheapest pleasure trip in the world." Although the hotel's great days were never revived, a steady stream of visitors continued for well over 75 years.

Dr. Winslow Anderson noted in his book published in 1890 that "these famous springs [at The Geysers Resort Hotel] have been the objects of wonder and admiration to all the many thousands who visit them yearly."

Indeed, the guest list shone. Lured by advice that a trip to Northern California was incomplete without a visit to The Geysers, the rich and famous streamed to the resort—among them J. Pierpont Morgan, Ulysses S. Grant (his daughter-in-law worked in the resort as a chambermaid and a cabin was built and named in his honor), William Howard Taft, Horace Greeley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan, Lotta Crabtree (the celebrated actress), Madame Melba (the operatic star), Mark Twain, Jack London, Luther Burbank, Giuseppe Garibaldi, and the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII), for whom a cement tub was constructed at one of the springs.



This map of Geyser Canyon, published in the late 1800s, includes fanciful names for the thermal features. The Geysers Resort Hotel, the eight geothermal wells drilled by John Grant in the 1920s, and "Magma" 1, the first modern well drilled in 1955, are added for reference.



View from the top of Geyser Canyon, looking toward The Geysers Resort Hotel, by now an extensive complex. Drawing from Dr. Winslow Anderson, 1890. Dr. Anderson advised hotel guests that "Each thermal and mineral spring differs materially in composition and temperature from any that may have been used before.... Place yourself, therefore, under the management of the competent keepers of the baths and the attendant physician, and do not use your own judgment about a matter which you but imperfectly understand."

"Do not," he added, "commence a course of treatment at the springs by bathing once or twice daily. The American fashion, as noted elsewhere, of hastening and rushing through everything may do well enough for business, but where the life of an individual or the treatment of an obstinate disease is at issue this plan is not only deleterious, but may prove fatal to the life of the patient."

Geyser Canyon, *Hutchings' California Magazine, 1860*

Benjamin Avery wrote, "The best time to visit Geyser Canyon is early morning, before the sun has risen above the mountain-tops.... Columns and clouds of steam may then be seen rising to a height of two hundred feet or more, obscuring the landscape like a fog just rolling in from the sea.

"One returns to the hotel after a morning tramp through Geyser Canyon and along Big Sulphur Creek with an enormous appetite, and is glad to rest for a few hours. Afterward, there are delightful strolls up and down the creek, and good trout-fishing for those who will go far enough." *Scribner's Monthly, 1873*

One half of a stereopticon view, by Andrew Price

These hotel guests, posing by the Witches' Cauldron, hiked up Geyser Canyon with a stout stick, called a 'Geyser pony' to marvel at the steam and hot springs. "Everyone takes a 'Geyser pony'... to help him or her over the rocks and springs, and then all start on the trail single file," wrote Benjamin Avery. "[On the way] the guide, who perhaps is the jolly landlord himself, points out a chalybeate spring of fine tonic properties, whose waters his guests imbibe, mixed with soda-water.

"The hot ground under the feet [in Geyser Canyon]; the subterranean rumblings; the throbs and thuds near some of the largest and most energetic steam-vents; the warmly moist atmosphere, filled with acidulous and sulphurous vapors, sometimes charged with strong odors of sulphuretted hydrogen; the screaming, roaring, hissing, gurgling, and bubbling of the various springs; all contribute to make the scene as repellent to some natures as it is grand and exciting to others....There are no spouting fountains in the canyon, but numerous bubbling springs, that sink and rise with spasmodic action. These number a hundred or two, and are of varying temperature and constituents." *Scribner's Monthly, 1873*

THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF WOMEN COOKING EGGS WAS TAKEN BY EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE AT THE Witches' Cauldron in 1870. "The Witches' Cauldron is a black cavernous opening in the solid rock, about seven feet across, and of unknown depth, filled with a thick inky liquid, boiling hot, that tumbles and roars under the pressure of escaping steam...that seems to proceed from some Plutonic reservoir. One irresistibly thinks of the hellbroth in *Macbeth*" (Avery, 1873).

"The rocks for several feet above this infernal fountain, over which its contents have splashed, were covered with innumerable crystals and stalagmites of pale sulphur. In the year 1861 this cauldron, from some unknown cause, was emptied of its contents and filled with steam. The proprietor of the hotel at the place, fearing that it would thus be deprived of one of its greatest attractions, caused a small stream of water to be led into the cauldron, curious himself to see what would be the result. The instant the cool water came in contact with the lower portion of the cavity a fearful commotion ensued. The ground, for several rods about, shook with violence, and in a few minutes after, the inflowing water was ejected with stunning reports, and thrown to the height of nearly one hundred feet. In about three hours after the water was shut off the viscid fluid reappeared, and has continued to boil and bubble ever since" (Cronise, 1868).

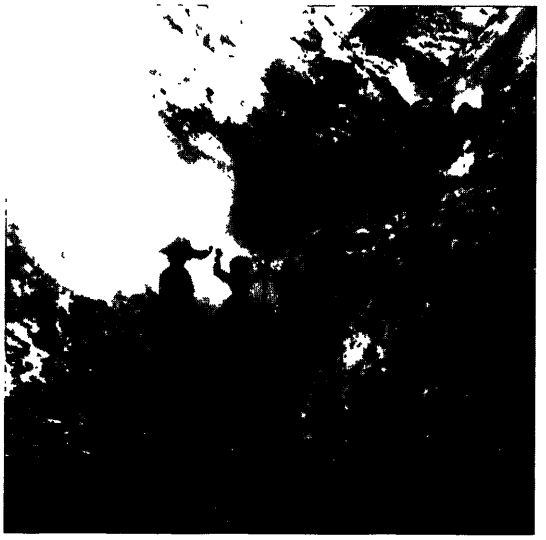
In the late 1880s, another author noted that an explosion at the Witches' Cauldron sounded like the report of a heavy cannon. When a ton or two of rocks blew from the uncharted depths, the noise was heard five miles away.

Eadweard Muybridge, soon to be world famous, was perhaps first to photograph The Geysers. Many of Muybridge's photographs of The Geysers are well known, yet not the fact that he made them.

After his work at The Geysers, Muybridge invented a way to take sequential photographs of animals and people in motion. Later, working with his locomotion studies on photographic strips, he invented motion pictures.

"Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog...
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble."
—William Shakespeare

Another especially famous Muybridge photograph of The Geysers was taken at the Witches' Cauldron. "A clever photographer, Mr. Muybridge, conceived the idea of grouping three lady visitors about this cauldron, with hands linked, and alpenstocks held like magic wands, in which position he photographed them," wrote Benjamin Avery in an article entitled *The Geysers of California*, published by *Scribner's Monthly* in 1873.



One half of a stereopticon view, by Eadweard Muybridge, 1870, titled "The Witches' Cauldron, *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene I."

Scribner's hired Thomas Moran, not yet the world-famous artist he would be, to illustrate Avery's article by drawing some of the Muybridge photographs. The drawings Thomas Moran made are widely reprinted and never credited to the artist, perhaps because he signed them with only his initials at the time when his career was just beginning.

Thomas Moran would gain international renown for his many paintings of Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Canyon, which he visited time and again. Moran Point, Mount Moran, and Moran Canyon—famed western sites—all are named after him.

Drawing by Thomas Moran of the Muybridge photograph for *Scribner's Monthly*, 1873. Note Moran's overlapping initials (T, Y, M) in the lower right-hand corner. The *Y* stands for "Yellowstone."

"WE FELT LIKE BOILED ANGELS" A FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT

"During May 1880, Fred. Somers, a well-known writer; Charlie Stoddard, the poet; Julian Rix, the artist, and another *trio* of valetudinarians, one day shook the San Francisco dust from their sandals, and hied themselves to the Geysers for recreation and recuperation, which emancipation they must have abundantly enjoyed, according to Somers' account of their little 'racket,' which appeared in the *San Francisco Argonaut* on May 15, 1880, a portion of which we reproduce, as follows:

> 'Inside, the house is partitioned off into male and female departments, with similar accommodations for each. Under the bath-house is a jet of steam, that bursts out of the ground just reeking with sulphur and iron and all the sweet-smelling minerals in the bowels of the earth. Over this jet a half-hogshead has been placed, and, by means of a wooden spout, the steam is conveyed to what may be called the *perspiration parlor*. Shedding our clothes, we investigated this apartment. It was a sulphur-stained room, with a settee against the wall, and a few chairs with raw-hide bottoms. Forsyth showed us the steam spout, and the adjustable valve, and how, when the valve was pushed in the steam would crawl under the floor, and climb over the back of the innocent-looking settee, and flay you alive. Then, having explained things, and invited us to take seats without cushions or anything, he proceeded to give us a practical illustration. He pushed the valve, and while the conversation went on the steam began to transact business. It came up the spout, and crawled in under the floor, and came out under and over the back of the settee just as has been described, and it made things very tropical. In less than five minutes that little room looked, and felt, and smelt, like a miniature Hades, with Forsyth in the box office. Hardened and accustomed to this temperature, he smiled through the vapor, while the six of us smothered in the sulphur. The skin rolled off in flakes as we frantically caressed our ribs. Every pore was open and howling with the heat. Finally, when the perspiration was pouring beautifully, and we were yelling for forks to try ourselves and see if we were not done, Stoddard broke up the *sèance* by fainting. We dragged him under the tepid shower in the next room, and he recovered. Then, red as lobsters, we went through the rest of the performance—with a slight suspicion, however, that we were getting more than the regulation dose. The tepid showers were delightful. The water came direct from the warm springs in the bank, and, tempered with minerals, was as soft and soothing as oil. From the warm showers we filed down a steep flight of stairs and took a plunge into a large tank of sulphur water as clear as crystal, and also toned by the hot springs to a degree suited to the steaming body of the plunger. Here we lay off to cool, as it were, and then, passing under the cool showers, were ready for the divans, or lounges, arranged after the manner of the Turkish baths. Amid the curling smoke of cigarettes we pronounced this natural bath very good.
>
> 'Fresh from God's Hammam, we felt like boiled angels. The skin was as soft as silk; the liver fluttered with joy; there was a tingling sensation along the spine; and, finally, there succeeded a sleep that tangled up the whole splendid sensation'" (Truman, 1883).

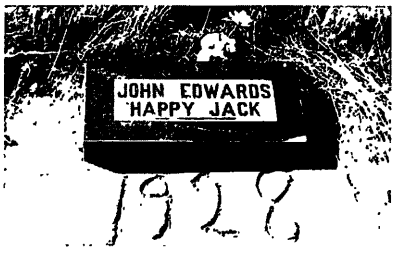
The Legend of "Happy Jack"

This 1922 photo of "Happy Jack" Edwards was taken at his homesite north of Geyser Canyon, near The Geysers Resort. "Happy Jack," with a long white beard, is standing at photo right. Today, 12 modern wells in The Geysers Geothermal Field are named after him.

Geothermal Resources Council photograph

Ernest Finley wrote in 1937, "Among the passengers on a stage that rolled into The Geysers [around 1908] was a wealthy San Francisco lawyer. He is said to have gone to the place to obtain relief from arthritis, for one reason, but there was another: his affliction was not limited to physical suffering, and he also sought surcease of sorrow following a romance that had gone wrong. Near the top of the peak directly above The Geysers he built a rude cabin, with only the hard earth as a flooring, and in this primitive abode he lived without companionship for more than a score of years.

"From the day that he entered the region until the day of his death the man never left Pluton Canyon [Geyser Canyon]. Now and then he would descend the mountain to obtain food and necessary supplies. Nature must have soothed the pangs of unrequited love as well as the ills to which flesh is heir in the case of this latter-day hermit, for he appeared always to be in jovial mood on visiting the hotel or when curious tourists climbed the mountain to talk with him and inspect the strange conditions under which he lived. In time he came to be known far and wide merely as 'Happy Jack.'



"The hermit died in 1928 and was buried on the mountain he loved, which had brought him relief from both bodily torture and anguish of spirit, with the moaning sibilance of 'Steamboat Geyser' as a never-ceasing requiem. The site of his burial place,

about one hundred feet from the little cabin he occupied, which is still standing, is marked by an expensive concrete sepulcher. The stone at the head of the vault, conspicuous by its strange surroundings, bears the simple inscription: John Edwards—'Happy Jack'—1928."

Until 1912, a stage ride began and ended most visits to The Geysers Resort Hotel. One early tourist wrote at the end of a vacation;

"And we will ride away from the Geysers, grateful that we have seen its marvels and terrors, and the more grateful that the Creator hides from us, by so much ever-renewing loveliness on the bosom of the world, the awful fact which the 'Professor' has so concisely stated, that we live on a globe which has a 'crust of fossils and a heart of fire.'"
Bancroft's Tourists' Guide, 1871.

The hogback road from The Geysers. (W. Anderson, 1890)

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