

An Historical Assessment of Spinning Wheel Ranch and the Hetch Hetchy Regional Lodge and Subdivision

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The following historical report focuses on Spinning Wheel Ranch, a former "dude ranch" and resort located primarily in Section 22 of Township 1 South, Range 18 East, but also in Sections 21 and 28, Tuolumne County, California. This is an attempt to inform the reader about Spinning Wheel Ranch from a little before the date of the first land patent until the mid-1970s, when all of the various historic activities and uses of the land at Spinning Wheel Ranch had come to an end.

Two of these activities and uses are of special interest: the so-called resort in its several forms over time, and the work camp, which also appeared in various forms until it eventually became the USFS work camp that it was in the early 1970s. While the resort (and former lodge) was on private land until recently, the camp was always on U.S. property.

I. The Jones-Seals Ranch

Historic land uses of this and surrounding areas between 1850 and 1911, the date of the original land patent in Sections 21, 22, and the upper portion of 28, were restricted to open grazing and prospecting for gold and other minerals. There is no evidence that either of these activities was profitable in the immediate vicinity, although the 1907 Tuolumne County Map indicates at least some mining activity just outside it, in the southwestern corner of Section 28. At the point where the South Fork of the Tuolumne River crosses the section line, a long span on both sides of the River is labelled South Fork Big Creek Gold Mining Company. Charles W. Terry's 1928 Map of Spinning Wheel Ranch outlines what he labels a "placer wash," south and adjacent to the Middle Fork, and there is little doubt that prospectors tried their luck all along the River. However, few mining claims were ever officially filed in this vicinity, either before 1911, when all of Sections 21 and 22 and most of Section 28 belonged to the U.S. Government, or after that time, even though shallow and apparently unnatural pits reminiscent of prospecting appear in a few locations on Ranch land.

A current homeowner of the area says that when he was a boy in the late 1940s, helping his father build a cabin in the Ranch Subdivision, he and his father attempted to work what he describes as four different claims above the River, using dynamite. But none of these trials was successful. Other owners of lots in the Subdivision were also at least interested in prospecting and mining. In the 1970s, Margaret Taylor, who ran what remained of the resort (in the form of a few small cabins and trailers), owned a claim on nearby Rush Creek (approximately seven miles east of the Ranch), as is noted in a land transfer of ownership to her son, Robert Hobbs. But mineral wealth on lands belonging to the Ranch never has materialized, no matter how much interest or attention may have focused on it. A former Forest Service Resource Officer claims he studied the land assiduously but found there was too much granite for gold..

The 1907 County Map suggests another possible use of nearby land during this early period. Lewis Elwell owned what looks like a quarter section in Section 28, a section that has both the Middle and the South Forks crossing it. Elwell's acreage may have been used or leased out as a sheep ranch during that period, but he personally chose to work at another job, that of toll keeper at the Groveland-Crocker's Station Toll House, where Cliff House was later built (Wurm, 1973, p. 30). Lewis Elwell followed in the footsteps of his father, whose own toll station on Big Oak Flat Road was set up in 1874, when the road was completed, according to the authors of *The Big Oak Flat Road*. This was at Colfax Springs, where in 1916 the Hetch Hetchy Railroad had its own station (Schlichtmann and Paden, 1986, p. 198). What finally became Spinning Wheel Ranch gave an easement to this railroad to cross one corner of its land.

The Tuolumne County Recorders Office possesses a copy of the original land patent for what was later called Spinning Wheel Ranch, after C. W. Terry purchased it. The patent was issued on March 6, 1911, to Thomas N. Jones. No other person's name is mentioned in this document, but (strangely) the County Archives assign a different name to the same patent. This name is that of William Seals, who may have been Jones' partner or have had some sort of similar relationship inasmuch as the Ranch is generally called in many subsequent documents the Jones-Seals Ranch (Official Records, Bk. 27, p. 314).

What is not listed in tax assessments is nearly as important as what is listed. One of the goals of this research is to establish what improvements in the way of buildings and ditches were made at the Ranch, with dates and values. By 1912 there were only two structures noteworthy enough to tax, a cabin and a barn. These were assessed at \$250; personal property was assigned a value of \$120, and the land itself was valued at \$330. Neither a map nor any kind of description in official records indicates exactly where the cabin and barn were located on the property.

By 1918 the cabin and barn were still the only structures, and still worth \$250, although personal property had more than doubled in value, to \$275. But the land itself had actually gone down in value (as land in other parts of the West had too, during World War I), and was now assessed at \$325, or \$5.00 lower than the assessment of 1912. Clearly, the Jones-Seals Ranch was barely holding its own economically, even if it was enhanced by surroundings of natural beauty, with the Middle Fork crossing it from east to west, not to mention the enhancement of its location along the routes to Hetch Hetchy Valley, on the one hand, and Yosemite Valley on the other. It could be, of course, that Jones and/or Seals never seriously intended to be ranchers. They, like Lewis Elwell, may have lived on their land or leased it but worked elsewhere--for example, on the Hetch Hetchy Railroad or water supply system. Hetch Hetchy was the major employer in the area in 1912 (Wurm, p. 41). Perhaps, when Hetch Hetchy reached the end of its initial phase of impressive accomplishments, in the early 1920s, Jones and Seals decided it was time to move on. By 1916 the railroad had been completed. The O'Shaughnessy Dam was constructed between 1915 and 1922 (Wurm, p.103).

II. C. W. Terry's Grand Plan

The next owner of the Ranch was a different kind of man, a promoter and would-be profiteer. Although his survey may have been unscientific and inaccurate, necessitating some legal revisions by subsequent owners, C. W. Terry was accepted in Sonora as a professional surveyor--at least by Tuolumne County officials in 1928, whose signatures appear on Terry's survey map for his proposed subdivision. He was also a real estate investor, and he may have made (or lost) money in other ways or in other professions as well. There are numerous documents filed under his name, but nearly all pertain to the sale of lots on the Ranch. Some documents are revealing in a surprising and negative way, seen from a later social perspective. Along with a number of documents that are, in essence, disclaimers of any responsibility for what occurs on any given lot in his subdivision once that lot has been sold, are a few documents in which he spells out a racial restriction as to who may live in his subdivision and to whom the owners must not resell. Any person who is not Caucasian cannot purchase lots. In a 1932 deed in which Terry sells a lot to T. H. Sherman and Arthur Miller, of Los Angeles, this is the exact wording: "that this property shall not be sold or leased or occupied by any person not of the Caucasian race." In retrospect, and especially in consideration of racism in the Mother Lode (or elsewhere) from the 1850s onward, this sentiment may be less a reflection Terry's personal prejudice than a reflection of his times.

Be that as it may, Terry's business practice in other respects was to advertise outside Tuolumne County, mainly in San Francisco and Los Angeles, as is shown by addresses on deeds and also by information from living sources. Also, whatever Terry's other occupations may have been, he did not live at the Ranch but was legally represented there by someone who acted as his agent, according to official records, first by a man named George Bartlett and later by Frank Bottles (Official Records Bk. 18, p. 487).

Anyone can see from his survey map that Terry had big ideas and possibly a grandiose vision of some verdant oasis of the future. He was undoubtedly affected by all that was happening around him: new railroads, undreamed of aqueducts and tunnels driven through mountains until they reached the Coast, dams and reservoirs that would have dazzled the builders of ancient pyramids. A successful rural subdivision on both sides of the Tuolumne Middle Fork probably seemed like a reasonable or practical idea, given its location near the junction of today's Highway 120 and the Cherry Lake Road to Hetch Hetchy. Holiday camps in the area attracted visitors as early as 1921 (Wurm, p. 39), primarily during summer. Terry's scheme to sell single parcels to big-city dwellers appears to have aimed specifically at those who could not live at the Ranch year round. It was always to be a "summer subdivision" for city dwellers who would live in summerhouses and cabins; the only full-time resident would be a year-round caretaker.

Generally, nothing seems to have happened very fast at Spinning Wheel Ranch. Terry sold very few lots in his lifetime and his envisioned concept in practice must have disappointed him after awhile, or until he died in the mid-1940s. But he did start out more or less with a bang. In 1932 the cabin and barn of the Jones-Seals Ranch were still there, but for the first time in the tax record there are other improvements: namely, two ditches and water rights. One ditch, valued at only \$25, is located in Sections 21 and 28, but no length is given; the other, in Section 22, is not assessed (except as part of the total value of the land) but the length is given: 1-1/4 miles. The total value of land and improvements in Sections 21 and 28 is \$585, while the total value of Section 22 is \$700. No personal property value is recorded, and no map (e.g., of ditches) accompanies the record.

After observing the remains of ditches at the former Ranch and also after studying the USFS records, it appears that Terry and later owners never extended either of the ditch segments that were originally excavated in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Terry's own map is the only one known that shows the location of his ditches or anything else in the subdivision.

While Terry appears to have been less successful than he had hoped or expected, it must be admitted that his ditches seem to have worked fairly well, at least for a time. It was not the pumping station that provided most of the water for the pool, but the upper ditch. (The pumping station was installed to service the trailers, the laundry, and the Lodge and cabins.) The ditch may also have supplied water to the orchard mentioned on Terry's map, which is remembered by an informant as "a bunch of apple trees".

Finally, it is obvious from the above discussion, from Terry's map, and from other accounts, that this small ditch system was built for agricultural and recreational purposes and had nothing to do with mining or with any other or earlier ditch system in Sections 21, 22, and 28 (of which none are known), nor with any ditch system in the surrounding region.

After Terry died, the next owners of the land, who purchased it in 1946, were Frank and Esther Bottles. Frank Bottles had been Terry's agent, his business representative on the land, and he had an option to buy the Ranch as early as 1942 (Official Records Bk. 18, p. 487). The 1946 deed (made up after Terry's death) describes the Ranch as comprising 267.5 acres. Bottles bought everything except two lots (Official Records Bk. 48, p. 370).

The two Bottles were, as in an amusing story, bartenders. They had a bar in Big Oak Flat called The Miners Resort. Although the official record is frustratingly elusive in certain particulars, it is clear from what exists at the Tuolumne County Records Office that the Bottle family had financial difficulties to the extent that they sometimes had to appear in court, where they were sued for unpaid accounts. Therefore, although the 1946 Stanislaus National Forest Map has the Lodge listed as The Two Bottles Resort, it did not belong to them for very long. And those interviewed sources who owned cabins and ate at the Lodge in the late 1940s and early 1950s do not remember the unusual name of Bottles, as one might expect.

III. Success, Then Decline

Whatever may be the full story of the part played by Frank Bottles at the Ranch, by 1950 he had sold his holdings to Frank DeBorba, who practiced dentistry and lived in Centerville, near Fremont, California. In 1952, DeBorba is assessed in the tax record for ten times more land than any other buyer of lots in the Subdivision. This amounts to a total of thirty lots of many sizes and shapes, as small as "city-size" 100 x 100 foot lots and as large as 19 acres. Although no buildings are described in 1950s tax records or even recorded as buildings per se (on DeBorba's or any other owner's lots), parcel 6809-04 is shown as having the greatest value of any at Spinning Wheel Ranch. This parcel is 12 acres in size and is located where the resort and swimming pool once stood. In 1952 this parcel and its improvements (which would have included some small cabins) were assessed at \$15,270. For reasons unknown but possible to surmise, this parcel and improvements decreased in value by 1954, when the total value was assessed as \$12,480. But it is well known that numerous fires occurred in the vicinity during the 1950s, as they do today, and fire is the most likely reason for this decrease in value.

The following headlines in 1956 issues of *The Union Democrat* are not unusual: "Lightning Causes Twenty Spot Fires in National Forest" (October 11, 1956); "Lightning Blamed for Fourteen Fires in Sierra Region" (July 19, 1956). Even more to the point than these, one 1956 article about a minimum-security prisoner escaping from a work camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch refers directly to the subject area of this report: "The Middle Fork Camp was established last March in Spinning Wheel Ranch, one mile north of the Cherry Valley Big Oak Flat Road intersection, where 25 inmates of the Soledad Minimum Security State Prison are engaged in replanting the area burned in forest fires in 1952" (*Union Democrat*, Sept. 27, 1956).

The Groveland Ranger Station Fire Atlas shows nine major fires in the region between 1908 and 1959. Three major fires in 1913, 1954, and 1959 swept across the northern and eastern portions of Section 22. Although the location of the Lodge and cabins was on the extreme western edge of the 1954 fire (labelled the Spinning Wheel Ranch Fire in the Atlas), there is little doubt that they were destroyed by fire at this time.

That there were very serious fires at and around the Ranch has been noted by ethnographic sources as well. One informant was only a boy in the mid-1950s, but his family has owned a cabin in the Subdivision since 1947, on the opposite side of the river from the former Lodge. He remembers more than one fire, and specifically the fire that burned down the Lodge, although he doesn't recall the exact year, but it seems safe to assume from the tax assessment record that the Lodge burned in 1954, after an earlier fire in 1952 that either damaged it or burned some of the surrounding cabins. This interpretation would explain why the value dropped from \$12,480 in 1952 to \$2,670 in 1955.

Other fires apparently ravaged the area after the major one in 1954. In 1957 the total value of the 12-acre parcel where the Lodge once existed is listed as \$1,000. Interestingly, DeBorba did make a few unspecified improvements during a few of the following years. By 1961, while the 12 acres themselves were valued at \$1,200, the total value including improvements rose to \$4,470. A slight increase is noted for 1964, and both the land and improvements went up incrementally by 1967 (\$1,880 land value plus \$1,780 in improvements), but the figures in parentheses probably reflect most of all the continual tendency of land and holdings to rise steadily in value.

By 1969 DeBorba had had enough of Spinning Wheel Ranch and had sold most of his investment to four physicians. These investors, according to a landholder there today, also invested in the original 1928 dream of developing the Ranch and Subdivision into a verdant and attractive oasis. Their names do not appear in the tax assessment record; they are represented instead by an attorney in San Jose, R. F. Dreyer. By this time the value of the land itself had more than tripled from the date when it was assessed in 1964, only five years earlier. But the improvements, which might only amount in reality to the swimming pool and a small cabin or two, did not increase much since 1964, and not at all since 1967, when they were valued at \$1,780.

Tax records after 1969 were kept with less care and, worse, cannot always be located. In any case, it is not the purpose of this report to carry the history of Spinning Wheel Ranch beyond the 1970s. What is known about land transactions in this area after 1969 is that the four above-mentioned doctors did not make their dream materialize in any sense whatever. Both the U.S. Government, which owns the site of the Lodge and swimming pool, and the current owner of the site of the former ranch house and over twenty other contiguous lots on both sides of the River, purchased land partly from the four doctors represented by R. F. Dreyer, working for what is called D.D.D. & Associates.

IV. Appraisal and Discussion

This seems an appropriate place to address important research questions: "What historic use do the existing historic features (ditch, swimming pool, etc.) represent? And following this, "How have these uses changed the land and natural environment?" As noted, the ditches were dug after Terry purchased the land and are noted in tax records for 1932. Their purpose was indicated specifically on Terry's survey map. One ditch was intended both to supply his trout pond and to water his orchard, while the ditch closest to the Middle Fork ends at his proposed garden area. These ditches changed the land and natural environment by disfiguring it. And the same may be said for the swimming pool, not to mention the diversion dam for the ditches and pumping station that pumped water to the Lodge and to the trailer park. Of course, the impact of summer visitors had altered the vegetation community from the start; and the trailer park (1950s-1960s) had an even greater negative effect over several decades.

An interesting evolution from ranch reservoir to trout pond to swimming pool seems evident. The pool sits in a low spot in the middle of a natural drainage that fills and holds water during wet spells, even before it reaches the pool. Very likely, the earliest owner(s) of the land made use of this wet area but, as mentioned above, no map or other information about them is known. Later, a dam was built, as shown on Terry's map, and this dam could, in fact, have existed in some form or other even before Terry bought the land. If the trout pond (which one source calls a trout hatchery) didn't catch on completely, the swimming pool in the same spot did, as shown in photographs. This was a main summer attraction, according to interviewed sources. It attracted people to the Lodge and Subdivision.

V. Ethnographic Input

Very few older people who lived at Spinning Wheel Ranch are alive, but a number of their sons and daughters continue to live in the general area or in other parts of California.

Of the older generation of people who were adults living at the Ranch in the 1940s, only two could be interviewed. Two others who would have been very helpful in this research died only this year. One informant, in her 80s, has many memories of certain events in the 1940s, mostly regarding the house that she and her husband built together on the south side of the Middle Fork.

This informant describes herself as a "big Swedish woman who was very strong," and she is proud of how she could carry sheet rock across the river to build the house, "two sheets at time." She says she hung sheet rock, sanded floors, and pounded nails at the house she and her husband built in the late 1940s. Many of her stories are about the River, the abundant rattlesnakes near (and under) the house, and about her neighbors. She remembers Patrick and Louise Cline, Frank DeBorba, and, later, Margaret Taylor, who lived in what became the Cline's house, on the site of one of the present homes. Everyone who lived either full-time or part-time at the Ranch appears to have been from a large city along the California coast, mostly Los Angeles but also San Francisco, where she and her husband and family lived when they weren't at Spinning Wheel Ranch.

This informant confirms that Patrick Cline and Frank DeBorba were partners at the Ranch, and says that they financed and built the Lodge, which was "new" in 1947 when she and her husband purchased their lot from DeBorba for \$500. She remembers the swimming pool and some near-drownings there, and also the restaurant, which was "very good." Her family sometimes ate there on Sundays before returning to San Francisco. There were several caretakers in succession at the Lodge and she doesn't specifically recall Frank Bottles and his wife, but she remembers how the area looked after the fire that levelled the building and surrounding structures, of which she says there were "three or four very simple cabins."

This informant also helped to bring the history of the Ranch and Resort up to the early 1970s, when it is known from other sources that Margaret Taylor (whose husband died young) ran the trailer park at that time. The Taylors, who had at one time managed a motel on Highway 120, not far from the West Gate of Yosemite, bought out the Clines and lived in the former ranch house (now demolished).

Another old-timer in her eighties and her husband began a cabin in the same year, 1947. While she can't recall for sure whether they had running water, she says she and her family of four lived for a couple of summers in one of the "Lodge cabins" while they built their own place across the Middle Fork. She remembers that the Clines were running the Lodge and apparently cooking for guests. Like several other sources, she says the food was very good there. Her son who often swam in the pool, says he remembers the Lodge as being clean, sound, and well built, "a relatively high-class affair".

A long-time resident of the Groveland area who worked for the USFS for eighteen years remembers the Ranch and especially the ranch house where the Clines lived in the 1950s. After a fire that, she recalls, burned Oakland Camp, downstream from Spinning Wheel Ranch, Patrick Cline wanted very much "to get out," she says, and if possible to sell his house to her family, who were not interested, however, having witnessed what fire can do.

A number of other ethnographic sources of information for this report are mentioned briefly or credited in other contexts. Those who are middle-aged today were children in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and they especially remember the swimming pool and the Lodge. Several Hetch Hetchy engineers who worked in the area later, in the early 1960s, also remember the pool (but not, of course, the Lodge) and the trailer park. They consistently recall the tenor of the place, how "rough and tumble it was, "a camp full of tarheels who travelled from place to place, working on big projects.

These engineers and other Hetch Hetchy employees agree that the trailers numbered between 20 and 30, and that facilities were simple or primitive. But there was, at least, a laundry building on a solid concrete foundation, apparently located a few feet from the dirt road that at present runs near the site of the swimming pool. The laundry took water from the same system that serviced the Lodge and trailer park.

VI. Hetch Hetchy: San Francisco Water and Power

The relationship between Spinning Wheel Ranch and Hetch Hetchy--both the region and the specific San Francisco water supply project--is an essential part of this historical assessment. San Francisco's gigantic water project, to build several dams and a number of reservoirs upstream from the Ranch, and finally to convey water by tunnel and other means all the way to San Francisco, was a project whose existence might be called the probable reason C. W. Terry bought Spinning Wheel Ranch in the first place. It is doubtful that the proposed Hetch Hetchy Regional Lodge on his subdivision map (1928) would ever have acquired that name if San Francisco had never initiated its infinitely larger plan. In a mode familiar to us all, Terry was hooking his dream to a star.

He was not the first to use and exploit the name Hetch Hetchy. By 1916 there was the Hetch Hetchy Shaving Parlor in Big Oak Flat (Wurm, 1973, p.127) and the Hetch Hetchy Restaurant in Groveland (Wurm, p. 129). During the 1920s a large and commodious lodge known simply as the Hetch Hetchy Lodge, at Camp

Mather, was purchased from a private concern by the National Park, where it was used as a summer resort for tourists who arrived there on gas-powered touring "buses on rails," along the Hetch Hetchy Railroad Line. It seems more significant, given that fact, that Terry's Hetch Hetchy Regional Lodge never has a shortened name on maps and documents. Confusion could easily arise, perhaps to the benefit of the owner of the much smaller lodge at Spinning Wheel Ranch. And those who booked ahead to arrive at the latter lodge, thinking they had booked at the former, might reasonably feel they'd been given a counterfeit coin. But, at least, they could have a swim in the pool. Terry, to be sure, was a promoter and a real estate man of a certain stripe.

It should be noted at this point that Terry uses both the names Spinning Wheel Ranch and the Hetch Hetchy Regional Lodge and Subdivision to describe his property on his 1928 map. Jones and Seals ranch at the same location is never described in records as Spinning Wheel Ranch, but simply as the Jones-Seals Ranch. Therefore, it seems logical to assume that Terry, the next owner, was the originator of this name. In most documents the two names are used simultaneously and interchangeably, but Spinning Wheel Ranch is easier to say and seems more attractive as a name. Whatever the case, this name is the one most familiar to locals and is most often used today.

But to return to the main theme, it is notable that the first land patent for a ranch in Sections 21, 22, and 28 was in 1911, when San Francisco Water and Power was well on its way. The original owner(s) of the Ranch did not improve their land more than to put up a small house and barn, valued at \$250. And Jones and /or Seals may have worked less on the Ranch than for some division of the gigantic Hetch Hetchy project. After all, the railroad ran right across one corner of Section 21, as is indicated on all maps and deeds after 1916 (Official Records, vol. 78, p. 405). Workers were needed on the railroad and, very soon, on the main aqueduct tunnel only a little to the north, not to mention "upstream" at higher elevations.

The business of Yosemite tourism began well before the turn of the century, and almost in the very neighborhood of the Ranch there were early recreation camps such as Oakland Camp (today's San Jose Family Camp) and, farther upriver, Camp Towanga. For this reason Terry's own scheme seems as sound as it does visionary, depending as it does on two important tourist resources at the ends of two roads: the railroad to Hetch Hetchy Valley and the Big Oak Flat Road to Yosemite.

Hetch Hetchy and its Dam Railroad (Wurm 1973) makes it very apparent that housing for engineers and laborers of many kinds was a much-needed commodity during every phase of Hetch Hetchy construction for a number of years. There is adequate testimony that Spinning Wheel Ranch was used as a Hetch Hetchy construction workers' camp during the 1950s when the Cherry Oil Road was built and the early 1960s, when work was required for tunnel and dam projects at elevations as low as the Ranch and as high as those reservoirs whose dams had to be raised. While there is no available documentation or testimony as to how the Ranch may have housed a work camp as early as the first quarter of the 20th century, a road and tunnel engineer for Hetch Hetchy remembers seeing a large Hetch Hetchy work camp on the property during the early 1950s, when the Cherry Oil (or Cherry Lake) Road was actually brought through the property.

An April 1950, letter that refers directly to where the Cherry Oil Road cuts through the Ranch is of some interest. From H. H. Turner, Manager of Utilities, to Eugene Riordan, Director of Property, City Hall, San Francisco, the letter partly discusses how best to approach and convince the owners of the Ranch that a right-of-way will be an asset and advantage to the property .One short paragraph is worth quoting:

A spectacular view of the dude ranch headquarters in a valley below can be had from the proposed road. No existing public highway provides a view of the property .The proposed road would therefore be instrumental in attracting patronage to the dude ranch [end papers, this report, letter of Apr. 6,1950].

The writer goes on to say that he is reciting the foregoing for what benefit it may prove to you during your negotiations with ...Dr. Frank DeBorba, D.D.S., 274 South Main Street, Centerville, California."

It seems probable that the writer of this letter visited the Ranch and saw that it was in need of more clientele, and that the best ploy to use in selling still another easement to the landowner (in addition to the existing railroad easement) would be to emphasize how "the dude ranch" could be seen from afar by more prospective clients, once the road was built. The letter also confirms that the Lodge and cabins had not yet succumbed to serious damage by fire, as was so soon to occur.

More than one observer connected with Hetch Hetchy projects in the early 1960s remembers what they describe as a trailer park and Hetch Hetchy workers' camp. While one informant remembers the early 1950s Lodge, swimming pool, and trailers, as well as a few tent cabins, another informant says he recalls only the pool and the trailers, and no cabins. But, he says, there were a large number of trailers, between 20 and 30. Because there are no actual records of this, it can only be assumed that Hetch Hetchy either leased the land for a camp (and possibly even owned a few trailers in which it housed workers), or else that any transactions between workers and Ranch representatives were strictly private, with workers either bringing in their own trailers or renting those already there. That Hetch Hetchy leased the land seems unlikely but not impossible. That some trailers belonged to the Ranch seems probable, partly because one source referred several times to the trailer park as a motel.

One informant says he remembers Patrick Cline and his sons well, and he visited their house (not the Lodge) many times. When Cherry Lake Dam was being worked on in the early 1950s, all of the Clines were hired to work on the project. Patrick Cline was hired as "an inspector of some sort, while his sons worked at grouting on the Cherry Lake Dam. An engineer for Hetch Hetchy recalls the camp full of "tunnel stiff" who worked on the tunnel in the sixties. He describes it as "a transient camp" whose workers had their own trailers and moved constantly from one big dam project to another, throughout the U.S. He and others mention that entire families stayed in the trailers, and that there were many children. "There were some serious fights between those trailer kids, who were a pretty tough lot, moving around as they did, and us," meaning those young men who lived in summer cabins at Spinning Wheel Ranch.

VII. The Forest Service Camp

Although there may not be an official record of any kind of camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch before 1971, it is known from ethnographic sources that various camps did exist there by the late 1940s, on the U.S. Government portion of Section 22. Low-lying open areas next to the Middle Fork and slightly higher areas above the flood line make ideal camping spots. Informants recall public usage of this area during the late 1940s when their families were building cabins on the opposite side of the water. Even before that, Hetch Hetchy construction workers may have camped in these places near the River, just as they lived in trailers during the 1950s and 1960s.

As mentioned, a work camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch existed in 1955 (and possibly during other years as well) to clean up debris after fires that ravaged the area, but the workers at this camp were minimum-security prisoners from the Soledad Prison in the Bay Area (*Union Democrat*, Sept. 27, 1956). The locations of prisoner work camps on U.S. Government land have generally been determined in cooperation with the USFS, at least in California.

Fortunately, more than one accessible Forest Service employee lived and worked at the USFS work camp at the Ranch between 1971 and 1974. Two recent retirees of the Groveland Ranger District were both interviewed for this report.

During this 1970s period, USFS District Headquarters were housed in the Groveland Hotel, although the land occupied by today's District Offices already belonged to the Forest Service. There were several houses in the area of today's compound, but these could not be used for barracks because permanent USFS employees and their families occupied them. All workers in the outlying camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch

were temporary summer workers.

In short, there was no better place between the summers of 1971 and 1974 to house temporary workers who, in fact, were needed for work primarily at higher elevations and in outlying areas several miles east of today's compound. In the meantime, permanent barracks for them and for future temporary workers were built at "home base," where they exist at the present time. The outlying camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch was shut down after 1974, and later demolished.

A great deal of thought and planning went into the construction and organization of the USFS camp at Spinning Wheel Ranch, which might be described as primitive, according to today's hygienic standards. The camp used untreated river water pumped uphill to a large tank, and old-fashioned pit-trench privies served as toilets, but the buildings themselves gave an impression of order. Prefabricated at Buck Meadows and assembled in sections, milled uprights and crossbeams were bolted together at prescribed points (see sketch in end papers), making each tent-cabin identical in size and shape. The exceptions were the cook house/dining facility and the shower house/laundry, which were longer and larger. There were no doors in any of the structures: entryways were simply tent flaps that could be tied shut. Both informants remember many non-human visitors at night, from abundant mosquitoes and gnats to less abundant bats and an occasional rattlesnake. Indeed, both mention the repeated experiment of eating rattlesnake meat.

One informant explained the division of labor. First, there was the Cook, who made do with whatever was at hand. Apparently, he obtained supplies only once a week from Groveland. There was a brush-dispersal crew of five, a timber stand improvement crew of five (that "in practice simply thinned trees"), and, finally, a recreation crew, also made up of five men. In addition to their routine daily duties, the entire group underwent training to fight fires, which they did more than once. One informant says there were many fires while he worked there, and he especially remembers the Granite fire of August 17, 1973.

Both informants discussed what was expected of the recreation crew. They remember that they serviced twelve to fifteen summer camps designed for the public. This involved installing and repairing toilets (including digging the pits), cleaning up campsites, and collecting garbage. For comparison's sake, he said that today these jobs, formerly done by summer "temps," are done by a regular full-time employee, but today's employee works alone and maintains fewer camps.

One informant worked starting in 1971. By the end of 1973 he'd decided he'd rather rent a regular cabin in the summer instead of living in a "tent frame". He therefore organized a group of four other USFS employees and rented a cabin next to the ranch house at Spinning Wheel Ranch. By that time Patrick Cline and his wife had sold the house and surrounding cabins to the Taylors, and Mr. Taylor had passed away. In the summer of 1974, he paid the rent to Margaret Taylor, in the amount of \$45 per month, split five ways.

Now the five young men were on their own. As one explains, this was a summer of powdered eggs, plenty of spaghetti, and an occasional treat like roasted rattlesnake-not to mention the usual regimen of hard work. "But these were good times," he says. "Everyone really enjoyed those summers at Spinning Wheel Ranch."

VIII. Summary and Conclusions

Historic uses of Spinning Wheel Ranch fall into three categories: summer recreation, centering on what was essentially a summertime lodge and a group of simple cabins; lodging, in the form of a trailer park and workers' temporary camp housing chiefly Hetch Hetchy laborers; and a seasonal Forest Service work area, where work was done by temporary employees who maintained surrounding USFS property and camps in addition to the one they inhabited. Recreation, lodging, and the maintenance of Government property may be said to be the main contextual theme or themes of Spinning Wheel Ranch.

The land comprising the Ranch was largely unused by non-Indians until after the first land patent, in 1911,

with no significant impact on ecosystems until after 1928, when a rural subdivision scheme involved the building of two ditches and a pool, first used for trout and later for recreation. These ditches required a small concrete diversion dam on the Middle Fork of the Tuolumne River; and a pool (constructed from local rock and concrete) also required a dam to keep the pool's contents from flowing into lower portions of the natural drainage in which it was built.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the nucleus of the Ranch was the pool, a small lodge, and a few summer cabins. In 1954 a fire destroyed the lodge and most if not all of the cabins associated with it, although the ranch house, situated over half a mile away from the lodge, survived until the 1980s, when it was dismantled to build a new house on the same site. A handful of cabins built in the late 1940s and considered part of the original subdivision also survived and are still owned and used by the families who constructed them. These are on the opposite side of the river from the lodge and ranch house sites.

Both before and after the 1954 fire a number of laborers associated with Hetch Hetchy lived in trailers located in a large, open area between the pool (and lodge) and the ranch house. Sources agree that these numbered between 20 and 30 at anyone time and that workers and their families were able to use the pool and such other facilities on the property as the nearby laundry building.

Compared to modern trailer-park standards, the amenities of this workers' camp were very basic. Although electricity and running water were available, toilet facilities were primitive. If 30 trailers were parked on the land and each trailer housed an average-sized family of four or five, the impact of 100 or even 150 inhabitants would have been considerable over a period of a year or more. Plant communities and the river below the camp had to have been adversely affected or, at best, altered. During the cooler half of the year, trailers must have been heated with wood, and many trees felled for fuel.

It is clear that, as a revenue-earning business, the dude ranch reached its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s, soon after the lodge was built. Without the Hetch Hetchy workers who lived in the trailer park, Spinning Wheel Ranch would almost have certainly folded earlier than it did, especially after the lodge and cabins burned.

Located on Government land east of both the trailer park and the pool, the Forest Service work camp of the early 1970s was only a stone's throw from the Tuolumne River. There was a tent-cabin cookhouse, a simple laundry and shower structure, and a handful of tent-cabins, each housing five or six summer employees. Local USFS Headquarters were in the Groveland Hotel during this period, and trips back and forth were limited. Workers living at the camp had duties (both there and at other locations) comprised of brush removal, tree thinning, and maintenance of overnight camps used by the public.

By 1974, the last summer the Forest Service made use of its work camp, the pool and the ditches, which are the main historic features of the site, had long ceased to function as intended and were seriously degraded, according to USFS employees who lived at the Forest Service camp.

At its zenith, which was very short-lived, this dude ranch and subdivision prospered and provided summer visitors with good food as well as recreation and a place to stay. But fire ravaged it, ditches eroded, and the pool eventually became nothing but a liability in the form of a rock-lined pit.

Unhappily for those most involved, the best years of Spinning Wheel Ranch and the Hetch Hetchy Regional Lodge number no more than seven or eight.