

## **Critique of “Native Plant Gathering Along the Village Chain Routes of Yosemite Genealogical Family Use Districts”**

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[Editor’s note: this critique was received by the GWS in June 2006. Gaskell et al. have not responded to an offer to issue a rejoinder.]

Regarding Sandra Gaskell et al.’s “Native Plant Gathering Along the Village Chain Routes of Yosemite Genealogical Family Use Districts,” there is a misconception that the Southern Sierra Miwuks were the original Indians of Yosemite and the primary group of Chief Tenaya’s band.

Lafayette H. Bunnell was the only person to meet and write about Chief Tenaya and his band, aside from a reporter embedded with the Mariposa Battalion. Both Bunnell and the reporter wrote that Tenaya’s band was primarily made up of Mono Paiutes and not Miwuks. Not once is the name “Miwuk” mentioned in both of their accounts. There are many references in both accounts to the original Indians of Yosemite being Mono Paiutes.

There was a group that later became the Miwuks in the area, composed from a combination of different tribes. Unfortunately, members of this group were the ones who assisted James Savage, the man who captured Chief Tenaya. They were brought up from the valley to work for James Savage. Savage had made alliances with certain chiefs to have their people dig gold for him. They were the ones who coined the name “Yosemites” for Tenaya’s band because they feared them. It is true that modern-day Miwuks are made up of different tribal groups, including Paiutes, but historical accounts show that the Miwuks were the ones who assisted James Savage, and were not the original band of Chief Tenaya.

It took Bunnell several years to write his memoirs; during that time A.L. Kroeber and other ethnologists had gone to Mariposa and spoken to Miwuks. They were the same Miwuks who worked for James Savage.

Also, Lancisco Wilson was Paiute and not Miwuk.

We Paiutes are interested in the true history of the Indians of Yosemite. We believe that history should be accurate, especially the history of Yosemite. Lafayette H. Bunnell documents the first contact between non-indigenous people and Natives (see reference below). It is the only book with the original accounts of Chief Tenaya’s life.

### **References**

Bunnell, Lafayette H. *The Discovery of the Yosemite, 1851, and the War that Led to that Event*, on downloadable PDF file. On-line at

<http://esnips.com/web/YosemiteIndiansWebResearch>. To read the account without downloading the PDF, go to <http://www.abovecalifornia.com/lib/Houghton/18.php>.

*Chief Tenaya*, a short biography of the story of Chief Tenaya, with sources. on-line at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief\\_Tenaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Tenaya).

*Early Chiefs and Captains of Yosemite*. This website lists the original Chiefs and Captains of Yosemite. Lancisco Wilson, who is mentioned in Gaskell et al.’s paper,

was a Paiute headman, and is buried in Yosemite cemetery with a "Piute" grave marker. On-line at <http://thehive.modbee.com/?q=node/153>.

*Hetch Hetchy, Our Beautiful Valley*. This website has the earliest story of Hetch Hetchy and the Paiutes who roamed that area, with historical references. On-line at <http://thehive.modbee.com/?q=node/180>.

Russell, Carl P. *100 Years in Yosemite: The Story of a Great National Park*, Chapter III, "White Chief of the Foothills." The website referenced below describes the September 1852 death of James Savage and how the Miwuks and other reservation Indians cried over his death. This was a year before the death of Chief Tenaya, who was hiding amongst his brethren at Mono Lake during the time of Savage's death. On-line at [www.yosemite.ca.us/library/one\\_hundred\\_years\\_in\\_yosemite/savage.html](http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/one_hundred_years_in_yosemite/savage.html).

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