

## **THE MANY HIDDEN TRUTHS ABOUT KUPANGA (PLACE OF SLEEPWATER) AND NOW KNOWN AS WARNER HOT SPRINGS**

The Cupangawichum, today known as the Cupeno, were given a small piece of land to call their own. It was blessed with a hot spring and a creek flowing with freshwater. The Cupeno were able to blend the hot water from the spring with the cool water of the creek so it could be bathed in without getting burned. On cold winter nights, the Cupeno would sleep in the water to keep warm. This is how they got their name “Cupangawichum” or people who sleep in the water. Cupa means sleep water.

Cupanga was central to trade amongst many tribes of Southern California. From there, one could travel to Yuma or head south towards San Diego. More importantly, the trails brought the Luiseno, who brought salt from the ocean. Everyone needs salt and Cupanga was a hub of convenience that allowed salt to be distributed to many different tribes. It is the reason my grandfather spoke 5 Indian languages and Spanish and English. Corn would be brought up from Yuma and was a prized trade item.

In latter years, Cupanga would become a major hub for the southerly route into California. The vast valley, that was part of the Cupeno territory, proved to be a rich grazing land. Cattle were moved into the area as well as horses and the Cupeno quickly became true cowboys. Living under Spanish rule and Mexican rule, life began to change for the Cupeno. During the Mission Period, many of the Cupeno were forced by the Luiseno to work for the Mission San Luis Rey. There they were brutally treated and treated as if they were slaves. After the collapse of the mission system, many of the Cupeno returned home.

In 1836, their home was declared to be the property of Sylvestre de la Portilla. It wasn't long before there were overlapping claims to the land. Jose Antonio Pico, Juan (John) Warner, and Joaquin Ortega had established some sort of claim to the lands of the Cupeno. These overlapping claims would eventually lead to the Cupeno losing their homeland.

In 1847, General Kearney, who was sent to fight the war between Mexico and the United States, camped at Cupanga. Along with General Kearney, was a Lieutenant named Emory. He was part of the topographical team, and it was his job to record latitude and longitude of their encampments. He would give a full description of what he saw from that particular point. He described Cupanga as having three adobes. One was the Portilla ranch house, which was occupied by Antonio Garra. One of the other adobes was a granary which would later be converted into the Catholic chapel. This is important because based on Emory's description, the adobe houses that still line main street today did not exist in 1847. Many claim that the adobes were built in 1830.

General Kearney did manage to recruit several Cupeno to join him in his excursion. They fought at the Battle of San Pasqual and for their actions General Kearny provided them with a letter that stated that the Cupeno people could keep their land forever. More than 50 years later, the letter still existed, and it was presented to Agent Wright of the Bureau of Indian Affairs as proof that the village of the Cupeno belonged to them. He of course ignored the letter and proceeded with the removal of the Cupeno people.

Between the years 1830 and 1903, many non-Cupeno people began to move in and settle at the hot spring. Some were Indian, some were not. The Cupeno referred to them as foreigners. They lived separate from the

Cupeno and began to monetize the hot spring. The Cupeno made no effort to monetize the spring since it was sacred.

Antonio Garra took charge of the hot spring, but it is not known exactly when he did this. The name Garra was a nickname given to him by the Cupeno which means "Grabber." He was there to grab control of the hot spring. In order to accomplish this, he and the ranch foreman, William Marshall, concocted a plan to take over the ranch in total. Garra would retain control of the hot spring and Marshall would keep the grazing land for his own purposes. They would attack the store and home of John Warner and kill him to secure the land. To do this they employed several members of the Mataguay tribe to carry out the raid. The Mataguay and the Cupeno were already long-time traditional enemies.

Learning of the raid, the Cupeno people warned Warner of the pending attack. It was for this reason that Warner survived. Warner had prepared for the attack and was able to fend off the attackers. The son of Antonio Garra was killed while his father hid in his adobe. Yes, the infamous Antonio Garra hid in cowardly fashion while his son along with James Marshall carried out the attack. Warner managed to escape and fled to San Diego. There he was able to raise a militia and soon returned to Cupanga. Warner also attempted to take advantage of the situation and used the opportunity to rid his ranch of the Cupeno Indians even though they had warned him of the attack. The militia attacked the Cupeno village, which was made of traditional brush homes and easily burned. The Cupeno had already fled the village and went into hiding before the attack occurred. The militia was able to pursue a group of foreigners into the mountains occupied by the Cahuilla. There they captured four men and executed them. The claim is that the men were Cupeno. They were not.

Warner, known for his ability to exaggerate stories, was able to convince the people of San Diego that the entire State of California, was under attack by multiple Indian tribes. What is interesting is that the Indians clearly outnumbered the California settlers and it would have been possible for the Indians to expel the settlers. Since it was never their intent, the supposed Garra uprising failed miserably.

After the uprising, the Cupeno and the foreigners, returned to the hot spring. The Cupenos built new homes with adobe, having learned that their brush houses could not sustain an attack by militia groups. The Cupeno houses were scattered about the hills along Agua Caliente Creek. The foreigners built new adobes to secure their hold on the hot springs and continued with the monetizing of the hot spring. Surviving members of the Garra family continued to claim ownership of the hot spring.

In 1852, the United States negotiated eighteen treaties with the Indians of California. The two treaties affecting the Cupeno were the San Luis Rey Treaty and the Santa Ysabel Treaty. Jose Noca signed on behalf of the Agua Caliente Indians which included the Cupeno and the Foreigners. Jose Noca was the grandson of Antonio Garra. The name Noca was also a nickname given to Jose Noca by the Cupeno. Noca means daughter-in-law in Cupeno. It is not known as to why the Cupeno would call him Noca. Jose Noca was also called Chngalangish which is a Cupeno word meaning spotted one. It is possible that the Cupeno were referring to freckles which would be indicative of Spanish descent. It could be that Antonio Garra was half Spanish and therefore carrying the gene for freckles.

What was not known to the Cupeno was that John Warner was serving as a witness to the treaty signing at Temecula and Santa Ysabel. The Cupeno were not asked to travel to Santa Ysabel to sign the treaty there,

but were instead asked to travel to Temecula. Santa Ysabel is 15 miles from Cupanga and Temecula is 40 miles from Cupanga. The answer is simple. John Warner had an addendum added to the Santa Ysabel Treaty that he did not want the Cupeno to see. The addendum reads:

**ADDENDA.-From the above district of country, set apart for the Indians, is reserved to the present Owner thereof, the Hon. J. J. Warner, one square league at Aqua Caliente, to be selected by him for the purpose of improving the warm springs at said place, in case the said ownership be adjudicated in his, (Warner's) favor by the land commissioners of California.**

**J. HAMILTON,**  
*Secretary of the Indian agency*

Cupanga was not within the ranch owned by John Warner. This was another attempt by him to take control of the hot spring and exclude the Cupeno. John Warner went on to be appointed Indian Agent for the Southern California area. Based on the available record, Warner did absolutely nothing for the Indians of Southern California.

Interaction between the Indians of California and the United States would come to a near standstill due to the Civil War. There are very few records regarding Indians of California during this period. The most significant action was the passing of the “Four Reservation Act” which allowed for the President to create four reservations within California.

**“ 2. And be it further enacted, That there shall be set apart by the President, and at his discretion, not exceeding four tracts of land, within the limits of said state, to be retained by the United States for the purposes of Indian reservations, which shall be of suitable extent for the accommodation of the Indians of said state, and shall be located as remote from white settlements as may be found practicable, having due regard to their adaptation to the purposes for which they are intended:”**

In Southern California, the Mission Indian Reservation was one of the reservations created for this purpose. The reservation was located in the area of Santa Ysabel and Julian and covered an area of 144 square miles or 92,160 acres of land. Not one Indian was ever moved to the Mission Indian Reservation. Gold was

discovered in Julian and this led to the quick cancellation of the reservation. The name Mission Indian stuck and it was applied to every Indian in Southern California, even if they were not associated with the missions.

One of the guiding principles in dealing with the Indians of California was the Treaty of Gaudalupe Hidalgo. This treaty with Mexico forced the United States to recognize the California Indians right to aboriginal title. In addition, it required the United States to take no action so as to cause the aboriginal inhabitants to become homeless. From this comes the term Homeless Indians and the Homeless Indian Act.

Settlers were quickly rushing into California and claiming lands occupied by Indians. This was forcing many Indians to become homeless. President Grant, through Executive Order, began creating several Indian Reservations and therefore setting aside these lands for Indians. One such reservation was the Agua Caliente No. 1 Reservation established at Cupanga for the Cupeno Indians. This was done in 1875. In 1880, former Governor, John G. Downey, purchased Warner Ranch and he quickly petitioned President Hayes to cancel the Cupeno reservation. This was done and the Cupeno were once again homeless in the eyes of the United States. The United States continued to provide services to the Indians of Agua Caliente No. 1 even though they were without a reservation. Services included a doctor, a schoolhouse with a teacher and provisions such as farm equipment and rations.

The providing of these services by the United States attracted several outsiders to include other Indians, Mexicans and even Americans to come and settle at Cupanga. Some of these outsiders included Alexander Barker and his wife Valeriana, Adolpho Moro and Silverio Nolasquez. Alexander Barker was a white man even though it has been told that he was Cupeno. He was a registered voter. Indians were not allowed to vote during that time. The aunt of Valeriana Casero Barker reported that he was non-Indian as well. What is not known by many is that Alexander Barker and his wife, Valeriana Barker filed title to the property of the hot spring area in Cupanga with the County of San Diego. This is what led Downey to respond almost immediately with a court proceeding to evict the couple from the hot spring. Later, Downey would amend the complaint to include all of

the inhabitants of Cupanga. If Alexander Barker had not filed title to the property, the Cupeno would still be residing in their homeland.

Adolpho Moro was a Spanish soldier from the area of Sonoma. He was more than likely a deserter and moved south to avoid arrest. He settled at Cupanga and soon began participating in the monetization of the hot spring. He was not a Cupeno Indian as others would later report. He was in fact a Moor from Southern Spain. A detailed search of the Spanish Garrison rosters of Northern California would probably reveal the true identity of Adolpho Moro. Along with his son, Domingo Moro, they relentlessly took control of the hot spring area. This did not include the village of the Cupeno. He declared himself as the alcalde or governor of the hot spring. The Cupeno still refused to participate in any monetization of the hot spring.

Silverio Nolasquez was from Mexico, and this is well documented. It is not clear whether or not his wife, Merced, was from Mexico as well. A review of the census records would indicate that she was in fact from Mexico. The Nolasquez family was not alone in acclimating themselves to the hot spring area. Many of the stories surrounding the hot spring area are a hodgepodge of stories told by several of the tribes in the region that these usurpers converged into their own history. These families did this to improve their opportunity to claim rights associated with the hot spring. They too participated in the monetization of the hot spring.

Former Governor Downey was persistent and soon he amended his complaint to include all the inhabitants of the hot spring area including the Cupeno. Downey did not own the hot spring but after two failed surveys, he finally had a surveyor move the property line to include the hot spring. Still, it did not include the Agua Caliente Village of the Cupeno. The case became known as Barker v. Harvey. The case made its way to the Supreme Court, who sided with Downey's claim. Downey did not live long enough to hear the decision of the Court, but his heirs were quick in wanting all Indians removed from their ranch.

Hearing of the plight of the Warner Ranch Indians, the Sequoyah League, headed by Charles Lummis, took immediate action to have the United States take some sort of action to prevent the Warner Ranch Indians from becoming homeless. Congress acted quickly and created the Warner Ranch Commission, which was headed by Charles Lummis. They were empowered by Congress to find lands

suitable for the relocation of the Warner Ranch Indians. Lummis attempted to employ members of the Cupeno Tribe to accompany him and the other commissioners in the search for this new land. Every Cupeno Indian refused to participate. They correctly stated that they did not have to move. The foreigners, including Salvador Nolasquez, were quick to accept Lummis's offer. They had everything to gain, even though they were not really entitled to make any claim except under false pretenses.

The Warner Ranch Commission considered and visited more than 60 sites as a possible reservation for the Warner Ranch Indians. The Monserate Ranch received first consideration, but after a meeting with the Bishop of the San Diego Diocese, it was decided that Pala would become the new home of the Warner Ranch Indians. Many of the Cupeno claimed that a deal was struck with the Bishop so that the Catholic Church would have a labor force to restore the mission at Pala. The mission was restored and this should answer the question as to whether or not the Cupeno were right.

Once the land was selected, Congress passed additional legislation providing the necessary funds to purchase the lands in Pala. The way the lands were acquired by Lummis came under scrutiny since he employed Frank Salmons to serve as the agent to purchase and consolidate the land under his name. Many considered this act to be illegal due to the use of an agent for this purpose. It is believed by many people that the United States purchased the Salmons Ranch. The Salmon Ranch never really existed except on paper.

Charles Lummis had Frank Salmons purchase various tract of lands located within Pala Valley. Once the lands were acquired, they were placed under the name of Frank Salmons. The United States then purchased the land from Frank Salmons. There are still problems with the title to the land to this day.

Charles Lummis personal role was that he wanted the exclusive rights to the story of the last tribe in the Untied States to be forcibly removed from their homeland. News of the removal of the Indians from Warner Ranch got out and it soon became national news and Lummis lost his story. Lummis really did think of himself as the savior of Indian people. He once wrote a letter describing Indians as having an inferior mind to that of the non-Indian and in need of much help.

Even though the land had been purchased and the stage was set to remove the Warner Ranch Indians to Pala, the Cupeno became an obstacle to Lummis's plans. Lummis threatened the Cupeno's with military intervention and told the Cupeno people that he had the cavalry standing by in the ready if needed. The foreigners were very ready for the removal. Some of them had already left in advance of the others in hopes of claiming the best land in Pala for themselves.

Lummis arranged for Agent L.A. Wright of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to conduct a meeting in hopes of convincing the Cupeno to leave peacefully. Wright had arranged for, Mr. Conser, Special Agent from Washington, William Collier, Special Attorney for the Indians, to attend the meeting. In addition, the meeting was attended by Charles Lummis, Father Hahn from Banning or St. Boniface, and Mrs. Matthews, the Agency Clerk and Stenographer. The Cupeno and the Warner Ranch Indians attended the meeting. The Cupeno were represented by Captain, Juan Owlinguish and the foreigners were represented by Domingo Moro. The report of Agent Wright caused many people to be confused into thinking that Domingo Moro was the Captain of the Cupeno. He was not. The report shows that Domingo Moro served as the translator for the "Captain" of the Cupeno people. It was not saying that he was the Captain of the Cupeno people.

The meeting was often heated, with many of the other Indians such as those from Mataguay, threatening to move to the mountains to avoid being moved to Pala. Agent Wright said some words that infuriated Captain Owlinguish causing him to respond in this manner. Domingo Moro interpreting:

**"The Captain says we do not want a place to be removed to. If I am a wild man or a savage man or a thief or a murderer and I had not other habits, I can do all the same as they do and I have always asked for my place and I am still begging for it. First when General Kearney was here and talked to us and gave us an oath that no one should disturb us and they traveled with him. I am called to old age and I have never known of any man being arrested for stealing on Warner's Ranch. We have heard other rumors and papers have been published for the Warner's Ranch; if we are thieves why do they not have a man to watch us?"**

Agent Wright was obviously taken aback by these words and offered that he never accused the Indians of being liars and thieves. He went on to promise the Cupeno

that they would receive a patent for the land at Pala and that no one could take it from them. He held up a copy of the patent for Mesa Grande and referred to other reservation patents as an example of his sincerity and promise.

Captain Owlanguish later responded:

**“We have asked for our place and it is failed. Now, just to have to remove to that place, we do not want it. And so, he says, the representatives ought to let us alone. No matter what they will do to us. No matter if they kill us with the big cannon or tear our houses, we will be well and is and somebody will publish about these Indians will be killed. They will say that for being thieves and murderers, they have killed these people, everybody. And you will see it is broken all to pieces and their houses will be burned down.”**

Upon a signal from the Captain, the Cupeno Indians left the meeting.

After the meeting, Agent Wright reported in a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs the results of the meeting with the Warner Ranch Indians. He states;

**“The Indians at Agua Caliente, -- the hotbed of disturbance and the point at which all our observations are taken, -- have for several months avoided my office; they have not visited Mr. Lummis and Mr. Collier for advice, as they formerly did, but have maintained a dogged silence, only communicating with individuals who told them what they wished to hear and who have held out the forlorn hope that something would yet happen by which they could keep their old houses at Warner’s Ranch.”**

Agent Wright further added:

**“We had hoped to persuade the Indians to move peaceably but after our visit and conference with them on the 16<sup>th</sup>, I am firmly convinced that a superior show of force will be positively necessary to make the transfer to Pala.**

**This opinion is concurred in by Mr. Conser, Mr. Collier and Mr. Lummis. We believe that it will require at least twenty soldiers to assist in removing; to escort and assist in getting all the Indians from Warner’s ranch and also San Felipe, settled at Pala.”**

It does turn out that the Cupeno really did not have to move to Pala. In 1901, the Secretary of the Interior had restored their reservation, and it was open for their

occupation. What is not known is who actually knew about the Secretarial Order. Why didn't Agent Wright know about it? Why didn't Charles Lummis know about it? Why didn't the Commissioner of Indian Affairs know about it. What we do know is that Domingo Moro knew about it.

Domingo Moro did not move to Pala with the rest of the Warner Ranch Indians. Instead, he stayed behind and filed a claim on the property that was reserved for the Cupeno Indians. He filed his Indian Homestead entry as a Copa Indian from the Copeno tribe. The land records today list the Copeno tribe as a separate tribe from the Cupeno tribe. He did build an adobe house on the property. He later sold the property for \$20,000 to a company out of San Diego. His actions should have caused his family and descendants to be known as Copeno Indians and therefore not entitled to any services at Pala.

So, it began. Teamsters were hired to remove the people at Cupanga to Pala and it wasn't long before the wagons were loaded and ready for the first group to be moved. The first wagon train to leave Warner Ranch was well documented. Many photographs were taken and stories were written about the last tribe to be removed from their homeland by the United States. There is only one problem with the story about the removal of the Cupeno Indians from their village. There was no Cupeno on the first wagon train to leave Warner Ranch. They were actually the third group to be removed from Warner Ranch and there is no account, story or photographs of the true removal of the Cupeno Indians. Because the Cupeno tribe was the third group to reach Pala, most of the good land at Pala had already been claimed by the foreigners.

The Cupeno houses at Cupanga were almost immediately demolished by the Warner Ranch owners. The houses along Main Street are still standing today. Other matters of interest include that the people of Mataguay did flee to the mountains and eventually resettled in Vulcan. The villagers of San Jose moved to Mesa Grande. The Indians of Puerta La Cruz were removed to Pala. Sadly, all of their burial grounds were abandoned. The cemetery at San Jose is now underwater in Lake Henshaw. The cemetery at Puerta La Cruz was damaged by flooding and many of the burials were washed out. The bones were collected and some of the graves were excavated by curiosity types and the whereabouts of these ancestors is unknown. The cemetery at Warner Spring is that of the foreigners. The Cupeno

cremated their dead and the cremation ground is located near the foreigners cemetery. Unfortunately, the Cupeno cremation ground was ordered destroyed by the leader of the foreigners and the dirt was used as road fill. The Bureau of Indian Affairs began erasing the Agua Caliente Cupeno from the records of Pala. The Agua Caliente Day School name was changed to the Pala Day School. The group at Pala became known as Pala or the Pala Band of Mission Indians. The census records no longer reflected the Cupeno people.

What Captain Owlanguish was referring to when he spoke of thieves and murderers, is the fact that the Cupeno are still being blamed for the raid on the house and store of John Warner. John Warner knew better but he still allowed the false scenario to prevail and the Cupeno are still being punished by the actions of Antonio Garra. Antonio Garra was forced to dig his own grave and was executed on the spot. His grave is located in the middle of the street in Old Town San Diego. Some fervent Garra worshipers have erected a false grave and placed his name upon it in order to gain attention to the Garra Uprising and of course themselves.

Legend has it that Cupanga is now cursed because the Cupeno were removed from there. There are stories after stories of how the curse has affected people. Bing Crosby once owned Warner Ranch and he was unable to develop it. Cal Rossi thought that he could overcome the curse by partitioning out the Cupeno village. That failed too. Harvey, who was one of the movers in the case to remove the Indians from Warner Ranch, died bankrupt. Henshaw, Vail, Gates and Fletcher were the ones that took over the ranch after Harvey. Henshaw was the main force in trying to develop the hot spring resort and he had his first debilitating stroke while visiting the ranch. Vail and Gates died early deaths. Mr. Vail was thrown from a horse at the Springs and badly injured; later bitten by a Gila monster in Arizona and ultimately killed when he was struck down by an electric car in Los Angeles. Mr. Gates had a heart attack and died instantly while at the Springs. (Source Linda Roth)

Still one has to wonder, what was it that the Cupeno did that was so bad that they have been deprived of their homeland. Some day we will return. Some day our ancestors will be able to rest knowing that we are finally home.