

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD INSPECTION
NEAR PRESTON SCHOOL OF INDUSTRY
AMADOR COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

by:

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INTRODUCTION In January, 1994, the author was contacted by Mr. Dan Patterson, a horticulture instructor at the Preston School of Industry (PSI), regarding some unusual cultural features he discovered in an undeveloped field on PSI property. He requested that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) provide assistance in interpreting and assessing the significance of these cultural features. A field inspection took place on February 1, 1994. Present were the author, retired state archaeologist Fritz Riddell, Mr. Patterson, PSI librarian John Lafferty, and PSI parole agent Glen Villa. This investigation was not driven by any project requiring a CEQA review and consequently, did not result in a formal archaeological survey on the property. It is best described as a field inspection where the group was led to a series of possible sites. Therefore, no archaeological coverage map or archaeological site records were produced. This report was prepared to document observations made during this inspection and provide accurate site locations on the Ione, CA USGS quad map.

PREFIELD RESEARCH

Dan Patterson and John Laffery have been exploring the history and prehistory of PSI, originally built in 1896. A centennial event is currently proposed for 1996 to celebrate its glorious 100 year history. During research for the centennial, Dan Patterson found a low-flight 1958 areal photograph which revealed images of several unidentified circular features (Figure 1). A review of the ethnographic literature for the Ione Miwok peoples indicated that these may be remains of large ceremonial structures called roundhouses. Mr. Glen Villa, a full-blooded Ione Miwok man, was later consulted, and he indicated that he knew of a Ione Miwok roundhouse site near the PSI property. He took Dan Patterson to this location.

Prior to making this field inspection, the author visited the North Central Information Center of the Historical Resource File System (located at California State University Sacramento) to determine if any archaeological or historical sites were known to exist on or near PSI property. Two historic sites related to PSI history (CA-AMA-275H, AF-3-23-H) were recorded by Jim Woodward southwest of Preston Road and two bedrock milling stations (BRMs) (CA-AMA-165, 166) were recorded by Lee Motz near Preston Reservoir in 1977 for a water pipe project. Other than these four, no recorded sites are listed on the North Central Information Center basemaps for the PSI area. The cultural features observed during the field inspection reported herein are new discoveries to the state historical resource inventory.

OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING FIELD INSPECTION

Dan Patterson led the group to numerous features he had identified during his research and previous field surveys. We also revisited the two previously recorded BRM sites near the reservoir. A temporary number (1 through 12) was assigned to each site visited and their locations were carefully plotted on the Ione, CA USGS 7.5' map (Figure 2). The site numbers listed below correspond to the numbered sites shown on Figure 2.

Site 1 This is a housepit village site, the site which was previously known to Glen Villa and his family. It is situated on the top of a hill west of the stream called Sutter Creek, approximately 100 meters east of Waterman Road due east of the PSI guard tower. A wooden utility pole supporting transmission lines exists on the site. This is private property, not owned by PSI. Dan obtained permission from the landowner to inspect the site area. A large circular depression 45 feet in diameter with a two foot earthen berm exists on the top of the hill. This is clearly a well-preserved Miwok roundhouse. A cluster of rocks in the pit's center reveal the remains of a hearth, and a gap in the berm shows the location of the former doorway. It faced east. A series of smaller circular depressions (about five) adjacent to the north are probably small houses - part of a village site. No midden or artifacts were seen. According to Glen Villa, this site was last

occupied around the time of John Sutter (A.D. 1839)

Site 2 This is a historic mining site. A portion of a hilltop has been removed by hydraulic mining leaving a distinctive one-acre hole and vertical exposure. Many historic artifacts (gold pans, buckets, bottles, etc.) were seen in the mined area. Tailraces and other mining features were clearly visible.

Site 3 Another historic mining site similar to Site 2. A large area blasted away by hydraulic monitoring. Not as many artifacts seen here, but tailraces and other mining features are visible.

Site 4 Man-made circular flat, 45' in diameter, cut into a gentle slope. The site is 15 meters west of Waterman Road. It is not a circular depression as is the main feature at Site 1, but a circular flat platform formed by carving a terrace into the slope. A recently-cleared fire break west of the fence on west side of Waterman Road shows no midden or artifacts.

Site 5 Circular flat similar to Site 4.

Site 6 Circular flat similar to Site 4. Fire trail cut next to feature reveals no midden or artifacts.

Site 7 Circular flat similar to Site 4.

Site 8 Circular flat similar to Site 4.

Site 9 Bedrock milling station with three large mortar pits on a small boulder or outcrop above the junction of two streams.

Site 10 A rock feature consisting of a flat cluster of local rocks approximately two meters in diameter. If prehistoric, this cairn could mark a grave. More likely, however, it is probably a relic of historic mining activity, perhaps an exploration pit (called a "coyote hole").

Site 11 This is the location of recorded site CA-AMA-165, a bedrock milling station with two mortar pits on a single rock outcrop. We could not relocate the site in spite of a ten minute search of all likely rock outcroppings near its mapped location. The sketch map did not provide much on-the-ground detail to help in its relocation. There has been some tractor disturbance on this hilltop and the boulders containing mortars could have been removed. It is also possible that we overlooked them. Some low rocks are hard to see in the grass.

Site 12 This is the location of recorded site CA-AMA-166, a bedrock milling station with two mortar pits on two separate rocks. This site is on a hilltop south of Preston Reservoir occupied by a distinctive old barn. We only spent a few minutes here. The barn still exists, but very few rock outcrops were seen. Finally Dan Patterson found one shallow (8cm) mortar on a low rock, but not the other one. He will do more searching here.

INTERPRETATIONS

There is no doubt that Site 1 is a Native American village site with a remarkably distinctive housepit thought to be the remains of a Miwok roundhouse. Some of Glen Villa's family came from here. The apparent absence of midden or artifacts suggests that this was occupied very late (circa A.D. 1840) but probably not into the prehistoric past. This is a highly significant site that should be recorded and preserved.

Sites 2 and 3 are interesting mining sites that may also have historical significance. There is no question that these areas were hydraulically mined, perhaps in the late 1880's or possibly earlier.

Sites 4,5,6,7,and 8 are extremely unusual man-made circular features. They can be seen in the areal photograph (Figure 1) and are very distinctive on the ground. I do not think they are Native American in origin. There are too many of them to be roundhouses and they are built differently - with pick and shovel. At first, we thought they might be Ghost Dance houses, bunkered-down into a hillslope for protection from the "great wind". However, Glen Villa told us that the Ghost Dance cult of 1870 did not really take hold in Ione. And again, there are too many of them. Don Patterson told us of an unconfirmed rumor (told to him by former PSI employees) that a golf course was built at PSI sometime during the 1920's or 1930's. It operated only for one or two years, but not as a commercial enterprise. It reportedly was built by a prison superintendent and maintained by the wards. I believe this information about an historic golf course at PSI is accurate. Sites 4 - 8 are probably ancient golf putting greens; relics of an early pitch and putt recreational golf course built with inmate labor. If my interpretation is correct, this investigation may have resulted in the classification of a new type of cultural resource: "FOSSIL GOLF GREENS". This may sound ridiculous, but these features may be significant in accordance with CEQA criteria due to uniqueness. I certainly have never seen anything like them anywhere in California during my 20 years of conducting archaeological surveys in the state.

Sites 9,11,and 12 are three bedrock milling stations where food materials (probably acorns) were processed. These could easily be associated to the village at Site 1, although other villages are probably also found in the general area. The oval outline of some of the mortars is distinctive from use with a large flat circular cobble that produces

uneven wear.

Site 10 is definitely man-made but of unclear origin. It is possible a historic mining prospect pit filled back in. The presence of quartz rocks in the cairn supports this hypothesis. Similar features have proven to be Native American graves. Dan Patterson expressed a desire to excavate or hand clear this cairn in order to determine its antiquity and origin. Fritz and I both cautioned against a hasty excavation. It should probably be left alone.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that this brief investigation is only the beginning of what may be a long-term, on-going research effort at PSI led by Dan Patterson. He promised to resurvey the locations of Sites 11 and 12 and report on his efforts to relocate the missing BRMs. Also, another possible site, that containing scores of "beads" (possibly a "Cry Site") has been reported near PSI. Dan will also chase down that lead.

Hopefully, when the location of these sites has been confirmed, CDF will try to undertake a more complete recording effort to make a more useful contribution to the California Historical Resource Inventory and a better record of the history and prehistory of Ione.

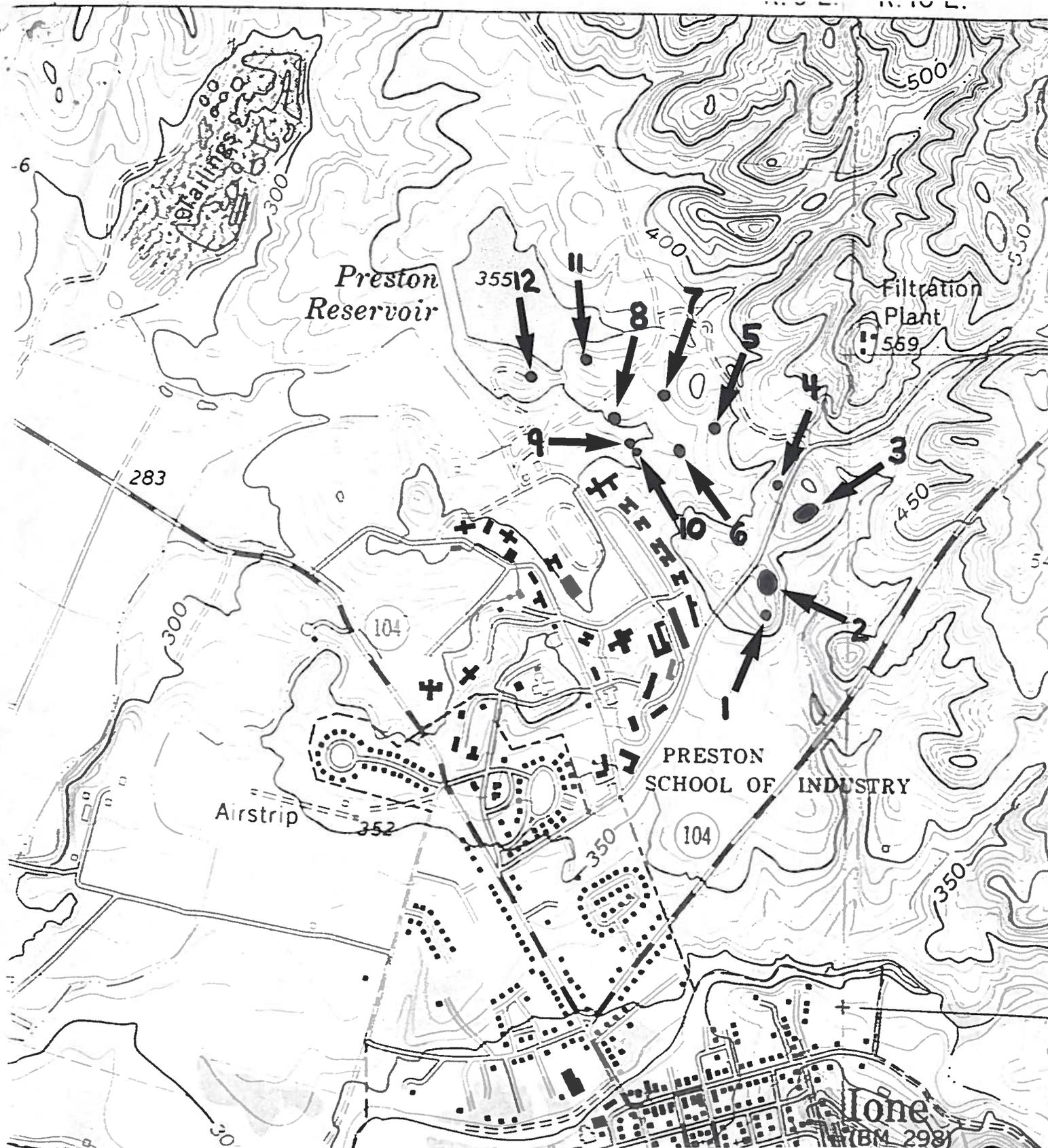


FIGURE 2

LOCATIONS OF SITES DISCUSSED
IN THE TEXT OF DAN FOSTER'S REPORT

SCALE (METERS)

enlargement of Ione, CA
USGS 7.5' quadrangle (1962)



0 100 200

Creek
CITY
BDY