

WEBB GRAHAM (JOSEPHSON), Winona Chico Enterprise Record 2-28-2005

Winona Webb Graham

☑ Obituary ☑ Condolences



Winona Webb Graham passed away Dec. 23, 2005 at the age of 83. She was born in Yankee Hill, Butte County, Dec. 17, 1922, the first child of Vivian and Ella Josephson.

She spent her childhood there, attended Yankee Hill Elementary School, a one room country school. Her father drove the Oroville bus. She rode the bus to school and graduated with the class of 1940.

She lived in Marysville two years and received her A.A. degree from Yuba Junior College. She married Owen Wright, a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942. They had three children. He became ill and passed away in 1951. She did day care in her home until her children were all in school. Then they moved to Chico. She received her B.A. degree, got her teaching credential and began teaching for Chico City Schools at the old Salem School. When it closed she taught at Neal Dow School until she retired in 1983.

She married Merle Webb in 1974. They both loved to travel and traveled all over the world until no longer able to do so. Merle passed away in 1995.

She married Paul Graham, a retired minister in 1996. Paul passed away in 1998.

She was charter president of the Chico chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa. She also belonged to Delta Kappa Gamma and the American Association of University Women.

She liked to teach, travel, read and spend time with her family.

She is survived by her son, Gary Wright and wife Pat of Woodland; her daughter Rhonda Blanchard and husband Jim of Chico, granddaughter Lisa Wright and grandson Michael Wright; a brother Elmer Josephson of Oroville and a sister June Blair and her husband Earl of Oroville; her "Graham" family daughters, Darlene Shidler and husband Gil of Huntington, Ind., Kaylenn Hignell and husband Doug of Chico and son David Graham and wife Kathy of Chico and six grandchildren; her "Webb" family daughter, Patty O'Brien and husband Bob of Sacramento, sons Byron Webb and wife Sherry of San Jose, Stan Webb and wife Jeanne of Chico, Greg Webb and wife Joan of Chico and 11 grandchildren plus spouses and seven great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her oldest daughter Marilyn Wright.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the charity of the donor's choice in care of the Brusie Funeral Home.

Funeral services will be held at the Masonic Family Center Friday, Dec. 30, at 10:30 a.m. Burial will be in the Gridley Cemetery where she will be laid to rest by her first husband.

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Gateway to the past

Mechoopda Indians continue thousand-year connection with Bidwell Park

By [Mark Lore](#)

This article was published on [06.30.05](#).

Bidwell Park is Chico's

playground, serving countless people in countless ways. But there is one group for whom it is uniquely special. They are the Mechoopda Indians, whose presence in this area goes back thousands of years. To them, the park is their ancestral home preserved through time.



"The sites in the park are part of our reconnection," says Arlene Ward, cultural liaison for the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria.

Related website:

- www.mechoopda.nsn.us/

Ward is a soft-spoken woman who seems determined to make that reconnection with the park and her history. A recent Chico State University graduate with a degree in anthropology, Ward has direct lineage to the Mechoopda tribe, although her ancestors lived most of their lives in Tehama County.

She explains that Bidwell Park is one of the few chunks of land in the area still untainted by shopping malls and congested intersections. And that "reconnection" with the park



BACK AT THE RANCHERIAOne of the last standing ceremonial roundhouses in the 1920s, located on the Chico Rancheria on what is now Sacramento Avenue. COURTESY OF MECHOOPDA INDIAN TRIBE

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and Mechoopda traditions, she says, allows her and other members to teach themselves and their families about the group's long history in the area.

Many locals who make use of the 3,670-acre park are concerned about whether Chico's 100-year-old "crown jewel" can continue to handle the wear and tear, but for Ward and the other descendents of the Mechoopda tribe the concept of preserving the park goes even further.

"How do we tell our children about our past if these sites are developed?"



RECONNECTING WITH THE PARKDelores McHenry, one of the Mechoopda tribal elders, shows her grandchildren, 13-year-old Mitchell Wilcox and his sister Allyson, 15, how to gather the willow used to make ceremonial headdresses.
PHOTO BY TOM ANGEL

Historical documentation paints a picture of the Mechoopdas using broad strokes—an unchanging people who lived a simple life at one with nature. But archeological records show that they were a thriving people who made good use of Bidwell Park's resources. The park served as their supermarket. It served as their hardware store. And the land is just as important to the Mechoopdas today as it was thousands of years ago.

Archeological records trace the Mechoopdas back at least 5,000 years, although their origins date back even further.

Greg White, director of the archeological research program at Chico State, says the Mechoopda way of life differed dramatically from what is portrayed in history books.



BAND OF BROTHERSThrough assimilation, many Mechoopda Indians were introduced to modern culture and modern music.
COURTESY OF MECHOOPDA INDIAN TRIBE

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White said many of the cultural misconceptions of the Mechoopdas are based on the first official documentation from John Bidwell and other settlers in the 1840s. But by that time the Mechoopdas had already been in contact with European, Russian and American explorers, which ultimately disrupted the lives of the area's native population.

He explained that prior to the Indians' first contact with explorers, there were roughly 200 villages spaced a mile and a half apart between the Sacramento and Feather rivers in the Chico area. The Mechoopdas were hunters and gatherers with a far-ranging trade system. Families lived in large earth-covered structures with a larger ceremonial roundhouse located nearby. Acorns were one of the main food sources, and hunting and salmon fishing in Big Chico Creek were also common.



OFF TO THE ROUNDHOUSEJodie Conway (standing) and his brother Dewey wear the traditional ceremonial dress used for dances in the roundhouses.

COURTESY OF MECHOOPDA INDIAN TRIBE

"There was a dynamic human landscape here," White says.

The first European settlers began sailing up the coast to enter the area as early as 1808, when Spanish explorer Gabriel Moraga, who was searching for possible mission sites, led an expedition through the valley to the Sutter Buttes west of Yuba City. The expedition eventually headed east across the Feather River, passing just south of the Big Chico Creek watershed to what is now Oroville.

In 1821 another Spanish explorer named Luís Argüello passed just west of the watershed and discovered what

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he called "cities along the river." Seven years later, in 1828, a group of American fur trappers led by Jedediah Smith entered the area.

Although fur trapping likely depleted much of the area's wildlife, it was a devastating malaria epidemic during the summer of 1833 that wiped out nearly 15,000 people. By the time John Bidwell arrived almost a decade later, White says, the once thriving civilizations looked more like refugee camps.

It wasn't long after Bidwell purchased land grants on Mechoopda territory in 1849 that he moved the native people to Rancho Arroyo Chico near First and Flume streets.

On an overcast rainy day in mid-June, Delores McHenry, a lifetime Chico resident and one of the Mechoopda tribal elders, is standing in a thicket of brush at the Five-Mile Recreation Area with her teenaged grandchildren Mitchell and Allyson Wilcox. They're gathering willow that will be used to make headdresses for a Ladies Dance Society event scheduled this spring.

McHenry explains that all the dancers are expected to gather their own willow for their headdresses. After they snip about a dozen branches,

McHenry instructs Mitchell to drop a nickel on the ground. She explains that it is tradition to give something back to the earth upon taking. Nowadays coins are sometimes used in place of tobacco, an item considered sacred among the Mechoopdas.

Back at the Mechoopda Tribal Headquarters off of Mission Ranch Boulevard in Chico, Arlene Ward explains why gathering is still important to members of the tribe.



BACK AT THE RANCHERIA One of the last standing ceremonial roundhouses in the 1920s, located on the Chico Rancheria on what is now Sacramento Avenue. COURTESY OF MECHOOPDA INDIAN TRIBE

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"The reason we gather today is to reconnect with our past," Ward said.

Ward said it is common to hold family gatherings in Bidwell Park and that members of the tribe are granted permission to gather willow along "Chulamsewi," the Maidu name for Big Chico Creek. Willow was used in the making of baskets used to gather acorns and headdresses used in dances, which were a way of showing thanks for a good harvest.

Once the Bidwells entered the area, the Mechoopdas became a modernized people who lost their culture. At the same time, the tribe was offered protection from Indian removal and members were offered work under Bidwell.

Ward says the tribe is discovering its voice again after essentially remaining a silent people for so many years. The Mechoopdas, named after the last major village of the Valley Konkow, became federally recognized in 1992.

The Mechoopda Tribal Council is now working with the city of Chico and the university in deciding how to manage and protect Indian sites in the area. Ward said everything is coming full-circle, and that the reconnection with her past is becoming a realistic endeavor.

"For me, Arlene Ward, being Mechoopda is starting to make sense."

WILSON, Lewis Santa
Chico Enterprise Record
9-2-2005

Lewis Santa "Mac-A-Boy" Wilson entered into rest on August 30, 2005 at a convalescent home of natural causes. Mac was born on June 15, 1934 in Chico, Calif. He served in the Marine Corps.

Visitation for Mac will be held from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. on Tuesday, September 6, 2005 at the Brusie Funeral Home with funeral services to begin at 1 p.m.

Mac is survived by his children Eileen Lopes, Jessica Gonzales, Clara Wilson all of Lake County, Calif., Stanley Wilson of San Leandro, Calif., and Darlene Wilson of Chico, Calif.; eight grandchildren; one great-grandson; Brother Marvin "Mickey" Wilson; and his sisters Frances Potter of Chico and Norma Ramirez of Orland, Calif.

He is preceded in death by his brothers Harold and Edward "Jimmy" and grandson Enrique.

Cremation services will be held at the Mechoopda Indian Cemetery in Chico. Brusie Funeral Home is in charge of all arrangement. 530-342-5642.

STEELE, Tyrone Clark "Mac"
Chico Enterprise Record
5-4-2006

Graveside service will be held for Tyrone Clark Steele Sr. on Friday, May 5, 2006, 11 a.m. at Sittu Cemetery in Berry Creek. Tyrone lost his life on Sunday, April 30, 2006.

Tyrone was born to Francis and Theda Steele on Nov. 5, 1964 in Oroville. Tyrone spent the last 10 years as a dedicated employee of Gold Country Casino. In his spare time he enjoyed restoring his beloved mustang, playing pool, horse shoes, chainsaw carving and playing Hem-Men-Nee. Most of all Tyrone loved spending time with his family. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and friend.

Tyrone leaves behind his wife of 24 years Brenda, sons; Tyrone Jr, and Remington, daughter B.B. and one grandchild Tyrone III "Sapu". He is also survived by his father Francis Steele Sr., brothers and sisters Francis Jr., Elliott, Curtis, Debbie, Teresa, Candace, Laurie and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Arrangements are under the care of Oroville Funeral Home.

McKEEN, Vera V. Clark
Chico Enterprise Record
1-12-2008



■ VERA V. CLARK MCKEEN

🕒 [Obituary](#) ➔ [Condolences](#)

Vera V. Clark McKeen, 105, of Oroville, passed away December 25, 2007. She was born March 12, 1902 to Benjamin Frank Clark and Annie Crabtree Clark in Covelo, CA. She would have celebrated her 106th birthday this coming March.

Vera was a housewife. She was the oldest Konkow Valley/Wailaki American Indian.

In 1998, Vera wrote a book of her life, (co-authored by Michele Shover and Antone Grieco), titled "Vera Clark McKeen of Yankee Hill: Memoir of a Maidu Matriarch". She was mentioned in Orin Starn's book, "Ishi's Brain: In Search of America's Last 'Wild' Indian". Orin was also present at her 100th birthday celebration. In 2006 an article was written about her life in "Our Town: 100 Years of Oroville".

Vera is survived by her daughter, Maxine Gramps, and her son John Clark, both of Oroville; her six grandchildren: Harvey, Walley, Bobo, Zena, J.C. and Jennifer; and numerous great and great-great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, family and friends. She was preceded in death by her husband, Donald McKeen, her parents and her nine siblings.

Private internment will be at Clark Cemetery on Saturday, January 26 at 12 noon. A Celebration of Life memorial gathering will be held at Concow Grange at 4122 Big Bend Road at 2:00 p.m.

Published in Chico Enterprise-Record on Jan. 12, 2008

MATHEWS (REECE), Cleo Faye
Chico Enterprise Record
2-2-2008

CLEO FAYE MATHEWS

Cleo Faye Mathews, 53, passed away in Oroville on Jan. 29, 2008

Family and friends will gather to honor and share memories of Cleo on Monday, Feb. 4, 2008 from 5 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Oroville Funeral Home.

Her Farewell and burial service will be held at Sittu Cemetery in Berry Creek on Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. Arrangements have been entrusted to Oroville Funeral Home, 533-0323.

To Plant Memorial Trees in memory, please visit our [Sympathy Store](#).

Published in Chico Enterprise-Record on Feb. 2, 2008.

RAMIREZ (WILSON), Harriet Pearl

Chico Enterprise Record

4-8-2008

Harriet was born on May 14, 1932 in Jonesville, CA, to Sherman and Lenora Wilson and lived in Chico for all but a few years. She has one brother Dell Wilson Sr. of Willows and Thelma Wilson of Chico. Harriet Pearl Ramirez (speedy) age 76 left to be with her husband Frank Ramirez on Thursday April 3, 2008. Their love was one of a kind, he started talking and she finished. They met at the age of 8 when he took her ice cream. They grew up to marry and have seven children; Frank and Ann Ramirez of Calackamas Oregon, Grover and Cathy Ramirez, Lenora and Tobias Vigil and John Ramirez all of Chico CA. She was preceded in death by three children: Eugene, Manuel and Cecilia as infants. Harriet had 28 grandchildren, 87 great-grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

She was the pastor of Open Door Outreach Ministries in Chico. Harriet dedicated her life to the Lord and helping others. She was an elder in the Mechoopda Tribe. I know its hard but sometimes you have to put one foot in front of the other.

A viewing will be held on Thursday April 10, 2008 from 7-9 p.m. at Newton-Bracewell Chico Funeral Home Followed by a funeral service on Friday April 11, 2008 at 11:30 a.m. Burial will be at the Mechoopda Indian Cemetery. Following the burial a reception will be held at Wildwood Park.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Mechoopda Indian Tribe Burial Fund in c/o Newton Bracewell Funeral Home. You may share your thoughts and memories of Harriet online at NBCFH.com

CONWAY, Vernon William
findagrave.com
5-5-2008
(born 3 Feb 1924 Chico, CA)



Services for Vernon, was held at 10:00 a.m., Monday, May 12, 2008, at Chico Mechoopda Cemetery on West Sacramento Avenue with a luncheon following at Wildwood Park, 100 Wildwood Avenue.

Vernon joined the Marine Corps in 1943, serving overseas and was honorably discharged in 1947. After his military service, Vernon attended Laney's College in Oakland, CA to be a chef and baker. He also participated on the American Indian Center's (AIC) Board of Directors, San Francisco, CA. from 1965 to 1976, and volunteered many years as a cook. During this time, Vernon became the only Indian letter carrier among 1,500 carriers of the U.S. Post Office Service, from 1950 to his retirement in 1977 in Sacramento and San Francisco.

Vernon was an active supporter in his community advocating for the protection of Native American rights and sovereignty. Vernon's grandfather, father, and uncles were members of the Chico all-Indian band and continued Indian traditional dances in the 1920's. He carried on the performing tradition when he played "Geronimo" in a play called "Indians" directed by the director of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", in the 1970's in San Francisco. "Indians" was highly praised for its portrait of how the U.S. treated the Native Americans in the West. Vernon performed for six months as Geronimo and his four daughters were ushers and his son worked backstage.

Vernon is survived by his five children, Raymond Conway of Reno, NV., and Loretta Conway, Eileen Conway, Estelle John, and Corinne Bermudez all of Chico and 20 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his sister, Juanita, and brother, Ivan.