LESSONS IN BRONZE

Why Good History Matters

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Thank you to the many local historians, activists, and leaders, who freely shared their knowledge, gave support, and made this paper possible.

In mid-March 2018, a plaque honoring the heroics of a man during one of the deadliest periods of Shasta County's history was proposed. The plaque, containing only a few sentences, is one of the best examples of the need for the careful study of history. Titled "Pioneer Courage," the plaque memorializes "… the rescue and protection from vigilante revenge on this ground of twelve innocent Yana First Nation people following the Allen-Jones pioneer family murders of 1864." The bronze plaque attributes the salvation of the individuals to a man who owned a farm near the Sacramento River. Even though the text is presented as a straightforward account of an important but less known event from local history, conversations with community members and research reveals much more (Benda, 2018). The plaque has become an important example that can help clarify what ideals we should uphold, who we acknowledge, and what a vibrant community that values its history looks like.

Most histories of the Allen-Jones massacres start from the same place, the murder of two women, though the murders are closer to the middle of the story than the start. On September 8, 1864, a woman by the name of Catherine Allen (née Boyes) (Janice, 2007) who lived just east of Millville was attacked and killed reportedly by two Native American men. Her four children were also attacked, though they all recovered. A day later a Mrs. Jones who lived close to Copper City was attacked and killed, also reportedly by a group of Native American men (Madley, 2017, p. 324; Madley, 2013, pp. 37-38; Kroeber, 1961, pp. 74-75[1]; Hunt, n.d., pp. 40-42; Frank & Chappell, 1881, pp. 180-181). The atrocities that followed the murders came to be known as the Allen-Jones massacres (Hunt, n.d., p. 40). Supposedly seeking to exact revenge two vigilante groups formed: one dubbed the Cow Creek Company and the other the Copper City Company; combined the groups numbered about 100 men (Madley, 2017, p. 325; Madley, 2013, p. 38; Hunt, n.d., p. 43). Rather than search for the alleged murderers, these two companies hunted Native Americans with zealous rage, crossing onto property and entering homes seeking victims (Madley, 2013, pp. 38-39). They killed men, women, children, and babies, often in the most brutal and sadistic ways. Some of the horrific acts were recorded by Jeremiah Curtin, an ethnographer who first traveled through the area in 1884. Although twenty years later, many atrocities were recounted in heart-wrenching detail.

Take, for example, the story of the murder of a young Yana girl named Eliza. Eliza lived on a farm with a white family, washing, cooking, and cleaning. She was reportedly well-liked by all who knew her, but this did not save her when one of the men who previously worked on the farm led a vigilante group directly to her. Eliza begged for her life, reminding the man that she was no stranger to him; she had cooked for him, washed for him, and shown him kindness. The group not only took Eliza, but her aunt and uncle as well, and shot them. Eliza reportedly died with eleven bullets in her chest. Appalling as this was, it was not enough to satisfy the man who knew Eliza personally. The group celebrated their actions with a drink, and after setting off on their way, the same man proclaimed "I don't think that little squaw is dead yet" and returned to smash her skull with his musket (Curtin, 1898, p. 518).

It is accounts such as this, and many others recorded, that frame the massacres of 1864, less as vigilante justice for the murder of two innocent white women and more as acts of unadulterated hatred towards indigenous people. To quote a letter to the editor from the September 14, 1864, edition of the *Shasta Courier*: "Up to the present time it has been the endeavor of the whites to punish the actually guilty ones but they have now come to the conclusion that the only way to secure to

[1] Kroeber confuses the murder of Mrs. Dersch (misspelled as Dirsch) who was murdered in August of 1866 with that of Mrs. Jones (Hunt, n.d., p. 51; Frank & Chappell, 1881, p. 181).

themselves and families peace and safety is to exterminate the whole and punish the accessory as well as the actually guilty ones and they will do it regardless of the epithets applied to them by that scurrilous sheet called the Pioneer" (in Hunt, n.d., p. 45). Attacks on local indigenous people had occurred with regularity for more than a decade, but usually under the guise of retaliation for crimes committed by individual Native people (example in: Barry, 1879, p. 135).

Contemporary accounts of the massacres alluded to the dubious rationale for some of the attacks. Richard Gernon, a surveyor who spent time in the Mill Creek area, wrote in a letter "You have been misinformed about them [the Mill Creeks[2]] robbing my camp … It is a remarkable thing, that the white men who hunted the Mill Creek Indians, between the years 1854 and 1865, have always had their camps robbed in after years. And those who never hunted those Indians never had anything stolen from them by the Indians." Following this quote in her book, Theodora Kroeber states "It is to be noted that the same names appear and reappear in the stories of reprisals and counterreprisals [*sic*]. Some people showed a predilection for Indian scouting and vigilante service …" (Kroeber, 1961, p. 50). In fact attacks orchestrated by white pioneers are argued to be part of a larger system of genocide of Native Americans permitted and funded by federal and state governments (Madley, 2017; Madley, 2013; Lindsay, 2012) suggesting vigilante mobs were functioning more like mercenary militias (example in: Barry, 1879, p. 135). It has been reported that 361 to 500 Yana may have lost their lives as a direct result of the Allen-Jones murders (Madley, 2017, p. 328; Madley, 2013, p. 47; Hunt, n.d., p. 51), but Yana were under attack directly since 1850, targeted for elimination as early as 1858 and murdered through 1870 (Madley, 2013).

The murders of Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Jones were long framed as an unprovoked attack on two women, but at least one source argues that the attacks may not have been random. Years after the events, David Matlock informed Irvin Ayres that he knew who killed Mrs. Jones, and that her murder was in retaliation of an earlier murder perpetrated by her husband, John Jones. According to Mr. Matlock, Mr. Jones shot and killed a Yana man who was peacefully laboring in a field for a white farmer (Madley, 2013, p. 37). The extreme reaction that followed Mrs. Allen's and Mrs. Jones' murders is sometimes characterized as indiscriminate (Madley, 2017, p. 325; Madley, 2013, pp. 37-38), but the precipitating events as well as most of the subsequent massacres involved one specific group of Native Americans more than any other: the Yana. Groups cited as opposing the attacks more so than any others were ranchers and farmers. (Madley, 2017, p. 325; Madley, 2013, p. 37; Kroeber, 1961, p. 75).

Yana people were considered "friendly"[3] in part because they labored for white landowners (Madley, 2013, p. 36; Kroeber, 1961, p. 75; Hunt, n.d., p. 44; Curtin, 1898, p. 517). The Yana likely had little choice since available food and land resources had been decimated or appropriated by the growing number of pioneers entering the state (Madley, 2013, pp. 18-20; Kroeber, 1961, pp. 49, 60). Native Americans would sometimes work as labor in exchange for food, shelter, protection, and tradable goods (Madley, 2017, p. 51), and the Yana and other indigenous people were particularly noted as working as farm labor in Shasta County (Madley, 2017, pp. 324-325; Grifantini, 2016, p. 123; Madley, 2013, p. 36; Kroeber, 1961, p. 75; Curtin, 1898, p. 517). The Yana may have been regularly targeted for attack in the years leading up to and after the murder of Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Jones because farmers were eager to sabotage rivals whose access to free or low-cost labor enabled those rivals to undercut competition (Madley, 2013, p. 37). If the argument for targeting the Yana is true,

[2] Usually refers to Yahi Yana people.

[3] Additional adjectives such as tame or domesticated were also used (see: Hunt, n.d., pp. 44, 45).

the inverse of it may also be true — some farmers did not want the Yana killed because they sought to maintain their source of low-cost labor.

Up until 1863, California laws made it legal to keep a Native American person against their will for a fixed period of time and require service or labor of them without cash wages (Madley, 2017, pp. 286-287; Lindsay, 2012, p. 249; Magliari M., 2004; Magliari M. F., 2012; Kroeber, 1961, p. 45). In fact during the many massacres that occurred in the North State, babies and children were frequently kidnapped to be sold or used as labor. Estimates of the number of Native American children in all of California taken between 1852 and 1867 are around three or four thousand (Magliari M., 2004, p. 353; Kroeber, 1961, p. 46). Even after bondage laws were repealed, illegal slavery persisted (Madley, 2017, pp. 332-333; Magliari M. F., 2012, p. 190). The low cost of Native American labor was openly discussed as not only beneficial to white farmers and ranchers (Lindsay, 2012, p. 183) but considered necessary to sustain profitability, particularly on smaller, family-operated farms (Magliari M. F., 2012, p. 166).

Benjamin Oliver and John Gottlieb Justus Diestelhorst[4] both owned land near the Sacramento River, close to what is now downtown Redding. Oliver's land was located primarily in what is now Turtle Bay, the Garden Tract, and Kutras Riverside Addition, while Diestelhorst's land was located near what is now 'Lake Redding' on the Sacramento River and what is now Riverside Drive. At the time both properties would have been on the outer edges of Poverty Flats and both men farmed on their land (Lewis Publishing Company, 1891, p. 669; 1860 United States Census, 1860; 1870 United States Census, 1870; 1880 Unites States Census, 1880; Shasta County Recorder, 1867, p. 704; Shasta County Recorder, 1865, p. 647; Shasta County Recorder, 1863, p. 147; Shasta County Recorder, 1861, p. 25; Shasta County Recorder, 1960, p. 672; Shasta County Recorder, 1859, p. 440)). As recorded by Curtin, both Oliver and Diestelhorst were associated with the Allen-Jones massacres. To date, the reference in Curtin's book is the only source that establishes the two men's association specifically with the Allen-Jones massacres. Curtin mentions the men exactly twice, first saying of the Yana: "The few who escaped were those who happened to be away from home, outside their country, and about twelve who were saved by Mr. Oliver and Mr. Disselhorst[5], both of Redding" He notes again a few lines further down: "Oliver and Disselhorst, who saved twelve, were at the edge of Redding[6], where support was possible" (Curtin, 1898, p. 519). No further details are provided by Curtin as to how or why the two men were able to save the twelve Yana people, but Theodora Kroeber alludes to the benefit of strategic advantage ranchers may have had over vigilante companies: "[Curtin's] informants were ranchers who opposed the vigilante program, in principle totally and in practice when they were sufficiently armed and fast on the draw to hold the guards off" (Kroeber, 1961, p. 75). What Curtin does not state and what Kroeber's assertion does not make clear is the motive for saving the twelve Yana people nor who specifically those Yana were. Naturally, we would like to believe that their actions were driven by pure altruism, but history teaches us the truth is usually far more complex.

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[4]Spelling from (Shasta Historical Society, 2015). Alternate spellings include Gotlieb Diestelhorst (igoana, n.d.; Shasta Historical Society, 2015), naturalized as Gotleib F. Diestelhorst (Shasta County Genealogical Society, n.d., Shasta county, California, Naturalization Records: 1852 - 1932), registered to vote as Gotlieb F. Deistelhorst (Ancestry.com, 2011), Gotlieb Deistelhorst (Bachman, 1989; Lawson, 1965) and Johann Gottlieb Justus Deistelhorst. Frequently listed as John G.J. Diestelhorst or J.G.J. Diestelhorst (nativewon, Diestelhorst.JGJ.Probate; Shasta County Genealogical Society, Shasta County, California Register, 1898; Lewis Publishing Company, 1891, p. 668).

[5]Misspelling of Diestelhorst.

[6] It is not clear if Curtin understood that at the time of the massacres the area was not yet called Redding.

We do have more clues into the potential relationship between the Yana, Oliver, and Diestelhorst. From Curtin's memoirs a clearer picture of the living situation for Native Americans emerges: "The Wintus in 1884 had no land; they lived where white men would let them, generally on the useless land of some farmer or ranch owner. One day I went to Mike's 'home,' across the Sacramento. I found him living in two little tents just high enough to crawl into. They were on Mr. Reed's[7] land, not far from Reed's ferry" (Curtin & Curtin, 1940, p. 342). Reid's land was located across from the Diestelhorst property. There is also evidence that in the 1880s, a "rancheria" existed at the foot of Butte Street, located snuggly between Oliver and Diestelhorst's properties (Shasta Historical Society & Rocca, 2004, p. 12). Early census information was taken by walking home to home so proximity of entries on the census likely correlates to the physical location of homes. On the 1880 census[8] both Diestelhorst's and Oliver's entries are surrounded by Native American households.

No known record of particulars of employment, if any, between Oliver, Diestelhorst, and any Native American laborers is known to exist, so again we must look to other evidence from the time to see what may be inferred about the potential relationship. Curtin clearly notes in his book: "[indigenous people particularly of the Sacramento Valley] worked for them in return for fair wages. The Yanas were distinguished beyond others for readiness to earn money. White men occupied in tilling land knew their value, and employed them every season in haymaking and harvesting." It is further noted: "That year [1864] the Yanas had worked a good deal, and it was not uncommon for single persons of them to have from $40 to $60. One informant told me that a man showed a friend of his $400 which he had taken from murdered Indians" (Curtin, 1898, p. 520). While wage or employment agreements may have existed, given the advantages white settlers had socially, legally, and economically, bargaining power was tilted to their favor. According to records contemporary to the time Native laborers probably made less than a white or Hispanic laborer (Lindsay, 2012, pp. 249-252; Magliari M., 2004, p. 352). This may have been particularly true if security and protection, or the right to live on land, was implicitly or explicitly part of the payment agreement. Actions of employers who were protecting their employees cannot be justified as purely altruistic.

Sam[9], one of the interpreters for Curtin, was a Yana man who worked for Benjamin Oliver; another, Mike Reid, was a Wintu man who lived on Reid's land (Redding Museum and Art Center, 1980; Curtin & Curtin, 1940, p. 342). Reid's adoption of the surname of his white associate suggests something more than a strict employment relationship. It was a regular occurrence for Native American people to use the surnames of white families who were their legal custodians (examples in: (Christman, 2017; Magliari M. F., 2012, p. 183). A Native American man, who was called Old Tom on the 1880 census, used Oliver's surname as a result of his work for Oliver (Redding Free Press, 1902; 1880 Unites States Census, 1880). Though speculative, a Yana man named Tom Oliver who received two land plots in eastern Shasta County in 1907 (Bureau of Land Management, n.d.) could be the same Tom (referred to as Indian Tom) who appeared closely below Benjamin Oliver's family entry on the 1880 census and whose occupation was listed as "laborer" (1880 Unites States Census, 1880). Just prior to the massacres of 1864 it was possible for both child and adult (over age 18) Native Americans to be wards of white families (Madley, 2017, pp. 286-287).

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[7]Misspelling of Reid.

[8] The 1860 and 1870 censuses do not contain significant entries for Native Americans, likely because they were by and large excluded by census takers.

[9]Sam Batwi (sometimes also Batwee, Yana name Bathwii) who lived in Redding and served as an interpreter for Ishi years later (Luthin, 2014, p. 258; Waterman, 1903, p. 65).

Images from the 1880 census showing the proximity of Native American households (green) to Mr. Diestelhorst's (left, red) and Mr. Oliver's (right, red) entries (1880 Unites States Census, 1880).

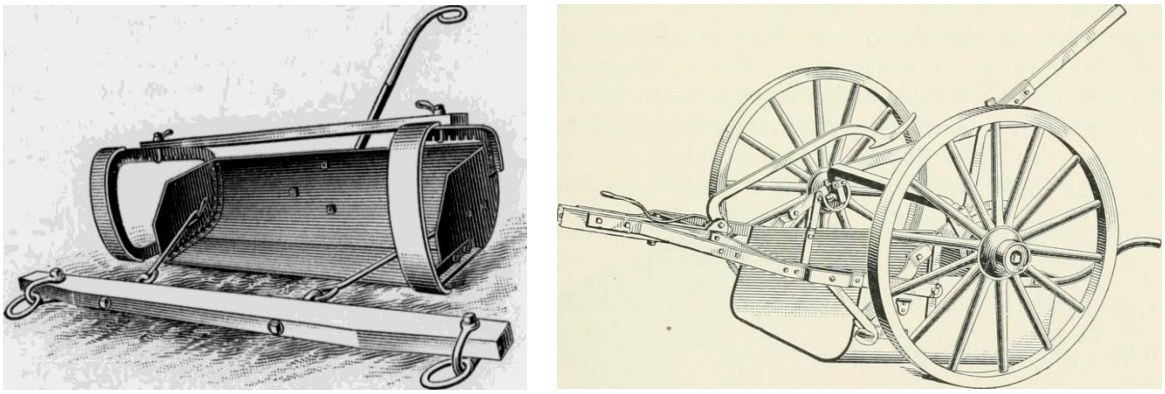
While both Oliver and Diestelhorst are recorded as having, together, saved about twelve Yana people, information of the exact circumstances is scant. Only one source suggests how the Yana may have been saved. In a letter, dictated to Curtin, several members of the local indigenous community describe the massacres of 1864 and the devastating impact they had on the Yana population. Two men are recognized for their actions during these massacres. "… there remain today but twenty-four [Yana people] and the majority of these would not be alive had it not been for the humane efforts of Mr. Oliver of Redding and Mr. Roberts of Round Mountain who secreted some and warned others to escape" (Curtin, 1896; Norel Putis & Et al., 1889, p. 6).

Over 150 years after the massacres of 1864, an implement was found on City of Redding land that had previously belonged to John Gottlieb Justus Diestelhorst. Identified as a Fresno plow[10] on the plaque the object likely has little or nothing to do with the text on the "Pioneer Courage" plaque, i.e. the Allen-Jones massacres, or Gottlieb Diestelhorst or any actions he took to save the lives of Yana people. The first Fresno scraper was patented in 1883 by James Porteous (Porteous, 1883). Made to collect soil in a retaining bucket, the invention incorporated design improvements that increased efficiency compared to earlier implements used to level or dig earth. Fresno scrapers are part of a type of dirt or earth scraper known as drag scrapers. Drag scrapers are pulled along the surface of the ground and based on pressure applied to a lever attached at the rear of the scraper more or less dirt is collected. Once the collecting bin was full the scraper could be tipped up onto curved bars and dumped

[10] The name of the implement is Fresno scraper.

(Fresno Historical Society, 2018). A different type of scraper is the wheel or wheeled scraper. In general, drag or wheeled scrapers can be used for any project that requires moving or grading earth; however they were used extensively on railroads, for levee or dam work, or to level public roads. Examining the details of the scraper found on the old Diestelhorst property, it is clear that the implement is the bucket of a wheeled scraper, not a Fresno or other type of drag scraper. Photographs of Gottlieb Diestelhorst's son and grandson show the two men using a succession of wheeled scrapers to grade Yuba Street circa 1904 (nativewon, 2011; Searchlight, 1903). It is not possible to tell from the photograph if the wheeled scrapers match the one found later on City property.

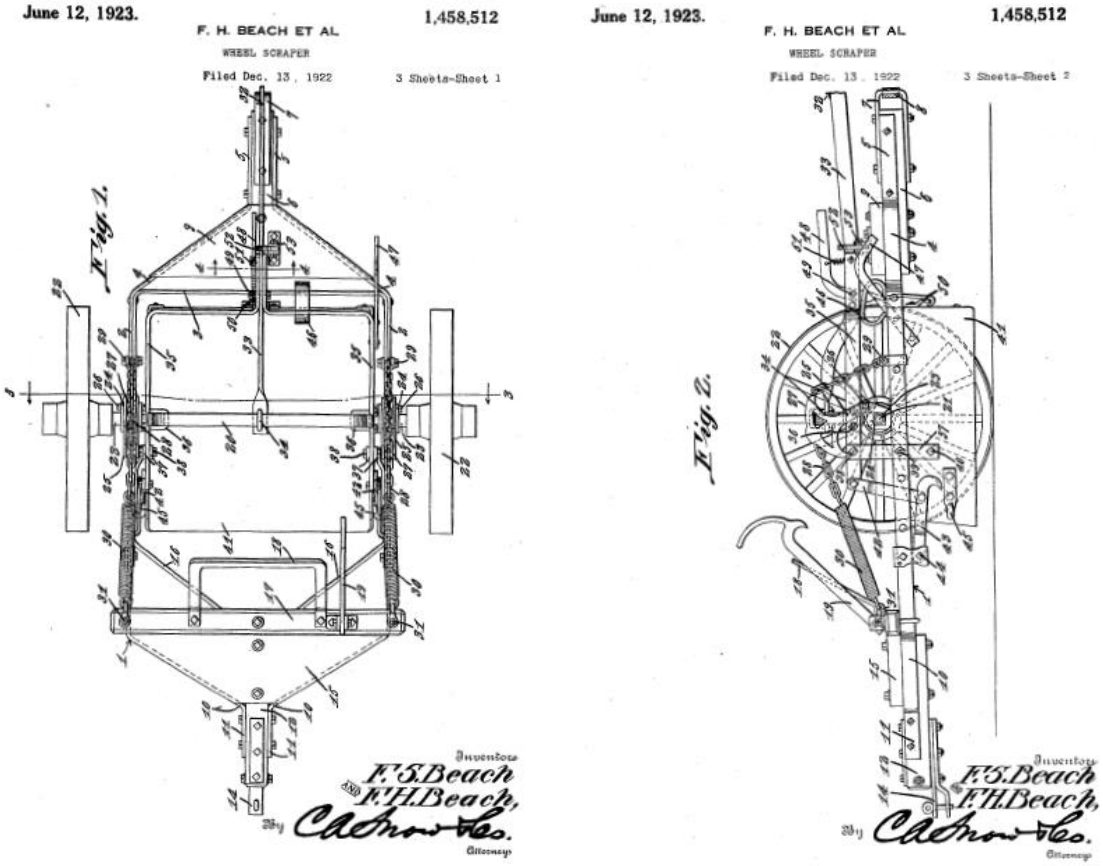
The implement that was found on City of Redding property, mounted for display.
Images courtesy of the author.



Renderings of a Fresno scraper (left) (International Textbook Co., 1914, p. 40) and a wheeled scraper (right) (The Colliery Engineer Co., 1897, p. 919).

Since much of the scraper is missing, determining the exact model is difficult and can probably not be done with any degree of certainty. Old catalogues from various companies who manufactured and sold wheel scrapers could help identify the model, but these resources are not readily available at this time so patent records, along with images from advertisements and photographs, were reviewed for comparison. While the basic design of the wheel scraper bucket is

consistent with wheel scrapers manufactured in the late 1800s to the early 1900s (You'll Need Western Plows and Scrapers for that Road Work Advertisement, 1919; McClellan, 1910; Deevy, 1886; Western Wheel Scraper Co., 1883), there are a few features that match one scraper more than any other. The wheel scraper patented by F.S. and F.H. Beach in 1922 (Beach & Beach, 1922) includes some features present on the scraper bucket found that are not seen on any other image or rendering of wheeled scraper buckets reviewed. On fig. 1 of the patent application the top view shows front side bars that match the bucket found, specifically that the side bars are flush, unlike other models of wheel scrapers where one sidebar comes up beneath the other (examples: (Ojibwa, 2013; WorthPoint, n.d.; Desert Classics, n.d.; Kirkman, 1901, p. 99)). From the limited research material readily available, feature 44 of fig. 2 of the patent application, which is an hourglass shaped bracket, appears to be unique to this scraper rendering, though patent drawings do not necessarily represent totally unique or final manufacturing plans. These two features are, in combination, unique to the Beach patent rendering. It is unclear what design differences may have been present in horse-drawn versus tractor-drawn scrapers, but further investigation could also help pinpoint the date and model of the scraper. Too much of the found scraper frame is missing, and some of the features are inconsistent or not pictured, but what may be possible is that the implement found is an earlier or different model of wheeled scraper that was used to form the foundation of the improved model depicted in the Beach patent.



Images from patent application US1458512A (Beach & Beach, 1922).

F.S. and F.H. Beach owned Beach Mfg. Co. in Charlotte, MI, founded in 1890 and incorporated in 1910. The company manufactured and sold scrapers, graders, and plows used primarily in construction of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects (Midland Publishing Company, 1911). This scraper is likely more associated with Gottlieb Diestelhorst's sons or grandsons and probably more associated with use of the property after Gottlieb sold it in the late 1880s (Shasta County Recorder, 1889, p. 570; Shasta County Recorder, 1888, p. 326; Shasta County Recorder, 1885, p. 2). The scraper may not have been necessarily used on the property itself but rather for projects like grading Yuba Street. It is quite possible that the scraper was used for roads and to level ground when the property was converted into an auto camp.

Any interpretive signage should avoid implying anything that is not known within a degree of certainty. Implying information that cannot be substantiated or does not represent defensible scholarship is unacceptable on historic sites on public land. When drafting any signage, there should be an overall interpretive goal or purpose. Clear points should be articulated and wording should reflect appropriate connotation. The misleading, incomplete, and inaccurate history reflected in historical sites and markers is a well-known issue in the museum community (Abram, 2002, p. 131). The "Pioneer Courage" plaque lacks the appropriate historical context that frames the Allen-Jones murders and massacres as not isolated incidents but explosive outbursts in an already genocidal environment. In some instances the plaque contains factually inaccurate or misleading statements, such as the total omission of reference to Benjamin Oliver in association with the twelve Yana people who were saved. No information exists linking the rescue of any indigenous people as having occurred directly on Diestelhorst's property so any justification for the placement of a plaque on that specific property is faulty. Wheeled scrapers would not have been a rarity in the area, and there is a possibility that the scraper bucket came to rest on the property through a different association altogether, including washing down river from a different site and becoming lodged on the property, the railroad and bridge projects completed nearby, or a use of the property after it was no longer owned by the Diestelhorst family. No direct information exists that explains the motivations of Oliver, Roberts, or Diestelhorst. Rather than confuse or upset audiences, museum professionals and historians alike argue that diversity of voices and complexities of history interest people more than single perspective narratives (Abram, 2002; Kelly & Gordon, 2002, p. 162). Lack of interest in history is due not to a person's age or inherent traits but rather that the study and presentation of history has been so poorly executed that audiences have been actively disengaged (Conway, 2015; Abram, 2002, p. 130). Aside from damaging the effectiveness of history as a discipline as well as organizations dedicated to the preservation of history, bad history erodes trust (Abram, 2002, p. 135).

Information relevant to historic sites or events should be distilled, not pared away. Any attempt to exclude relevant information should be highly suspect, particularly the exclusion of difficult or unpleasant realities. As at least one institution discovered, motivations driving the promotion of history are not devoid of relevance to contemporary issues and that the celebration of a history can and has been used as an intentional obfuscation (Szekeres, 2002, p. 149). The celebration of pioneer history has been used to obscure or detract from the difficult, unpleasant, and horrific history of California before, during, and after the gold rush (Lindsay, 2012, pp. 43-69; Gendzel, 2001). So-called Western myth creation uses pioneer pedigree establishment, along with romanticized recitations of tales of 'Argonauts' conquering the land, to legitimize ownership claims over previous occupants and preserve or establish power structures (Gendzel, 2001). There are points about pioneer life that are important for everyone in this community to study and many admirable characteristics to emulate, but the pioneer presence in this area was, without exception, predicated on the disenfranchisement of

Native people. Kroeber eloquently summarizes “It is neither meet [*sic*] nor needful to withdraw such affectionate respect and admiration [towards pioneers]; it is perhaps well to remind ourselves that the best and gentlest of them did not question their right to appropriate land belonging to someone else” (Kroeber, 1961, p. 47). This reality is what makes the intentional inclusion of indigenous voices in history critical. Having multiple voices present when creating interpretive information at historic sites not only illuminates the depth of history, it is indicative of vibrant community life. Too often what is recorded and preserved relates to power, manifested primarily in property ownership, business, and civic life — arenas where women, people of color, the disabled, or those with less money have been explicitly or implicitly excluded. The effect has been a near obliteration of the histories indicative of the majority of people who have lived. Even when stories involving underrepresented populations are preserved due to proliferation of established power structures, particularly in cultural organizations (Abram, 2002, p. 140), those stories are cited less frequently.

Take for example, another story from the Allen-Jones massacres: A woman took quick action to protect three Yana women whose husbands had just been murdered by a vigilante mob. Visibly pregnant, the woman used her body to shield the Yana women from attack, presumably from firearms. Betting with her and her unborn child’s physical safety and that her status would deter the mob, she threw a quilt around the women, obscuring their forms, stood in front and said “If you kill them you will kill me” (Curtin, 1898, p. 518). Neither her actions, nor Oliver’s, nor anyone else who objected to the massacres, are mentioned on the plaque. Furthermore, the land where the scraper was found was previously owned, in part, by a woman named Eliza Jane Gillman. Mrs. Gillman was one of the first married women in Shasta County to conduct business solely in her name (not under the name of her husband as had been the law). Mrs. Gillman owned and operated a farm as well as a ferry and sold the original plot of land to Gottlieb Diestelhorst and later sold more to his sons Charles and John (Fiorini-Jenner, 2017; Shasta County Recorder, 1889; Shasta County Recorder, 1859). When significant numbers of people are disengaged or excluded from history and historical organizations, it creates an atmosphere of self-perpetuation where those already in power are able to craft histories and myths that reinforce their own power structures. Collectively our community needs to insist that our cultural organizations hold themselves to rigorous contemporary professional standards; produce inclusive, balanced, and scholarly content; are governed and staffed by a diverse group of people who actively seek and incorporate input; and that our public spaces mark important sites that reflect the whole community’s interests, values, and history.

The intention of this paper has been to demonstrate the complexity of the events discussed on the “Pioneer Courage” plaque. Given the amount of information that is unclear or unknown, the most appropriate way forward would be to focus on what is known: During the decades before, during, and after the gold rush, thousands of indigenous people were murdered under the guise of justice, retaliation, or necessity. Genocidal policies and attacks decimated Native American populations. While for some this assertion may seem like just a contemporary judgment out of historical context, many of the arguments that impugn the atrocities committed come from white persons witnessing the events firsthand. Accounts from Native Americans living at the time establish that they had no doubts about the intent and goal of laws and actions impacting their lives. The impact of the totality of events was also not lost on those observing and committing genocidal acts (Madley, 2017; Lindsay, 2012). To that end the City of Redding is encouraged to adopt the term “genocide” to refer to systematic attacks perpetrated against indigenous people.

The following language is offered as a suggestion or starting place for a plaque acknowledging the injustices of the massacres of indigenous people:

> This plaque is placed on [DATE] in acknowledgement of the thousands of indigenous people who were murdered, assaulted, abused, raped, enslaved, kidnapped, deprived, and removed from their land by non-indigenous individuals and government agents. Henceforth the City of Redding adopts the term genocide to refer to the systematic atrocities committed against indigenous people.

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