SHELTER COVE SCALPING

This is the Shoemake, Oliver, Sheppard version of the event to the best re- collecting of John Biagi, Jr., a descendant of the early settlers of the south coast.

"William Oliver and his brother-in-law, owned together a large herd of cattle. These were collected here (south coast) and at other places and taken to Shelter Cove. Tradition has it that they were driven to Shelter Cove. On July 2, 1861, Oliver and his brother-in-law, John Hamilton were riding horseback around the Shelter Cove section looking over the cattle. The Indians were hidden and suddenly jumped out of ambush and attacked the riders. Oliver was a well known expert pistol shot, (his two pearl handled revolvers were here until our home was burned in 1927), but he was not able to use them to any good effect. Hamilton was able to spur his horse over a high embankment and get away along the sand of the ocean beach, but Oliver was caught and scalped.

"Hamilton rode back here and with a posse of 14 men, including William Shoemake, returned to Shelter Cove. They watched the Indians who were having a tribal celebration and feast, and when they lay down to rest the posse attacked. Hamilton led the charge with the cry "Kill them all," and most of them were either driven into the surf with whips and drowned or were shot. The children were put into some sort of a stockade for the night, but during the night one of the members of the posse, who was classified as a "bad actor", crawled into the area and cut the throats of most of the children. Walt Hamilton, who had prevented the rest of the children from being killed, asked the man why he had done such a terrible thing, he replied that the Indians had killed some of his relatives.

"This information concerning the murder of the Indian children was learned by Walt Hamilton while working with one of John Hamilton's sons in the Shelter Cove country as a young man. He had talked with one of the Indians there who was one of the children whose life had been spared.

"William Shoemake took along with him to Shelter Cove a length of canvas and cord and the body was sewn up in it and brought back here (Manchester) where he is..."
The wreck steamer to land. This was done in hope that it could be done before the wreck steamer burned. The only boat available was the landing boat, and a life boat, but the only boat failed in the endeavor to come to land a gun and a life. But there were no attempts to get to the burning steamer. The crew left the steamer as they came from Greenwood. The seas were too rough for the boat to come in to tender whatever assistance might be given. The crew were taken in from the burning on land when six of the ship’s crew were taken in. The seas were not the same. Men are more likely to lose their lives themselves for their bravery and skill. Much praise is due the boat crew of the Point Arena for their bravery and skill.

The Point Arena boat returned for a second load, but met with failure. The boat crew was out of water, and taken to a neighboring house.

The man was almost exhausted, but with skill and assistance he was succeeded and taken to his home. The house was not far away. The dog was with the water, but the assistance of the Point Arena boat was a poor substitute. The dog was in the water, and aid was sent, but the man's condition was too weak to be assisted. The dog was saved, but the man was not. The unfortunateellen was brought back to the house, and what little one could be done was done. The man was buried near his daughter's house.

Gilroy, his wife, later married Dave Clanton, and they moved to Gilroy with my grandmother, Marie Oliver, who was born after William Oliver's death. Dave Clanton bought a ranch at Gilroy and also property in Santa Barbara, and after the birth of a son, Willie, Levina died of tuberculosis. On hearing that her daughter had died, leaving a small child, Susan Shoemaker took her, a niece of the Ketchum family, a young girl, and riding horseback around San Francisco Bay, they rode to Gilroy and brought back my grandmother, about 10 years old, and the baby Willie. The boy died at 12 years of age, as the result of the story goes, of eating sugar from the barrel for months, undetected, until he became ill and died of diabetes. So ended the story of William and Levina Oliver.

It is interesting to realize that William Oliver is remembered both on the west and east coasts. Up on the road to Shelter Cove from the Garberville area is a place known as "Oliver's Gap." On the east coast, in Nova Scotia, according to Ralph Cuy, an Oliver descendant of Nova Scotia, there is a memorial stone, with the correct date of his death inscribed.

On Oliver's first trip to California he went via the Horn. On his second trip brought with him his brother James and his two sisters, Helen and Isabel.

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THE WRECK OF THE SAN BENITO

I am indebted to Walter Jackson of Mendocino for this article from the Point Arena Record of December 5, 1896.

"The arrival in town (Point Arena) Sunday morning, (Nov. 29, 1896), of a sailor, reporting that the steamer San Benito had gone ashore between Brush and Alder Creeks, created considerable excitement and soon all available teams in town were on their way to the beach. On arrival there, a pitiful sight met the eyes. The big steamer had parted in tow and men were clinging to the rigging for their lives. Great waves washed over the sandbound steamer, but the wreck was firmly grounded and was hardly moved by the breakers.

The San Benito was bound from Tacoma to San Francisco with 4,000 tons of coal. The night was stormy but clear. From one of the crew we learned that the Greenwood electric light was mistaken for the Point Arena Lighthouse light and the steamer hove in. She ran on to the sand and was soon in a helpless condition. She struck between one and two o'clock in the morning, and in about a half-hour, broke in two, just aft of the smoke stack. The two boats were lowered and five men succeeded in getting into one and four into the other. The experience of the boats was terrible. One capsized nine times and but two of the occupants reached shore. The other boat found another and they were saved. All the other passengers were saved by the other boat. Five human beings went down to a