

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Our Mission: To Preserve, Promote and Make Accessible the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

SPRING 2026

Taqwus, A Great Power Balanced Between Good and Evil

By Edward Warner

Feint whispers of an unfamiliar word.... “Tahquitz”... uttered by the older scouts as we gathered, eyes stinging with smoke, huddled around a crackling campfire with sparks shooting into the night air.

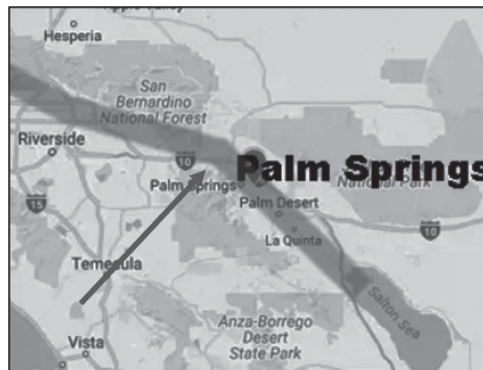
The mysterious name evoked misty images of sacred ceremonies and traditions, to us, the new crop of 11-year-olds joining Long Beach Boy Scout Troop 75 in the summer of 1967. What or where was this mythical Tahquitz? We quickly learned that every winter our troop ventured to the snow-covered land of Camp Tahquitz, located at Barton Flats on the south slope of the San Bernardino Mountains along highway 38. It was during one of those cold nights at Camp Tahquitz where I heard more about Tahquitz through fictional ceremonies and “authentic” dances performed by the older scouts.

Tahquitz with all its ritual was filed away like many childhood memories, for another 50 years. That was until we moved to our Idyllwild home, discovering the name attached to much of the local geography. Tahquitz Peak, Rock, Creek, Valley, Canyon and so many commercial uses would seem cliché in another place. I wondered how Camp Tahquitz in the San Bernardino’s shared a name with these San Jacinto Tahquitz places. The ah-ha moment came during a visit to our San Jacinto Mountain Nature Center where I learned that the original Long Beach Boy Scout Camp Tahquitz was right there under my feet, some of the campfire rings still existent. It was founded here in 1925 on five acres of land given

by Claudius Emerson. Years later with a need for more space, Camp Tahquitz was moved to Barton Flats in 1959, but kept the name.

More recently as I host weekend guests at our

Idyllwild Historical Museum, I am often asked about the name Tahquitz, each visitor with their own pronunciation, the more daring one’s feature some pretty clever syllabic twists and turns. Their questions prodded me to learn a bit more about this fundamental story of our Idyllwild. With that in mind, let’s take a scenic drive down the “Palms to Pines Highway” and pull into the large parking area of the Coachella



San Andreas Fault Palm Springs Bend

Valley Vista Point for a shallow dive into North American Plate Tectonics. Looking out across the Banning Pass, with the San Bernardino Mountains in the background, peering closely at the terrain we see the trace of the mighty San Andreas Fault. It is the division between the North American and the Pacific Plates, that collided some 30 million years ago and continue to grind against each other. Idyllwild rides on the Pacific Plate moving north about 2 inches per year, relative to Big Bear and the San Bernardino’s on the North American Plate.

The San Andreas fault is a rather straight geological feature throughout this region, yet near today’s Palm Springs, the fault curves. Geologists believe this curve causes more stress on the plates than in places where the fault is straight. This pressure point resulted in the formation of the significant San Jacinto Fault to the

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HINDSIGHT: 20/20 VISION IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR!

As a member, you know we benefit by learning our history, to better plan our future. Your Idyllwild Area Historical Society takes on the acquisition and preservation of important items that are historically centric to this community, its people, places and events. We use research tools, records and documents from the Frank and Mabel Moote Archive to share stories about our past, with color and texture to make them compelling and relevant to our shared future. With each issue of this newsletter, we bring you a feature story to further describe what a special place the Idyllwild area is.

We hope you reflect on how we might protect this gem of a community while becoming more than just a “social media weekend experience” like so many similar novel communities. We were always more of a secret. We had to strive to bring guests here in years past. We have achieved success in that regard so maybe it’s time to look at how we can level off that popularity and enrich the experience of guests that do find us, with our rich background that has shaped this place.

We want weekend visitors to the Idyllwild Area Historical Museum to come away with greater respect by learning a bit about our history. We hope that might influence them to care more about us and our community, and maybe behave a bit more like our ideal tourists, the PCT hikers and the rock climbers, who never leave even the slightest physical trace of their being here, and only enrich us with their presence and adventures.

We value and appreciate your Membership, and please keep an eye in that mirror, its pretty clear where we came from, but where are we going? 🏠

Edward Warner
President, Idyllwild Area Historical Society
Contact me at edward54625@gmail.com

TAQWUS

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west of the San Andreas, and a whole family of related parallel faults, that help relieve the stress at the curved section. The San Jacinto Fault Zone, historically the most seismically active area in Southern California, is under us, and the source of frequent and unexplained scary rumblings.

Ancient people living here certainly experienced these unpredictable and sometimes violent convulsions of the earth they walked on. Early civilizations all over the world explain the unexplainable with real and vivid oral traditions passed down from one generation to the next. The unpredictability of earthquakes, lightening, meteors and comets is often attributed to graphically depicted spirits. It should be noted that original people in North America may not separate a spirit world from a physical world, and many of the languages do not have a word for a separate spirit world, it is all one.

To understand Tahquitz, we look at oral narratives of people who share branches of the Uto-Aztecan languages. These include the Aztecs of central Mexico, Great Basin civilizations of Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Idaho, and remarkably, our Cahuilla, Luiseno, Serrano, Cupeno, and Tongva People of Southern California. In Mexico, we find Tepeyollotl, an Aztec deity associated with earthquakes, caves, and echoes, and is often depicted as a jaguar. He is seen as a powerful underground entity, frequently described as a “demon” or monster that emerges from his cave to cause destruction. The Shoshone people of the Great Basin tell of Dzoavits, blamed for earthquakes, floods and volcanic activity. His lair is described as a stone house or underground lodge, in elevated rocky mountains, and acts of cannibalism are associated with this narrative.

In the early 1900’s, ethnographic studies were conducted here in Southern California. Scholars visited native settlements to listen to elders and story-tellers describe the “lost” history of their people. These interviewers documented aspects of the “religion” and

“legends” from the few remaining speakers of their unwritten language. In their quest to understand these cultures, they learned of the demons and deities from those who could still sing or tell the story. The story tellers are often reluctant to speak of the demons for fear of reprisal. I also found it interesting that when one teller was questioned about further meaning or detail, he dismissed the question with: “I tell you what WE say” in the same way Christians might say, “for it is written”.

In our region the interviewers learned of the Yuman Speaking Diegueno (Kumeyaay) entity called Chaup, a fire-ball of electric or meteoric origin accompanied by thunder, and the Mojave (Aha Macav) told of the Fireball Cannibal, Kwayu. They also learned of the Luiseno’s entity Dakwish (or Dakush) the meteor or fireball, blamed for causing natural phenomena, and in some tellings known to eat people. The coastal Luiseno were influenced earlier than the inland peoples by the Spanish invasion and resulting control of the church. Luiseno tellings



Tahquitz Rock, San Jacinto Mountains
Bennett Barthelemy

of this narrative infer more of a “devil” connection to Dakwish, likely altered from the original association due to the church’s teachings. A similar being known as Tacquish was described by Serrano people. The Luiseno and Serrano believe their entity resides not in their area, but further inland in the San Jacintos, leaving one interviewer to conclude the narrative may have originated with the more isolated Cahuilla.

Cahuilla believe that all beings share in the workings of the universe. Since humans have an effect on other parts of the world, they must act responsibly to protect plants, animals, the earth, water and sky. Keeping the world in balance is integral to their culture resulting in both good and evil entities. Respect for the evil spirits give people reason to behave responsibly. Taqwus was the first shaman (nukatem) made by Mukat, the Cahuilla creator of everything. Taqwus is very powerful and initially provided for the good of all people and became the guardian spirit of all shamans. He then began to use his power selfishly, harming the people. He collected souls and enjoyed human flesh, especially that of young

See Taqwus, page 5

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RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please make your tax-deductible membership check to IAHS and mail to PO box 3320, Idyllwild, Ca, 92549
You can now also can renew membership online!

www.idyllwildhistory.org/membership-application-2/ and pay with a credit/debit card.
Please list your name(s) as you want it to read in our newsletter.

TAQWUS

(continued from page 3)

girls. This led to his banishment to a cave below towering Tahquitz/Lily Rock (Pul Lo Cla). Taqwus appears as a meteor or even a human-like shape that glows with blue sparks. He is most active at night. The strange rumblings heard deep within the San Jacinto Mountains, the frequent earthquakes, and the crashing of boulders are all attributed to him as he stomps about the mountains. The spelling Taqwus is from Margaret Boynton's early 1940's interviews with Chief (net) Francisco Patencio of the Agua Caliente Cahuilla. Patencio was a skilled linguist, with knowledge of English, Spanish, French, and several Indian dialects.

The spellings varied, including Tahkoosh, Taakwi, Takwish, Taukwitch, and Tau-quitich. It's clear the ethnographers recorded these names phonetically, and it was their interpretation of the spoken word of an unwritten language that influenced the English spelling, so much variation appears today in the record. Today's spelling was standardized by the U.S. Geological Survey as they mapped our area in 1897, naming the 8,850-foot peak above Idyllwild, Tahquitz Peak.

In that survey the monolithic rock below Tahquitz Peak was named Lily Rock after Lily Eastman the daughter of Dr. Sanford Eastman, a founder of Riverside. Technical rock climbers in the 1930's discovered climbing routes up its granite faces, but call it Tahquitz Rock. The Cahuilla, who do not condone the rock climbers, have narratives that tell of hunters increasing their power with rituals there, leading me to wonder if the climbers have similar license. Other Tahquitz place names can be found as you head east over the mountain range, with little Tahquitz Valley and Tahquitz Meadow. Heading down the other side, you find Tahquitz Canyon with its seasonal 60-foot Tahquitz Falls, a sacred canyon to the Cahuilla.

A peek into the history of the Strawberry and Garner Valleys reflects early white settler's awareness of Tahquitz. Local ranchers in the late 1800's drove their herds up the Devils Slide from the dry valleys below. Cattleman Frank Wellman's son Jim recalls many Cahuilla cowboys would not go above Strawberry Valley, wary of Tahquitz, who lived above the Devils Slide. As recently as 1980, the fear of Tahquitz was cited in an So. Cal. Edison Environmental Impact Study as one more reason to deny a proposed high-voltage line through the San Jacinto Mountains, because: "it is believed ... that the electrical power can be used to increase the power of ... Tahquitz."

In a more recent chapter of the Tahquitz narrative, on

July 4th, 2017, I was seated in a folding chair up on Fern Valley Road preparing to watch a much-touted Laser Light show. In a well-intentioned effort to celebrate a



Highway 243, Valentines Day 2019
Riverside Press Enterprise

recently deceased spouse, an Idyllwild resident contracted a laser light company to project images on the face of Tahquitz Rock. The organizers believed it would promote tourism and like me at the time, were not aware to any useful degree the current and ancient significance of Tahquitz Rock. Many locals in the days after the show felt it was not a fitting event for our community. The Town Crier later quoted a Cahuilla elder who said "Tahquitz is and has always been a source of great power and energy, precariously balanced between good and evil. There is great power in the rock and it has been held in balance for many years. For us it is a sacred site. To disrespect that power and our traditions will cause a disruption in the balance of power and there will be consequences."

Within a few months, the San Jacinto Fault became unusually active with quakes of 2.9 and 3.2 an hour apart, and during one 10-day period there were 8 earthquakes over a 2.0 Magnitude. A year after the laser show we suffered the July 2018 Cranston Fire that burned 13,000 acres of forest and took five homes. On Valentines' Day in 2019, an atmospheric river generated catastrophic rainfall over the San Jacintos washing out both roads to Idyllwild. The flood all but wiped-out tourism, with the recovery taking years, and many businesses and residents never returned.

Idyllwild is changing rapidly in ways that should concern us. We see new residents replacing the older generation and wonder if they understand the legacy of the land they live on. Each weekend our valley fills with visitors who may have little if any knowledge of our first inhabitants. Kids visit our youth camps each week and the experience may include evening campfires with the typical ceremony, stories and even a little smoke in their eyes. I hope the oral traditions of our original people are included, as it's wise to have a healthy respect for the energy, and balance between good and evil on this earth! ✍

Comments? edward54625@gmail.com.

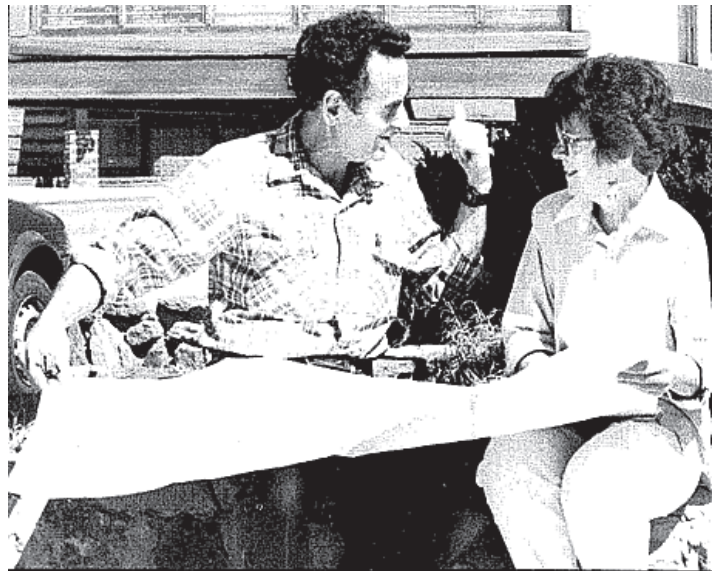
The Original Idyllwild Historical Museum?

A few months ago, a set of 5 old weathered wood panels, each one about 4 feet square, appeared in the Frank and Mabel Moote Archive. Each one featured large format photographic images depicting the early history of Idyllwild, mounted behind plexiglass panels. We had no idea who created them or where they were originally displayed, but clearly, they were an early Idyllwild history exhibit. We learned these panels were in the garage of a home on Cedar St. that belonged to Carol Johnson Adamson. Carol was Jay Johnson's sister and Jerry and Eleanor's daughter. Shane Stewart bought the Adamson house and upon discovering these historical images, donated them to the Historical Society. The photo images were familiar to us, as they were published in the book "The San Jacintos" by Robinson and Risher. The IAHS Board began to discuss what to do with them, with no concrete idea as to their origin. With a bit of research, the following tale emerged!

Back in the early 90's, an avocado farmer/developer from Escondido, teamed up with a local realtor who was also a pioneer in the natural foods industry. Dick Krupp and Maureen Jones built "The Center of Idyllwild" with a desire to

create needed commercial space yet maintain a rustic look for the village. As the building, now known as the Fort, neared completion, Maureen, a very clever businesswoman, saw an opportunity to bring some Idyllwild history to the development. I believe she also realized that her new real estate office was just one of many in Idyllwild, but if she could add value to the Idyllwild experience,

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Developers Dick Krupp and Maureen Jones went over their plans for the center of town.

Town Crier Archives



Five Historical Photo Panels donated to the IAHS

MUSEUM

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that would set her apart. The seed was planted for an exhibit of beautifully mounted and captioned historical photographs, many from the renowned Laura Swift collection. The display was designed and compiled by Lucy Bryant, publicity chairman for the new development, and Duane Lawson, then naturalist at the Idyllwild Visitor (now, Nature) Center, Lucy's husband Baird Bryant built the exhibit display panels, and mounted them across a wall of the Caldwell Banker Lily Rock Realty office. Captions were written and included for each set of images telling a larger story of the development of the West. And so, in 1992, the first Idyllwild Historical Museum was born!

The photos include local ranching history with images of Charles Thomas and his famous cattle ranch, along with the logging operations of Amasa Saunders, Anton Sherman and others. Images show the dangerous work of moving the logs and lumber down the incline to the valleys below, made possible by Joseph Crawford's toll road. The exhibit then transitions to the first signs of recreation here, the camps of George Hannahs, who gave this community its name and the original Keen Camp. From there it moves a few years ahead with two iterations of the Idyllwild Inn, the original two story 1901 building that



Lucy Bryant's Search for Materials
Town Crier



Because there is more to life
then just real estate.
Town Crier

burned down shortly after, and the one that replaced it and was the center of Idyllwild as a resort until the mid-1940's.

There were additional parts to the original exhibit, featuring luminaries like Ernie Maxwell, of *Town Crier* fame and Max and Bea Krone, founders of ISOMATA (now Idyllwild Arts) but these were not part of the materials that were donated to us. It should be noted that in 1997 Lily Rock Realty and the historical exhibit moved to the original *Town Crier* Building in Fern Valley Corners, and was promoted in their advertising. We love our current award-winning museum and cherish those who created it, but today we know that The Idyllwild Area Historical Museum was not the first well-crafted exhibit focused on Idyllwild area history. Our challenge now is to share these 5 panels with you, the community that made sure they found their way home! ✍️



Idyllwild Area Historical Society

We need Volunteers for the
IAHS 2026 Home Tour
Saturday September 19th
Why?
You get to be part of one
of the Great Events in
Idyllwild each year! And
all Volunteers get a
private preview of these
special homes on Friday
September 18th


Call or Text
Chris Perrault at 951-961-8403



General Notices

Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Annual Public Meeting
Saturday August 1st, 2:00 PM
Idyllwild Library
Come Join Us!



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54960 Upper Pine Crest at Fern Valley Corners

Lily Rock Realty and the Idyllwild Historical Museum have moved to a new location as of 9/1/97. Look for us at Fern Valley Corners in the old *Town Crier* building next to Creekstone Inn

Ron Caron • Maureen Jones

Lily Rock Realty Fern Valley Corners
Town Crier

Museum Hours

11 am to 4 pm

**Saturday and Sunday
and Monday Holidays**

Also daily between Christmas and New Years

**History Gardens Open Tuesday Thru
Sunday 9 am to 4 pm**

Follow us on Facebook

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www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special hours and other business, call
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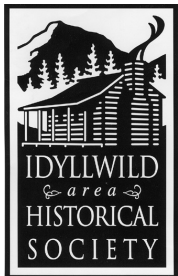
Upcoming Events

- June 30th, 5-6pm, Bob Greenamyers' presentation on Idyllwild's Movies, Idyllwild Library
- August 1st, IAHS 2026 Annual Public Meeting, Idyllwild Library
- Sept 18th, IAHS Home Tour, Volunteer Docents Private Preview of Homes
- Sept 19th, IAHS Home Tour

Check our Website for details and times

www.idyllwildhistory.com

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