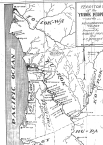
Ancient And Modern Blend For Klamath Carnival



The Yurok world. The Klamath river—"The River" for the Indians of old—is the focal point of the Yurok legends and beliefs. The map shows the various tribal boundaries and settlements in the Klamath river region. The anglicized names have been reconverted into Yurok names.

Scene of Daredevil Race Was Highway and World Of Indian Tribes in Area

By ED NEUMEIER

Way back yonder when Time was being born and the great Indian god Wah-Pek'u-Maou was founding the world for the Redmen, the sun travelled an overland route between the two great oceans of the east and west. This great ball of fire rolled along the ground merrily for centuries and then wore a deep crevice along the pathway. And as this lengthy crater grew deeper and deeper, Wah-Pek'u-Maou ordered the sun to travel overhead, so that he could shower his light more effectively.

Sun obeyed. And he traveled in his canoe. And at the edge of the world he had a cabin wherein he tied his canoe each night after his return trip underground. And there he would sleep until his next trip through the sky.

And this world was the Klamath river. And when sun began his overhead traversing the two great oceans on each side of the world flowed together to form the Klamath in the crevice vacated by sun.

This is the Indian legend. And it is on this river, California's longest, that the daredevil race will be held when Klamath presents its spectacular sports carnival July 8, 9 and 10. Perhaps the god of all things, Wah-Pek'u-Maou, will watch from his overhead vantage spot as the modern white man attempts to conquer the Indian highway in a 176-mile stretch of treacherous rapids and falls. There is no existing record to show the performance of this feat before.

The river has served as a waterway connecting Indian tribes and villages for centuries. A swift, muddy highway in winter, and a dangerous, plunging pathway in summer is this water highway. For centuries Yurok, Karok and Hoopa tribes paddled to and fro between villages via the Klamath. In 1828 a visionary white man traveled to the small Indian village on the mouth of the river, Requa, attempting to find a passageway to the Missouri river! Such has been the repute of Klamath greatness.

Bordering this 176 miles of aquatic splendor and treachery are rolling, densely wooded hills and splendid, sheer precipices of hearty rock. The area is fabulously rich in natural beauty. It is primitive and challenging in both spirit and appearance, just as the river is primitive and challenging. And it is this challenge which scores of daring white men and red men are accepting when they put their frail boats and modern outboards into these waters.

Several attempts have been made to trial run the river in exploration for the race. They were met with heroic defeat at the power of swirling, foaming rapids just south of the Indian village of Olem-itit, or Orleans. There are also two dangerous falls, the Ish-Pish and the Ike, and expert boatmen have declared the surrounding 15-mile stretch as impassable. Another boating danger are the tall, jagged rocks just under the surface.

Tiny Indian houses speckle the hillsides down the river. Some of these homes were dug as a bit with trees and brush covering the top to form a mound in the earth. Others are nestled in the many tiny valleys which open surprisingly along the river. Indian dugouts hewn from huge, solid logs are tied along the banks, and handwoven willow branch eel baskets rest on the shore awaiting a good eeling season. From fishing platforms along the river Indian cast their gill nets, usually handmade from willow roots.

The middle of this Indian world is Ten-ek (near Orleans), where there is a gigantic crater along the Klamath. A coyote, a treacherous spirit, lived in the old Indian world before men existed. One day this evil spirit viciously attacked the sun while he slept in his eastern cabin, by scraping his canoe so that in the next day's journey through the sky, sun sank and fell. This impact of sun falling to earth dug a huge crater, the one near Ten-ek. And though sun's canoe was immediately repaired, the crater remains until this day. Or so says Indian legend about its formation.

Just above this spot lurks a gigantic mass of hidden boulders in the Klamath water, lying in wait to lure the unwary boatmen into a watery mishap. From there until the site of the falls, the river narrows and plunges through deep gorges.

Jedediah Smith's historic trek in an attempt to find his way by water to the East began in the Southern valleys of California, where he heard of a "gigantic river to the north" that might lead him to Missouri. The Columbia was meant, but with his small band of men and horses, he was the first white man to be seen by the Klamath region Indians. His horses, or elks as the Indians termed them, amazed the redmen more than the white faced strangers.

This, then, is the scene into which the Klamath River Sports Carnival, July 8, 9 and 10, will be cast. Wah-Pek'u-Maou on his high throne above will see some strange antics as the descendants of the men who conquered his race, as well as many of his own descendants, the Indians, pit their variously-learned skills and tricks to attempt a conquest of the great god's waterway.

The spirit of the ancient Indians and their primitive cultures is dominant in this Klamath river area. It permeates the trees and hills, the rivers and glades, the valleys and plains. And into this atmosphere of antiquity and simplicity, the sudden roar of modern motors and the cries and applause of the thrilled spectators, will produce a strange effect. For no applause and no roaring motors can drive this dominant spirit from the woods and lands and waters; this is stronger and more durable, perhaps, than the clamoring manifestations of modern civilized culture. It is permanent because it is basic. It is the birthplace of a human culture, the geography of which has yet to be

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The elaborate costumes and headpieces pictured above will be some of the ancient Indian array worn at the Yurok ritual brush dance. From left to right the above pictured are Viki Gensaw, Robert Spott, Yurok Chief, Lawena Brantner, Murray Stravers, state official, and Virginia Taylor. The highly priced head piece of Chief Spott is made of red woodpecker scalps with trim of black duck feathers, all designed on the soft white deer buckskin.

My sincere thanks to those who supported me during the recent elections. I pledge my best efforts during the coming term.

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A contrast in costume. This is a far cry from the garb of Yuroks a century ago. The twentieth century streamlined model is Miss Ora Owens, direct descendant of one of the oldest Yurok families in Del Norte county. She will be one of the Indian maiden contestants in the Indian dugout boat races. She paddles a wicked oar, they say.

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Klamath Carnival—

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distorted in any great degree.

There will a strange concourse result during this carnival time. Undoubtedly deep wrinkles will cross the brow of great Wah-Pek'u-Maou when this blend of modern nonsenseness and technical skill merges with the primitive serenity and profound natural splendor.

But Wah-Pek'u-Maou may experience more gratification at other spectacles of this three-day event. Besides the daredevil race, shorter boat races will be held in the Klamath bridge basin, the finishing spot for the marathon event. Water acrobatics, Indian dugout exhibitions and rifle shooting will be staged in an especially built arena. And Wah-Pek'u-Maou will also see modern men fighting bucking broncs and wrestling steers and bulls, as the Del Norte Horsemen stage their two-day amateur rodeo. And he will see the Yuroks perform their native brush dance with all the ceremonies and costumes of the old Indian world. He will see his Indian ancestors take part in the primitive stick games, too.

And what will the Wah-Pek'u-Maou think of all these shenanigans of white man and redmen? No one knows. Perhaps he will smile at the modern Indians as they gaily and solemnly engage in their primitive games and traditions. Perhaps he will frown at the Indians and white men who presumptuously befoul his great water highway with churning metal propellors and gasoline fumes and smoothly surfaced wooden boats. Perhaps he will smile indulgently at these whims of modern man and silently bless this blending of modern white and primitive red cultures. No one knows. But the show goes on.

Louise Suggs Victorious In Women's Golf Meet

OKLAHOMA CITY, June 25. (U)—Louise Suggs, Carrollton, Ga., defeated Betty Jameson, San Antonio, Tex., 5-4 to win the women's western open golf championship here today.

The victory was the first professional triumph for the little Georgia star. It also gave her her third western title to share honors with Mrs. Babe Didrikson Zaharias and Patty Berg, also three time winners of the event.

Quincy, Mass., was settled in 1625 and ranks among the oldest permanent settlements in New England.