

## PIONEERS OF LAS POSADAS

A story of Milton and Sally Dodge Morris and their relatives who pioneered at Las Posadas in 1878.

by

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LAS POSADAS  
GRAVEYARD KNOLL

Graves of those who have gone before have an interest for most people, especially if in unusual places. They excite curiosity and make us wonder what kind of person lies there, and why. Here are brief accounts of the people who lie buried on Graveyard Knoll, at Las Posadas, or, as we knew it in childhood, Lookout Hill of Uncle John's ranch on Moore's Creek, before the place was chosen by Grandfather Morris as the spot where he wished to be buried. These stories are written for those who have seen these graves and been moved to wonder who are the people who lie here.

Long before Las Posadas became state property, Uncle John Morris deeded to the State of California the "Graveyard Knoll" believing that he was by that act securing protection for the graves of his family. They were no ordinary people who sleep there. They were pioneers, history-makers. They lived hard lives, full of poverty, sickness, and toil; but they carried civilization with them: cleanliness, religion, law and order. Among their descendants are farmers, forest rangers and guards, expert electricians and mechanics, gardeners, teachers, scientists, missionaries and journalists.

There are seven graves on the knoll; of Grandfather and Grandmother Morris; their son John, who was the owner of the Moore's Creek Ranch; his first wife, Melissa; his little daughter, Delphine; a cousin, Martin Modrel, who came from Missouri, sick and poor, and was cared for here till his death; and a tiny baby niece, Emma Martin.

GRANDMOTHER MORRIS

SALLY DODGE MORRIS

1811 - 1901

A three year old child sat on her mother's lap, frightened. There was a dull, far-away booming in the air. Mother was crying. Father came in, and when he opened the door the booming noise came with him, filling all the neat Vermont farm kitchen. He took his gun from above the fireplace, kissed mother, and went away. Kisses were not common nor lightly given in that austere New England family. Father went away, but the booming stayed on and on, seeming to shake the granite hills. That is Sally Dodge's first memory of her home in Barre, Vermont; how, in 1814, as a little scared girl she heard the guns of the British at the Battle of Lake Champlain, when Father went away to fight.

Father was a fighter but not a soldier. He was a preacher. Seven years after the cannon-fire on Lake Champlain, he, the Rev. Nathaniel Brown Dodge, was asked by the American Board of Missions to lead a party of Missionaries to the wild Osage Indians of Western Missouri. The name of Sally Dodge's father is in Missouri history books, because he was one of the founders of civilization there. Sally went along. Here is her own story of the long journey:

"When I was nine years old, in the winter of 1821, my father, the Reverent Nathaniel Brown Dodge, was sent to found the Christian Missions among the Osage Indians. From our home in Barre, Vermont, he took his family to join the rest of the missionaries in New York. We then came on steamers to Philadelphia, where we embarked in large crooked-bed wagons, difficult to get in and out of; and set out across the Alleghany Mountains. Bad roads. We were cooped up, young and old together. Some were sick. On long hills the driver would invite us out to walk,

and we enjoyed the exercise much better than the inclination to sea-sickness in our tight covered wagons. One day I set out to walk as far as the teams went, and did twenty-two miles; but next day my feet were so sore that I was never allowed to try again.

At Pittsburgh we found two keelboats built for our voyage down the Ohio and up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. We made good time down the Ohio, but when we began to ascend the Mississippi River our troubles began. We worked the boats upstream by cordelling with long ropes, which were rolled and taken in skiffs the ropes' length up the river and fastened to trees. Then all hands would pull for dear life until we reached the tree. Frequently we were stuck on mud-flats for half a day at a time.

After traveling on these rivers for four months, we came as far up the Big Osage as our boats could go, and stopped at a place called 'Rapiddecow'. We founded our Mission on the banks of the Big Osage, christening it by the name, Harmony Mission. All our goods had to be unloaded and conveyed fifteen miles up the river in skiffs where the Indians were swarming on the banks and we could not understand a word they uttered. We built cabins of logs, sixteen feet square, joining cabin to cabin in a long row. The roofs were made of shakes weighted down with heavy logs on top. Each cabin had one small window. How nice it seemed to live in these cabins after our seven months journey and hardships!

After getting into our cabins, we put up a house that should answer for a schoolroom below and storeroom above. The stores consisted chiefly of clothes for Indian children. We all went to school in the same room, white and redskins together. We went to the same table to eat. Our coffee was made of parched wheat sweetened with honey. At last our flour and meal gave out. Then we had two large iron kettles put up in an arch, and every day boiled corn for hominy. For six months this was all our living; not a morsel of bread did we taste. Nearly all our Mission became sick and helpless. Having suffered so much for want of food before getting our mill built, we used to say that the Mission ought to be called 'Hominy Mission' instead of 'Harmony'." (From a manuscript written by Sally Dodge Morris, in possession of her grandchildren.)

Sally grew up at the Osage Mission. As she played with the little Indian girls, she learned from them some things that few girls of her time knew. She learned to carry jars of water and baskets of corn on her head. This gave her a strong, straight back and a smooth graceful way of walking. She could even balance a full pail of water on her head and walk home from the spring carrying a pail of water in each hand, never spilling a drop.

Also Sally learned to swim. This was a most unusual accomplishment for a white girl at a time when the fashion was for girls to be frail and delicate. On hot days, though, when the little Indian girls went into the water, Sally would go too, and soon was splashing and paddling along with them. When she grew up she became shy about her Indian lore, though she would steal away to swim by herself when there was a chance. Once, while crossing the Plains with her husband and children, their wagon-train camped for a few days beside a cool clean river. At twilight Father Morris came to the camp-fire, laughing silently, and beckoned the children to follow him, but make no noise. He led them to the river bank.

"Look," he whispered, "out in the river beyond the willows!" There they saw someone swimming back and forth and diving like an otter across the big pool. It was their mother! When the amazed children began to exclaim and giggle, she stood up in the shallow water, her old linsey-woolsey dress that she used for a bathing suit clinging dripping to her body, and began to cry, ashamed.

Little Sally was a favorite among the Indians; and besides, the chiefs regarded her as something sacred because she had fiery red hair. They named her Pah-su-cha, which means "Redhead". Medicine-men and warriors coveted a lock of this brilliant hair to weave into a Wa-xo-be, or charm, to bring luck in war or hunting. Her father warned Sally never to give or sell a single hair, nor to allow the warriors to touch her head. He was constantly refusing to allow Sally to be adopted into the Osage tribe. The chiefs begged for her again and again, believing that Pah-su-cha would bring safety and good fortune to their tepees.

From the Osage girls, there at Harmony Mission, Sally Dodge learned to talk the Indian language. She helped the missionaries in making a primer of the Osage language, and a translation of the Bible. When she grew up she was interpreter between the Indians and the United States soldiers who were sent to keep the peace. The Osages were a fierce tribe of fighters. They frequently broke the treaties that their chiefs made with the white, and there would be scrimmages followed by councils and pow-wows and new treaties. Sally would stand between the scowling Osage chiefs and the stern American officers, translating and repeating phrase by phrase, frightened but steadfast, for although she was a timorous woman, she faced things bravely.

Once the Indians came plundering and burning cabins, killing cattle and hogs and taking a scalp now and then. There was a skirmish in which one of Sally's brothers was killed and another wounded. The few settlers gathered and sent a messenger for help. Then they took Sally Dodge with them to interview the hostile chiefs. She said: "The United States Government is going to punish you for your treachery. Go back to your tepees and hide your weapons. Go today." Then, as the Indians hesitated, Sally remembered that help had been sent for, and though no answer had come, such faith took hold of her that honest little Pah-su-cha, who would not lie, even to an Indian, found herself threatening: "Go! If you wait till tomorrow there will be a hundred United States dragoons here to drive you to your villages. Do not wait!" The Indians retreated to their villages, and that night a company of one hundred United States soldiers appeared on the Osage River!

Her saddest ordeal was acting as interpreter when the U.S. Government moved the Osages to their present lands in what is now Oklahoma. She read the treaty to the Indians, translated their questions to the U.S. officers, and showed the chiefs where and how to sign the documents. Then the time came when the Osages must leave their hunting-grounds and travel west to strange, barren lands in the Indian territory, lands thought to be worthless. Sally shut herself up in the cabin, not to see them go. For three days and nights the Indians went by, the squaws carrying the household goods. Sometimes a pony dragged a traverse, or rack of poles loaded down with skins and baskets. For three days and nights the slow procession moved on unbroken. As they went the exiles sang a mournful parting-song.

"Farewell, Pahsucha," they sang, "Farewell, Farewell, Pahsucha!"

All the three days and nights the wailing was continually in her ears. As each group came to the Mission they left on the doorstep a gift - a pair of moccasins, a handful of corn, some jerked meat, or a piece of calico torn from the bolt given them in payment for their lands. Then, as they moved on, another group came up wailing: "Farewell, Pahsucha, Farewell, Pahsucha!"

About the time that the Missions were flourishing, a tall, dark-eyed, young Virginian came limping barefoot into Harmony Mission. Milton Morris had turned his back on family and friends and walked to the utmost border of civilization to escape the sight of human slavery. Welcomed at the Mission, he fell in love

with the little Yankee, Red-haired Pah-su-cha; and presently, at the New Boudinot Mission, across the border in Kansas, Rev. Nathaniel Dodge read the ceremony which united Milton Morris and Sally Dodge, the first white couple to be married on Kansas soil.

Milton Morris was licensed a Methodist preacher. For about twenty years the family lived in Western Missouri, where all but one of their eight children were born. The hot question of the time, the human slavery problem, caught up with them as farms and plantations replaced the wilderness. At last, unable any longer to bear the quarrels in the church and the enmity of a slave-holding community, Milton and Sally Morris sold out, paid their debts, loaded their children into an old wagon, and set off for Iowa, the free territory. They found Iowa full of Mormons, a crowded stopping place for the Salt Lake caravans; and Sally Morris was unwilling to bring up her children among that sect. For a few years the family, the older boys now well grown, farmed in Eastern Nebraska on prairie lands bought from the Indians when that territory was first opened to settlement. There the eldest daughter, Sarah, was married, the first white girl to be married on Nebraska soil, as her mother was in Kansas. Once, when all the men were away, Sally, armed only with a poker and her knowledge of the Indian language and character, chased off a band of plundering Pawnees that were killing her chickens and trying to steal her cooking-pots. Then, after the sudden death of one of their sons, the rush to California overwhelmed the Morris family. They changed their farm for ox-wagons and provisions, and in 1857 made their first crossing. Four months they travelled, from the Missouri River to the Trinity Mines of California. They had lived among the Border Ruffians of Missouri, the hostile Mormons of Iowa, but life in Trinity was the roughest yet. Father Morris preached - in the bar-room of the miners' hotel. Sally Morris and her daughters did everything; housework, of course, and sewing, chicken raising at one dollar per egg, laundering at one dollar per shirt; and nursing the sick for miles around free of charge from pure neighborliness. The three older sons mined and farmed. Still they did not prosper, even after moving into Napa Valley, and at last they decided to go back to Iowa.

This was in 1863, while the Civil War was raging. One son was fighting in Virginia. The journey was doubly dangerous on account of hostile Indians, and when accomplished, brought no profit. Within three years the hard times following the close of the Civil War had reduced them to such misery that their second son, John, who had prospered in the Idaho mines, came and brought them again to California along the slow, dusty, Overland Trail.

After this, Milton and Sally Morris were genuine Californians, though they did make one more trip "back to Nebraska". This time, though, in 1869, they travelled by train, and accomplished in five days the distance to the Missouri River that had taken them four months with the slow ox-teams. The trains were not to be compared with those of today. They had been running only a few months and there were no dining cars nor Pullmans. A board laid across two seats supplied the bed and the passenger furnished his own bedding. One paid as much for a ticket to Omaha as to New York. Worse yet, at Ogden, this train-load, women, sick boy, everybody, was transferred into freight cars which had not even been fitted up for the use of through passengers. There were no seats nor dressing-rooms. By night some of the bolder and rougher men had started a riot, news of which was telegraphed to the Superintendent of the road, and about midnight the passengers were moved into a better train.

This sick boy, the youngest son, for whose health this journey was made, died during the winter, and as soon as the snow was gone, Father and Mother Morris returned to California to stay. When Uncle John, their son, bought the Moore's Crank Ranch, they came here to live, and spent their remaining days on Howell Mountain, he preaching, she living a busy, neighborly life.

It is a long way in time and space from Vermont in 1811 to California in 1901. Across a continent, step by step, Sally Morris brought civilization. A clean cabin, clean dishes, clean clothes, clean beds and quilts; delicious food from scanty provisions; care of chickens; milking cows - think of the work and planning these things cost. Grandmother had to be nurse and doctor, helping babies into the world, and glad that she had learned something of the skill of her brother, Dr. Leonard Dodge. Along with the lore of the pioneer woman, she had place for refinement. She read aloud well, and wrote a tiny clear hand that economized precious writing-paper. She pieced log-cabin quilts for recreation. She taught her children gentlemanners and orderly behavior. She planted a strip of flowers along the ditch.

## GRANDFATHER MORRIS

MILTON MORRIS

1807 - 1891

Away back in the eighteen-twenties, young Milton Morris rode up to a neighboring East Tennessee plantation on an errand for his grandfather Fores. As he was tying his horse to one of the locust trees of the Avenue, the boy noticed three men come out upon the verandah of the Big House, leading a well-built young negro girl who had a baby at the breast.

"Here, I didn't sell you the picanniny," remarked the master, not ungently, taking the child and handing it to one of the negroes loitering round. The two buyers led the slave-mother half-way toward the light wagon that stood hitched near the gateway, when, with a frightful scream, she broke away, rushed back to the verandah and tried to snatch up the baby, sobbing and making queer animal-like cries. The negroes scattered, taking the child with them; the master disappeared indoors, and the two slave-dealers caught the woman and dragged her, fighting and screaming, toward the wagon. As they passed Milton, the boy heard one say: "I'll teach you to squall!" and saw him strike her with his whip. She only shrieked and fought the more, until they had dragged her, beaten and exhausted, into their wagon. The sight not only darkened that morning for Milton Morris, but changed his whole future. It roused in him such a hatred of the injustice of slavery that his life decisions were ever afterwards the result of what he had seen that day.

Of Sally Dodge, we know her acts and accomplishments; from piecing quilts to chasing off plundering Indians - actual practical doings. The life of Milton Morris is a record of feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. He was born at Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1807. His father died while the children were still young, and his mother who was Lucy Ford of Knoxville, Tennessee, took her family home to the Old Plantation. They were not too warmly welcomed, and Milton Morris had to work in the fields with the field hands. It was while he was hoeing, alone, that there came to him his second great experience, his conversion.

"When a lone boy," he says, "having hardly ever heard anyone pray or preach, I became powerfully convinced that I was a sinner. While all alone in the cotton-field, with my hoe in my hand, I tried to pray as best I could. I did not know what to do or say, but God put it into my mind to praise His Name, and there, with hoe in hand, both arms outstretched, I shouted: "Glory to God!" Then the world changed. All looked beautiful; the sun, the sky, never looked so bright! Alone in that cotton-patch with no one near, God came down to me!"

Whatever this mysterious experience was, it had a profound influence on Milton Morris' character. It led him to break away from the slave-owning Fords, his mother's people, to leave and try to forget them completely. He could not share their home nor their money. Finally he left East Tennessee, afoot, working his way westward, taking some time to find a land where there were no slaves. One day in 1830 he jumped into Harmony Mission in Western Missouri, still barefoot, his clothes in rags, six feet two inches of straight, hard muscled, free man. And Dr. Nathaniel Dodge, head of the Osage Missions, gave him his daughter Sally in marriage, because, says Dr. Dodge: "I found him honest, sober, and industrious." They were married in 1831, at Boudinot Mission, on the Kansas border.

From this time on Milton Morris' history is that of Sally Dodge Morris. There is no record that they were ever apart except once for a few months in the winter before they started on their first trip to California. Milton Morris was licensed a Methodist preacher. Frontier preachers had very uncertain pay, and performed many a marriage for no fee at all. Besides, they were expected to be hospitable to all visiting brethren, even to sharing the last loaf and giving up their own beds. Milton Morris tried farming, to help out his expenses, but until his three older boys were large enough to work, he had poor success. One winter the only piece of money they saw was a single silver dollar that Sally Morris earned by making a coat. Another year the whole family went in the Fall to the river-bottoms and cut down pecan trees for the nuts. The women gathered up sixty bushels of nuts after the men had cut off and dragged away the larger branches. The sixty dollars brought in by the sale of the nuts had to supply the family of eight with "store provisions" for a whole year. It took much scheming to hold out enough from the family share to buy Father material for a warm overcoat.

During the years from 1840 to 1860 Missouri was filling up with a farming population, most of them slave-owners. Father Morris did not mention the slave question in his sermons, but everybody knew his anti-slavery opinions, and several times he was brought to trial in the Methodist conference on charges of sympathy with Northernism. Though the Conference cleared him of blame, the Presiding Elder refused to renew his license. It was then, in 1849, that Milton Morris again exiled himself, leaving the land that had been his home for almost twenty years. He took his wife and children, and with horse and wagon journeyed northward into Iowa, camping on the way. Here, free to speak his beliefs, he had his license renewed, and his home at Council Bluffs was church and center of Methodism in the midst of throngs of mormons. Since Sally Morris could make herself understood by the Indians, Omahas, Otoes, and Pawnees all speaking dialects similar to the Osage, her husband had no trouble buying land from the Otoes of Nebraska. In 1854, the year the Indian Territory of Nebraska was opened to the whites, he led a party of ten families to settle on the west bank of the Missouri River, near where now stands Plattsmouth, Nebraska. His sons broke the new prairie-land with ox-teams and harvested rich crops. They had a hand in organizing the State Government and electing the first legislature of Nebraska. In the Morris cabin was held the first Quarterly Meeting of the Methodist Church in Nebraska. Their daughter Sarah was the first white woman married in Nebraska. The marriage record can still be read in the County Court House.

Prosperity was looking their way when a favorite son, Nathaniel Brown, named for his missionary grandfather, sickened and died.<sup>(1)</sup> To his father, this

(1) - Nathaniel Brown Morris' grave, long "The Unknown Grave", has this year, 1938, been identified and marked, in a cornfield in Cass County, Nebraska.

seemed the Hand of God afflicting him for the unknown sin that he feared lived in his own heart. He could not bear the sight of that grave under the oak tree near the cabin. As always, his feelings controlled the actions of others. They sold the farm, to join the ox-caravans plodding up the Platte River toward the West. This, in 1857, was the family's first crossing of the plains.

Then, always with Sally at his side, Father Morris lived for a time in California, preaching in the Trinity mines and at the Old White Church in Napa Valley. In 1863 they made a war-time retreat from California to the Missouri River, toiling and preaching on the "Delaware Reserve" in eastern Kansas, where their son John found them in poverty and brought them again across the plains in 1867. They settled in Napa Valley near the Old White Church, and except for a train trip to Iowa in 1869, on the just-finished railroad, travelled no more. When John Morris bought the Moore's Creek Ranch in 1878, his father accompanied him here, helped him develop it, and at last died and was the first one buried on the knoll. He had chosen the place himself, as a burial ground.

What was he like? A tall, long-armed, sharp-eyed man, with a shock of snow-white hair that stood up from his forehead to make him look even taller. He was a simple, straight-thinking man, who knew what he thought was right, and did it; knew what he believed and made others believe and do it. He set an example of strength and earnestness. For instance: he loved music so much, he confessed, that the sound of a fiddle would draw him right toward it, but he thought music was sinful because he loved it so, and would not listen to any instrument. From boyhood he had chewed tobacco, but after the Civil War, there on the Delaware Reserve, he had not enough money to give tobacco to the discharged soldiers who came by, begging for a chew. He made up his mind to quit chewing, since he could not share this luxury, and did so, though for a time he suffered intensely.

Does he seem narrow and hard to you? Perhaps he was. He belonged to a hard, crude civilization. There was surely some quality of leadership in him, suited to the times in which he lived - pioneer stuff. If you can find any of his neighbors, they will tell you that he had their sound respect.

#### UNCLE JOHN

JOHN MILTON MORRIS

1835 - 1907

John Morris was born in the Osage Country of Western Missouri and endured the wretchedly hard lot of a pioneer boy. Hard work and poor food made him a sickly, under-sized lad; a lively, underschooled mind made him a restless, intolerant man. He shared the migrations of his parents from slave-holding Missouri to Mormon Iowa in 1849, across the Missouri River to the Indian Lands of Nebraska in 1854, where he helped elect the first legislature in Nebraska; and across the plains to California in 1857. He mined in Trinity, farmed in Napa County, was guard at San Quentin prison; mined again in the Nevada Silver Mines; was a prosperous store-keeper in Idaho; sent his brother as his substitute to fight for the Union because he could not qualify physically as a soldier; went to New York via Isthmus of Panama after the War, and gathered together his family who had returned to the Middle West during the war, and brought them again overland to California in the year 1867. After a railroad trip East on the newly finished transcontinental railroad in 1869, when they took "Brother Eddie"



to Iowa to die. John fell upon hard times and coming to California, started afoot as book-agent, selling and delivering books all up and down California and Oregon. He walked himself into health and prosperity, married his wife Melissa, and bought the Moore's Creek Ranch as a place in which to restore her health. After her death the Ranch was a refuge for all of his relatives upon whom misfortunes had fallen; his brother William and family; assorted nephews; a cousin and his wife, who lived there several years.

Melissa left him one son. Later he married again, and four daughters were born to him. About the end of the Century the hardships of his early life broke down his health, and he lived in pain till his death in 1907. A fierce, loud-spoken little man, self-willed, active and generous, he accomplished much.

#### AUNT MELISSA

SARAH MELISSA (HARMON) MORRIS

1842 - 1880

When Grandfather Morris died and by his burial "Lookout Hill" became "Graveyard Knoll", Aunt Melissa had laid for over ten years in St. Helena cemetery. But Uncle John wanted his family kept together even in death, so he had his wife's body removed to this family burial place. After all, it was for her sake that he had settled on Moore's Creek.

Melissa Harmon was a native of Foxcroft, Maine. She had come to Eureka, California, in the early 1870's, to keep house for her brother Charles, and there in her brother's home she met John Morris, the travelling book-agent, and opened his eyes to beauty, her own and that of the world. Even her pictures, in the old-fashioned dress of her time, show how beautiful Melissa was. Besides lovely features, she had curling red-brown hair, a fair skin, and magnificent dark eyes. Her daintiness and grace of person, joined with good taste in dress, were a revelation to John Morris, the pioneer, to whom fashionable women were "fast women", and beauty was vanity. Melissa worked in a "Dressmaking Establishment" where she was in constant demand to choose materials, patterns and trimming for the ladies of the town, yet she kept her brother's house perfectly, was quiet, well-mannered, and modest. John Morris could not keep away from the Harmon house, and prolonged his business in Humboldt County until he had courted and won his "Yankee Bride". They were married in 1875.

Melissa loved her husband devotedly, but there was a shadow over their married years. Possibly some of her fragile beauty was due to the disease that was already menacing her life, tuberculosis, feared then as cancer is today. Three years wandering from place to place, then the discovery of Moore's Creek as "the healthiest spot in the world", and two years here on Howell Mountain - that was all that was left to her. It was long enough to win the hearts of all the Morris kin, and to make the Moore's Creek Ranch sacred to her memory.

"How beautiful it is out of doors!" she would say, and her husband wondered what she was seeing. Where he saw only "dirt and rocks and unprofitable timber", she saw fair earth and flowery hills, shadowy forest and bright sky.

LITTLE DELPHINE

DELPHINE EDEN MORRIS

1896 - 1899

Delphine Morris was John Morris' eldest daughter, the child he loved most of all. She lived three happy years, a quiet, docile little creature whose quaint ways and odd sayings amused and charmed her busy father. It is told of her, that like other children she would try to catch the big yellow butterflies, but with an unchildlike persistence, for hours at a time; and, though she never caught one, she never lost patience nor grew peevish over the unsuccessful chase.

Before she had lived to know anything but loving care, she became just a happy memory.

"In small proportions we just beauties see,  
And in short measures life may perfect be."

## THE HISTORY OF LAS POSADAS FOREST

The first people that we know of in Moore's Creek Canyon were the Indians. We can prove that they lived here for they have left relics of their life beside the creek, but until these have been collected and studied, they have no history.

The first settler that I know anything about was an Irishman named More or Moore; the name of the creek is all that he contributed to the place. He did not own the land, nor did Musso who was living here when the history - or the written record of the ranch begins. In fact, the King of Spain was the first owner to have and give title to a part of Las Posadas Forest. The level tract on top of Howell Mountain is a part of the old La Jota Grant, which was given to Colonel Yount when California was still a part of Mexico.

In 1878 John M. Morris paid Musso a thousand dollars for his right on Moore's Creek. Then John Morris had the land surveyed, and had his title patented by the United States Land Office. Later he bought from the owners of the La Jota Grant, and from other people who had secured Government land, until he had over six hundred acres. After his death, his heirs sold the property to Mrs. Anson Blake, who has given it to the State of California as a holiday place for us all.

John Morris brought his family with him in 1878; his wife, Melissa, his two year old son, Vincent, his father, Milton Morris, and mother, Sally Dodge Morris; and an orphan nephew Mitchell (called Mittie) Bartholomew, about seven years old. They lived and the elders died here and are sleeping in the little cemetery on the knoll. Here is a bit of their history, for they were pioneers of the sort that gave our State some of its better institutions.

Milton Morris (Grandpa) was a Virginian, born in 1807. He was a Methodist preacher, a tall, white-haired, restless man, always ready to start somewhere; never having any property, but invariably winning respect and friendship. His wife, "Mother Morris", was born in Vermont in 1811. She came to Missouri in 1821 with her father, the Rev. Nathaniel Brown Dodge, who established Missions among the Osage Indians, and she grew up there and became interpreter when treaties were made between the Osages and the White men. She was the first white woman married on Kansas soil, and her daughter's was the first white marriage in what is now Nebraska. The stories of this pioneer family would fill a book. They came to California in 1857, returned to Iowa in 1863 by ox-wagon, and came again to California in 1867. Ox-wagon Commuters. That was not enough. In 1869, about three months after the transcontinental railroad was finished, they took a train ride to Iowa and back, having almost as adventurous a trip as their ox-wagon journeys, though a much shorter one - five days instead of four months.

John W. Morris was a pioneer of six states. Born in the backwoods of Missouri, he lived among the Mormons in Iowa, was one of the first settlers in Nebraska, when in 1854 that state was opened to settlement. In California he mined in Trinity County; spent a winter in Nevada when the silver mines at Virginia City were at their richest; was two years in Idaho when pack-trains supplied the Boise basin.

Some day Uncle John's autobiography will be published, full of pictures of pioneer life. Here are some pages condensed from it, in which he tells of the Moore's Creek Ranch.

Home at Last - Moore's Creek 1878

I Establish A Home for my Family

(Condensed from the Memoirs of John M. Morris)

I determined to give up all consideration of making money, and to put my entire thought to prolonging the life of my Dearest Earthly Treasure. We spent the summer (1878) traveling and camping in the Coast Ranges between Napa and Humboldt Counties, and as in the Summer before, my wife seemed to improve. Late in the season I left the family in camp on Cobb Mountain in Lake County, with my parents and my young nephew (the orphan Mittie Bartholomew) who had been with us in all our journeyings. I went on a land hunt. We had spent the last two summers traveling to see if that would bring any change for the better. Now my design was to find a place to live where conditions would be most favorable for Melissa's health. I never gave a thought to adding one nickel to my wealth.

Down through Pope Valley and Chiles Valley I kept hearing about a place on Howell Mountain owned by a man named Musso. This locality was thought unsurpassed for sufferers from lung trouble. I came to the place and found it to be a claim on Government land. The price was one thousand dollars. On looking it over, I had seen nothing that suited me so well. Returning to my wife and child on Cobb Mountain, I realized that we must get into Winter quarters at once, for poor Melissa had been near dying while I was gone. Unless Father and Mother went along to live with me, I would not buy, for my wife was too sick to go far from neighbors unless she had companions. So I sent my parents to look at the places I had chosen, and if they liked either one, to pay some money down to bind the sale. They went and looked and made payment to Musso on the Howell Mountain claim. It was a squatter's right to unsurveyed Government land on Moore's Creek, Napa County. We broke camp and two days later, October First, 1878, took possession of the Moore's Creek claim.

This was a frosty, cold October, and we had only a little two-room shanty of slabs to move into. There was a fireplace in this shanty. Our goods were pretty well scattered in upper Napa Valley, stored in houses and barns of the neighbors we had lived among. We had a fearfully rough mountain road to haul over, twelve miles from Saint Helena. We were within one mile of Chile's Valley, half-way down the mountain to the East, with a very steep rough road on that side. There was hardly a passable wagon road into the claim we had bought. On the West, one mile uphill brought us to the top of Howell Mountain, a country of flat poor lands covered with fir, pine, oak manzanita, madrone, and in the gulches, some redwood. The water privilege was the best part of the purchase. Excellent springs in the redwoods formed a creek that would irrigate ten or fifteen acres of flats and hillsides. But most of the water came out on Grant lands owned by one Watson, cashier of the Bank in Napa City. Hence we were buying for the most part in futures. There was nothing worth mention done on the claim; no substantial fencing, no barn except a long shanty, no land cleared. We had tackled a forest of rock and timber, with little good soil, but said by doctors to be the healthiest place in the world.

First, we set about building our house. We hired teams, bought lumber, nails and doors and had them hauled in. Mr. H. Risley of St. Helena was hired to do the carpenter work. We built up fires out of doors to keep us warm. Mr. Risley got the frame up, and all the windows in and doors hung before the end of October, and the pantry well shelved up. We left Father and Mother the slab-house with

its two rooms and stone fireplace, and for the first time since casting our lot together, Melissa and I were in our own home, a rough little new board house of two rooms and pantry. We felt we were Monarchs of all we could see, for we claimed all the lands our eyes could behold from this basin at the head of Moore's Creek. We soon added another shed room for a kitchen, and were very comfortable. My farm work was close to the house, fencing, grubbing, and plowing with a small plow and one horse. The cabin where Father, Mother, and Mittie lived was only fifty yards away and we had a milk house under the hill on the bank of Moore's Creek, within thirty steps of Mother's door. There we kept our butter and milk cool. I bought two good cows and mother had made Mr. Musso agree to give her a cow when contracting the first payment, before we moved. There was enough hay on the ranch to feed the three cows and one horse for six months. Mother went to raising chickens and making butter to sell, and nearly supported Father and Mittie independently of my help. We started our Moore's Creek home with money loaned out, and it was strange how I prospered there. For the most part I was well off financially from the very beginning of our life on the Moore's Creek Ranch. We could very easily have changed the name to Morris Creek, for half the people coming in to fish or visit actually thought the true name was Morris Creek.

This is how the ranch came to be named. Away in the forties a family by the name of More had settled here and lived for some years. The husband was a drunken Irishman. All of a sudden the Old Lady More took sick and died. Some of the neighbors hinted that the drunken husband may have helped his wife off from these mundane shores, but the suspicion was not sufficient to cause anyone to dig up the old lady after she had been buried at St. Helena. All agree that never was there such a time getting any one into a coffin or out to a cemetery. She was very large and so swollen up that they could hardly get her into the coffin. The road to St. Helena was nearly impassable, so everybody engaged in that act of philanthropy remembered ever afterwards their last respects to Old Lady More. Moore's Creek, it is, not Morris'.

Half my time was spent indoors. My wife seemed better than in the previous winter, but could not do more than take care of our little boy, and show me what she wanted done. I devoted myself to housekeeping, and the ladies coming to visit us were surprised at the meals I could get up for them. They did not know about my cooking for a year in our hotel in Minersville, or that I had spent five or six years "batching". We had plenty in the house to cook, which was the principal key to the mystery. As soon as we had our small house up, the neighbors came pouring in to visit us. Teachers, preachers, and doctors came without being called for. In this out-of-the-way place we had three visitors to one who came in the thickly settled Napa Valley. Three preachers in one week came to see my wife. On Spring coming on, Melissa was able to go down into Chiles and Pope Valleys to visit her new neighbors. It was only one mile from our place down to Chiles Valley by the steepest, roughest, worst washed out road I ever traveled. Yet I fixed it up so we were able to get out that way.

My dear old father, now over seventy years old, was a wonderful help on this ranch, not only in the work he did, but as a spiritual adviser to my wife. He came in very often and read and prayed with her and talked to her on the state of her mind. She had the greatest confidence in him. My father was terribly dissatisfied about our location. He would roam about and grieve over "settling on a pile of rocks, on a place where nothing could be made, away off from any one, and where there was no prospect of future remuneration." He was no judge of Earthly business, for his mind was wholly devoted to Spiritual things.

The forest grew down to within thirty or forty steps from our house, on two sides. We cut our own wood, and had not far to carry it on our backs. There was an acre or two of garden land partly cleared on one side of the house, also five or six rows of blackberries, about 150 vines. Some two dozen apple trees had been set out the Spring before we moved onto the place, and eight to ten peach trees nearly big enough to bear. But the rabbits had come in before we bought, and Musso had let the pestilential scamps eat the bark so that I told Musso I would not give twenty-five cents for the whole twenty-five apple trees. Yet by wrapping them properly, we saved all the trees but two. The pigeons, like the quail in the days of Moses, gathered into More's Canyon so thickly that I could never have believed their numbers without seeing them with my own eyes. They blackened the skies and when they flew the roar was like distant thunder. I had read and heard talk of Pigeon roosts in Florida but never had realized the truth. These pigeons were not fat as we had seen them before. There were plenty of speckled trout in Moore's Creek, but I did not know how to catch them. Brother Sawyer - of Sawyer's Tannery - camped on our place in the summer and came every day to see my wife, bringing her a few fresh shining trout. The woods were full of deer, too, and we would see the hunters carry them off. They would never give us a mouthful of the venison, shipping the carcasses whole to San Francisco.

The winter (1878-79) was a severe one for Napa County. Ice froze on a little pond till our horse walked on the crust. In the Spring of 1879 we had the highest water for years. In April Mother went to Napa Valley, and while she was gone the Valley was flooded so she could not get home. There were over three feet of water on Napa River Bridge. Next day, Melissa's brother, John Harmon who was on a visit, started to help Mother. He met her on the Howell Mountain Grade. She had two or three men helping her pass the slides, where she had been told she could not possibly get over. She would have the men take the horse out and pull the light spring wagon over the mucky slide and lead the horse round the slide up on solid ground and then hitch up and drive on. She was bringing a load of groceries for the ranch, and had been gone from home for three days, with us all wondering where she had put up. When John Harmon was starting to meet her, he remarked: "Oh, she can get over the grade anywhere with that light spring wagon." "Yes," said I, "but you will not find it empty. If it were Father, you would find the load stored at the first house he came to, but mother will stay with the cargo." Sure enough, when they drove up, there was the full load of groceries. To this day the teamsters wonder how "that Old Lady" ever got through those slides and reached home safely. They did not know that this "Old Lady" had crossed the Allegheny Mountains when a child of nine years, that she had crossed the plains three times in ox-wagons, and had lived at the Trinity mines where all provisions were brought forty miles on pack mules. Engineering this gentle horse and light wagon was a small thing compared to what she had passed through.

The winter (1879) passed, the month of March came, and with it came the desired rest My Melissa had longed for. She had suffered so much that it seemed a sin for me to wish her to stay. She died on March 12, 1880. This closed the five years of our wedded life, the happiest of any to me, except, perhaps, the first two years after I was converted to God. We had lived in our own home for less than two years. Melissa always did like the Moore's Creek Ranch. As long as she was able to walk, toward Spring she would drag herself to the door and supporting herself by the door-post, exclaim, "How beautiful it is out of doors!"

Though I felt all broken up after the Light of Our Home went out, there were many things calling for attention. Father and Mother moved into my house shortly after Melissa left us, to take care of little Vincent and cook for me. I made several trips to San Francisco to attend to surveying and filing on my land. I copy from my Journal:

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all would bid against me, thinking I knew more about the values of the land than they. I told Milton not to bid over twelve dollars and fifty cents per acre on one lot, and not over fourteen dollars on another which I marked for him. They sold everything but the tract I wanted before they got to these lots. My nephew bid off the first tract at six dollars per acre. The terms were, if you buy one lot on your bid you have the privilege of taking two lots adjoining at the same price. I stepped up and took the two tracts I thought I wanted and was starting across to the Bank for the deposits, when the Old Auctioneer hailed me. "Don't go off mad! Here, give us a bid in this!" I thought a moment, and believing there was a good spring of water on the tract, I said: "I'll give you the same for it that I gave for the other two tracts." It was knocked off to me and I got  $164 \frac{2}{3}$  acres in the redwoods on the head of Moore's Creek, embracing all the water in the Canyon; and 80 acres of comparatively level land on the top of the mountain right adjoining my Government land, all for \$6 per acre.

We decided to commute our claims to Government land. By filing a Pre-emption first and living on the land six months, doing a certain amount of work, and paying two hundred dollars and expenses one could get title to one hundred-sixty acres, and then could file a homestead on another hundred-sixty acres and after living on this claim for five years, get title to the homestead by payment of office fees. We were greatly rejoiced to think that at last we were getting a home of our own, though rocky and rough, the first home for so many years. Father also had taken a homestead on 160 acres and I lived so near, both on my pre-emption and homestead, that I could be at his house all through the day, sleeping and eating at my own shanty. It was wonderful how each one got his Pre-emption or Homestead on the very piece of land he wanted; and all the shanties were within 150 or 200 yards of each other. But so it was, and we were wonderfully blessed in this location. When Father got the patent for his 160 acre lot, he gave me eighty acres and I bought the other eighty for five hundred dollars. The hundred sixty acres I bought of the La Jota Grant, at Watson's Sale and ten acres of S. D. Mitchell made me 640 acres in all. I became land poor.

Thus ran the ranch. We were annoyed by our stock getting out on the neighbors and had to sell off our cattle. We were in the meantime making fence, all of it barbed wire, and it was a great joy when we got the premises fenced. Then we turned our attention to grubbing out stumps, clearing land and running ditches. We had a fine water privilege running at the door, and raised from ten to twenty tons of hay each year. Our hands were full of business. Father preached round over the country, at Pope Valley, Chiles, and on Howell Mountain. My father became reconciled to the Moore's Creek purchase and when I talked of moving away he was just as much averse to leaving as he had been to coming into the Canyon at first. We kept getting more out of the ranch. Though the year 1880 was a year of mourning, we prospered financially. The Spring of our joy was vacant and blank, and we had no heart for the world. In 1881 we put in more garden and berries, extended the water ditches and planted black and English walnuts and some shellbark hickorynuts. Fishermen and hunters came to Howell Mountain in Summer and it became a famous place of resort. Angwin went to building and we could sell him more vegetables and berries than we could raise. The Mountain was full of healthseekers. Some forty families from different cities came to a camp on the mountain, among them the wife of Senator Jones, the Silver King. Our ranch was run over with picnickers. On my own part I cared little for company, but for the sake of Father, Mother, and the two motherless boys, we were glad to see people come. Father preached and married the young folks, because he charged them little or nothing. We had a school house built on the Mountain this year. We had abundance of company, plenty to eat and plenty of money, teams to go and come as we choose.



In November 1881 my brother William came with his family and went into partnership with me, as there was too much for one man to manage. He had a nice wife and family. We bought sheep and herded them, selling them early in the Fall of 1882. After which William and his folks went back to Iowa, leaving us more lonely than ever.

This winter the snow fell the deepest we ever saw it in Napa. Our sheep died off till we lost nearly half of them.

In 1883 I let a contract to get out my redwood timber, up to the top of Howell Mountain where teams could get at it, and I sold the oak and fir wood on the top of the mountain for twenty-five cents stumpage per cord. In the two years following we got out posts and grape stakes from the redwood timber left for clearing up. So business was running brisk on Moore's Creek. I was putting out more blackberries, raspberries and gooseberries all the time, and more apple and peach trees. There were also a few plum and pear trees. We soon had more in the way of Agriculture and Horticulture than one man could attend to, and I was once more on the up grade financially.

The grape boom had set in. People ran mad in the wine-making business, hid in tanks, hung themselves up on trees. Land went up to one thousand dollars per acre. In five years some of the lands would not bring the price of the buildings erected thereon. Vineyards had been turned out to commons. The county was bankrupt. I put out no wine grapes. But grapestakes were high, so were posts. We sold the redwood timber out and paid for the land three times over; loaned money, and had more to eat than ever before in life. We bought sugar, flour, and pork by the barrel, grain by the ton, and coffee, beans and salt by the sack. People thought us crazy because we put out no grapes, shunned me as a crank, a fanatic, and would hardly speak to me; but when the crash came the same men came to shake my hands and call me sagacious, complimenting me on my good judgement. This is the way of the world.

#### THE REST OF THE STORY

John Morris died in January 1907, a few months after making the entries quoted from his Diary. He is buried on the "Graveyard Knoll" at the Moore's Creek Ranch, along with his parents, and his own much loved little Delphine, the eldest of his four daughters. During the time of his prosperity he had married a second time, in 1894, fourteen years after the death of his first wife.

The Moore's Creek Ranch on Howell Mountain is now the property of the State of California, Division of Forestry, as a gift of Mrs. Anson Blake in 1928. It is called Las Posadas State Forest. A portion of the forest near Graveyard Knoll has been developed for use as a Summer Camp for the 4-H Clubs of the San Francisco Bay region. It is famous among botanists as the point where outliers of the redwood forests reach their easternmost limit, and where they are found farthest from the Coast; also as the only region where redwood groves appear on the Sacramento River Watershed. (See Jepson, *Silva of California*, pp. 131-132.) Besides, it is the "type locality" for many Coast Range plants, several of which were discovered there. But, interesting as it may be as a field of study for botanists, geologists, and archaeologists, Moore's Creek continues best to fulfill its destiny as a place in which to be happy.