

Earl's Diary - Tuesday, March 29, 2016

Greetings to all my Loyal Readers,

Earl and the Lil' Nut are off on another sightseeing expedition. This time we are a little closer to home. My destination today is Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, about 175 miles north of Sacramento. The nearest large town is Redding, California. I have never been to this location so was eagerly looking forward to the exploration. It was an uneventful drive through our great Central Valley on Interstate 5. Whiskeytown is a mere 9 miles west of Redding.

I am meeting other owners of molded fiberglass trailers at Whiskeytown for a "cult" gathering. We have been looking for a place where boon docking reigns supreme with no hookups, and is relatively inexpensive to stay. This place meets the criteria - No hookups, and free admission and half price camping fees. That amounts to \$7.50 per day. Can't beat those prices!

After a 4 hour leisurely drive, I arrived at Brandy Creek RV campground, located right on Whiskeytown Lake. Only one other fiberglass RV, belonging to Terry and Mari, was in sight. So, with their trailer and my Lil' Nut, we were ready for the arrival of other members of the cult. By 7:00pm two others had arrived. By nightfall almost everyone else had claimed there first come, first served site.



So far the weather has cooperated nicely. It was clear and warm - but not overly hot!



An arrival



Looks like a bare lot



Earl and the Lil' Nut all set up, ready for the afternoon nap!



A neighborly visit



An RPod among us



A vintage Trillium



Tonight we enjoyed sitting around the warm glow and warmth of the "campfire in a can". We are calling this gathering the April Fools Gathering. Tomorrow we will be off on our first sightseeing adventure. Thanks for coming along with me today. Bye for now - - Earl

Earl's Diary, Wednesday, March 30, 2016

Hello to all my Loyal Readers,

The day dawned bright and clear without a cloud in the sky. Last night it was cool enough for me to drag out another blanket, however it warmed up quickly as the sun appeared over the mountains to the east.

I had heard that this area was full of California history. After some research I found probably more than you ever wanted to know about Whiskeytown, but here goes anyway!

The discovery of gold during the mid 1800's stirred the collective imagination of thousands of people across the world and enticed many to California in the hope of finding instant wealth. New settlements appeared overnight throughout the foothills of the Sierra and Trinity Mountains. Here in the "northern diggins," nestled in a small canyon along Clear Creek, Whiskeytown sprang to life.

Whiskeytown, like most gold rush communities, had its beginning as a cluster of tents. Miners, mostly young and unmarried, accepted the cold winters and dismal living conditions. It was not long before entrepreneurs arrived, transforming the wilderness outpost into a permanent settlement and convenient supply depot for the local miners. Whiskeytown also became a comfortable stopover for travelers, pack trains and later, stagecoaches traveling the main route to the Oregon territory.

With a steady influx of business from miners and travelers, the town soon boasted a fine hotel, stable, general store, and several saloons.

Waters of Whiskeytown Lake now cover what was once a bustling gold rush town.



Whiskeytown Lake is located at an elevation of 1300 feet above sea level. Some of the higher mountain tops around the lake still showed evidence of recent snows.

Whiskeytown Dam is protected from flooding by the circular structure located a short distance from shore. Named the Glory Hole because it resembles the trumpet-shaped morning glory flower, this structure allows overflow lake waters to drain. Water cresting the rim of the Glory Hole is funneled under the dam, emptying into Clear Creek below.

The Glory Hole is a functional feature of Whiskeytown Dam and is not designed for recreational use. It is 260 feet deep and has no safety devices to prevent fatal falls.



Later this afternoon I was invited to go for a kayak paddle. Now you need to understand that this would be my very first try at kayaking! In my very earlier younger years I was able to paddle across lakes and even a couple trips down the Sacramento River in a canoe. Kayaking, me? Never!

I guess you are never too old to give it a try. Terry and I hopped into his truck - the one with two kayaks on the top and headed for the boat launch ramp. As we were unloading the kayaks I noticed for the first time there's only place for one person to sit. Uh oh! That means I have to paddle my own canoe - or kayak? It appears so.

After placing the boats on the sandy shore, I crawled into the thing with Terry steadying it while I tried to sit down. That was like trying to sit down on the sidewalk without anything sturdy enough to hang on to! After a noisy plop I made it!

After the launch we were off. I found it wasn't much different than paddling a canoe, only I had to do all the work. Fortunately the lake was calm and we made headway. A flock of noisy Canadian Geese greeted us as we rounded one island. I purposely headed right for one who didn't seem to mind my presence. Terry said he or she was probably looking for a handout. When he, or she, didn't get one, there was a noisy squawk as he/she glided away!

After about an hour I was ready to head back to shore. Getting out of the boat was another interesting matter. It's like trying to get up off a sidewalk without anything sturdy enough to hang on to! Fortunately Terry was there with a strong hand and assisted my egress from the boat!

You may have noticed there aren't any pictures of this grand adventure. I sure wasn't going to chance my good camera having a dunking in the drink. You will just have to imagine what this all looked like!

After returning to our campsite it was definitely time for the requisite daily nap!

Needless to say, I will sleep very well tonight!
Thanks for coming along with me today.

Bye for now - - Earl



This is as close as you get to a look at the two kayaks.

Earl's Diary - Thursday, March 31, 2016

Dear Loyal Readers, wherever you may be,

Today is the day when the remainder of our 13 April Fools Gathering participants should be arriving. Again the weather was cooperating. A short walk around the campground provided color highlights from the Redbud shrubs that weren't hard to miss!



What's in a name?

While no one really knows the origins of the Whiskeytown name, local folklore tells of a miner by the name of Billie Peterson who had a mishap in the 1850's. While hauling supplies back to his mine, the pack on his mule's back came loose and a whiskey barrel went tumbling down the hillside, breaking on the rocks below and spilling its contents into the creek. From this christening came the name Whiskey Creek, and the small settlement that established itself next to the waterway became known as Whiskeytown.



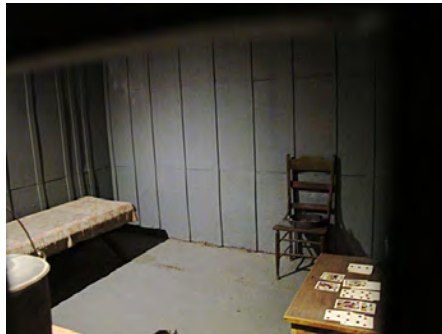
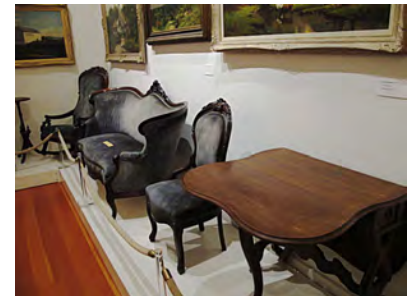
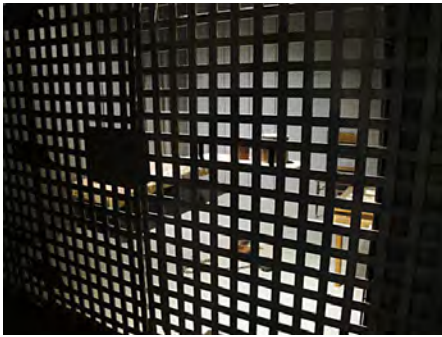
What do people do when they come on one of these gatherings? Well, they might take a hike - - or stand in the middle of the street and talk - - - sight see - - -or like me, take the regular afternoon nap!



Thursday morning Coleman, Cathy, and I went on a sightseeing expedition to nearby Shasta Town. Several times I have traveled right through the middle of Shasta while on State Route 299, out of Redding. Little did I realize there was a California Historical Park on both sides of the highway!

We spent a couple hours exploring what was left of the old gold rush town. The town has quite an historical background.

Our first stop was the county courthouse. The courthouse, dating from 1855, has been restored to its 1861 appearance. It houses the visitor center and museum, as well as the gathered works of outstanding California artists.



The recreation of the original courtroom.

We went downstairs to the dark, damp basement and visited the jail cells. Who should be waiting to tell us a tale of whoa but Jake!



How would you like to be wearing this ankle iron?



More jail paraphernalia



Signs along the street showed locations of buildings that had one time been located there.



Temporary residences gave way to houses, stores, hotels, barbershops and saloons. By 1852 more than \$2.5 million in gold had passed through the town. In December 1852, fire destroyed much of the town. The residents quickly rebuilt, but six months later another fire destroyed all 70 businesses on Main Street. Wary merchants rebuilt with fireproof brick walls and iron shutters.



The Shasta Masonic Lodge - it still has an active membership and is reported to be one of the oldest continuous operating lodges in California. One of the members of our cult gathering was proud to be a member of this lodge. He mentioned next year he might be able to get us a tour of the building.



By 1854, Shasta was home to California's longest row of brick buildings north of San Francisco. Bakeries, saloons, hotels, banks, grocery, and clothing stores were just a few of the businesses.



Gold claims were depleted by the late 1860s. Shasta's gradual decline was hastened when its lucrative stagecoach and freight business moved away. The new Central Pacific Railroad had bypassed Shasta and placed its tracks near the Sacramento River. The new town of Redding sprang up almost immediately.

Merchants abandoned or relocated their businesses, and in 1888, after three decades at Shasta, the county seat moved to Redding. Shasta's vacant buildings quickly fell into disrepair.



What you see today are the reconstructed or stabilized walls of the 1852 brick structures.



This has been quite an adventure. It was probably time for a little lunch AND the requisite nap. So - - thanks for coming along with me today. Bye for now - - Earl

People keep telling me I'm never in any of the pictures. I'm including this photo to prove that I was really there!