

Wintu

By WILLIAM



Social Organizations:

The Wintu Indians were made up of tribelets. Tribelets are groups of extended families that make up villages. They take care of their social, economical, and political issues within their separate villages. Their villages are very territorial. When a tribe wants to hunt on another tribe's land, they must get permission first and give a gift to that village. Their leaders are men who are popular, smart, and good singers and dancers. The leadership is passed down from father to son. But if the son does not have the same qualities as his father, then another man is chosen to be the leader. The leader's job is to organize meetings, dances, and to invite leaders from

other villages to attend their meetings. The leader or chief can be married to more than one wife at a time. Marriage is just a matter of a man and woman living together. There are no marriage ceremonies, but there are rules against marrying cousins and other close relatives. Most men get their wives from other neighboring villages of the same tribe. They sometimes will marry women from other tribes.



The Wintu Indians were inactive hunters who also fish and gather wild plants. They mostly fish and hunt. The men do the hunting and fishing, and the women gather the wild plants and materials to make

baskets. Deer and acorns are the main food, but they ate a lot of other types of plants and animals such as brown bear, rabbit, gophers, wood rats, ground squirrels, and other small rodents. Eating grizzly bear was against their beliefs. Deer hunting is done by individual hunters or in groups. They used bows and arrows, traps, and dogs to drive the deer over cliffs to kill them. The men would cut the meat up and give it to the women to divide among the families of the village. They would cook the deer meat by cutting it into strips and roasting it over hot coals. In the spring and fall, the Wintus would do their salmon fishing. They would catch the salmon with nets and spears. They would also catch whitefish and trout sometimes. The salmon was dried in the sun and stored in baskets to use in the winter. Acorns were the main food of the Wintu. The acorns were collected, dried, and pounded into acorn meal. This would be used to make bread or soup. Other important plants were berries, lettuces, nuts, wild grapes, and sunflower and cotton flower.)

Dwellings and Materials:

Placing poles into a cone shape and covering them with bark, made Wintu family homes. The unmarried men lived in Earth lodges during the winter. Earth lodges were also called sweathouses. It was made by digging a large round hole in the ground, placing large posts about five feet apart and covering the entire thing with pine and willow brush. Then a layer of mud about 1 inch thick was put over the brush. They used grasses to make baskets for cooking and storage, transporting goods, sifting acorn meal, and for dishes. Bows for hunting were made from yew wood. Ash wood was used to make pipes. Logs were placed across streams for bridges, and wooden rafts were used to cross the streams.

