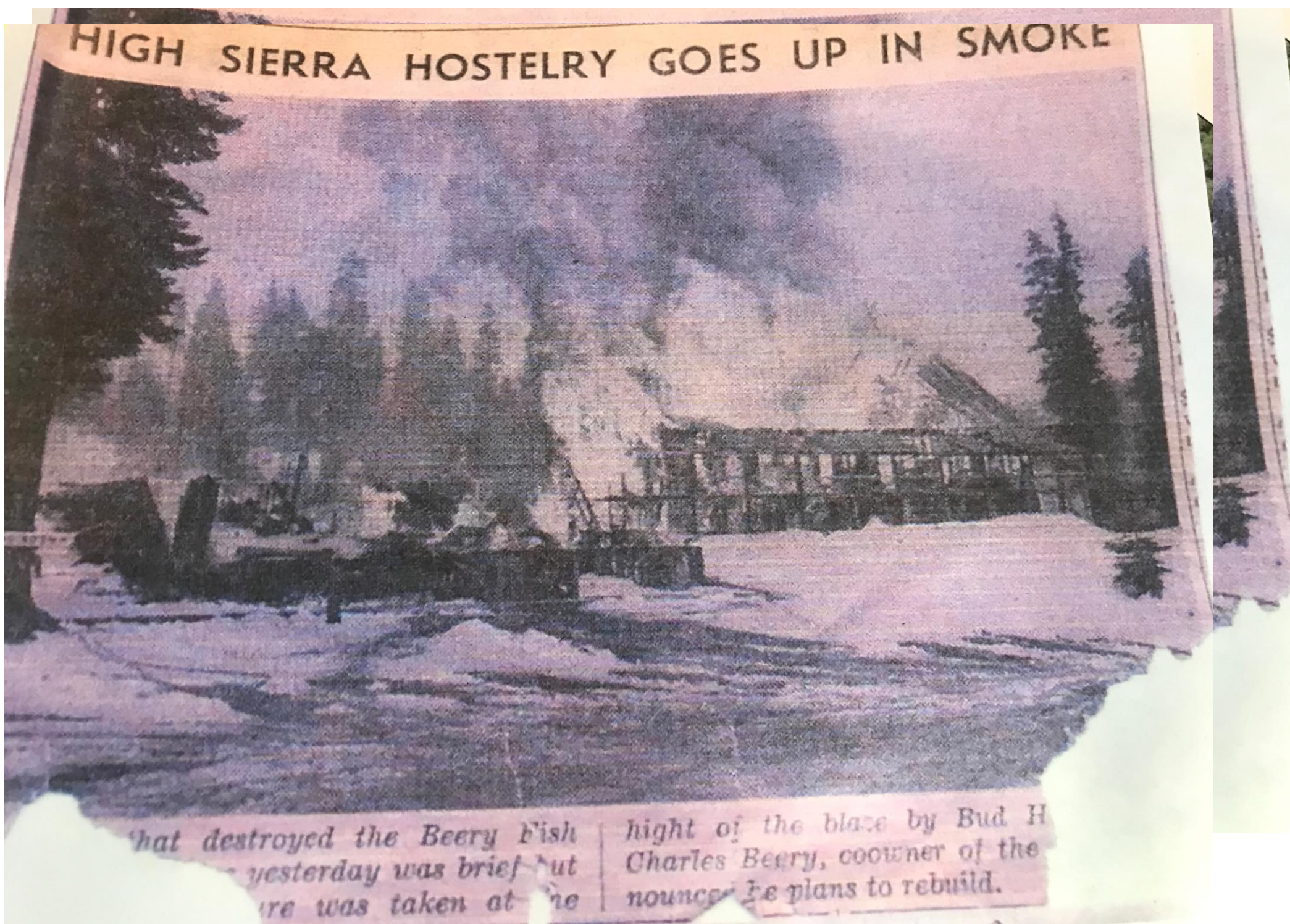


# Fire and Ice:

## The Story of the History and Prehistory of Fish Camp



### Introduction

How many of you have sped through Fish Camp on your way to Yosemite? Little did you know, that like so many places in California, it has quite a story to tell. In the Summer of 2018 my students and I started to learn this story through an archeological project at Fish Camp California. I was asked to monitor the grading as part of the environmental impact process for the Silvertip Hotel Complex for the Pacificus Real Estate Group. This project has had a bit of a long torturous history, dating back to 1988. I was brought in somewhat late in the project. Previous archeological work focused exclusively on the prehistoric site. They dug 9 1x1 meter test units and as a result had rather limited recovery. I proposed a different approach that minimized cost and maximized data recovery. This was done with a partnership between students and Native Americans. I am working closely with the North Fork Mono, Chuckchansi and the American Indian Council – Miwuk.



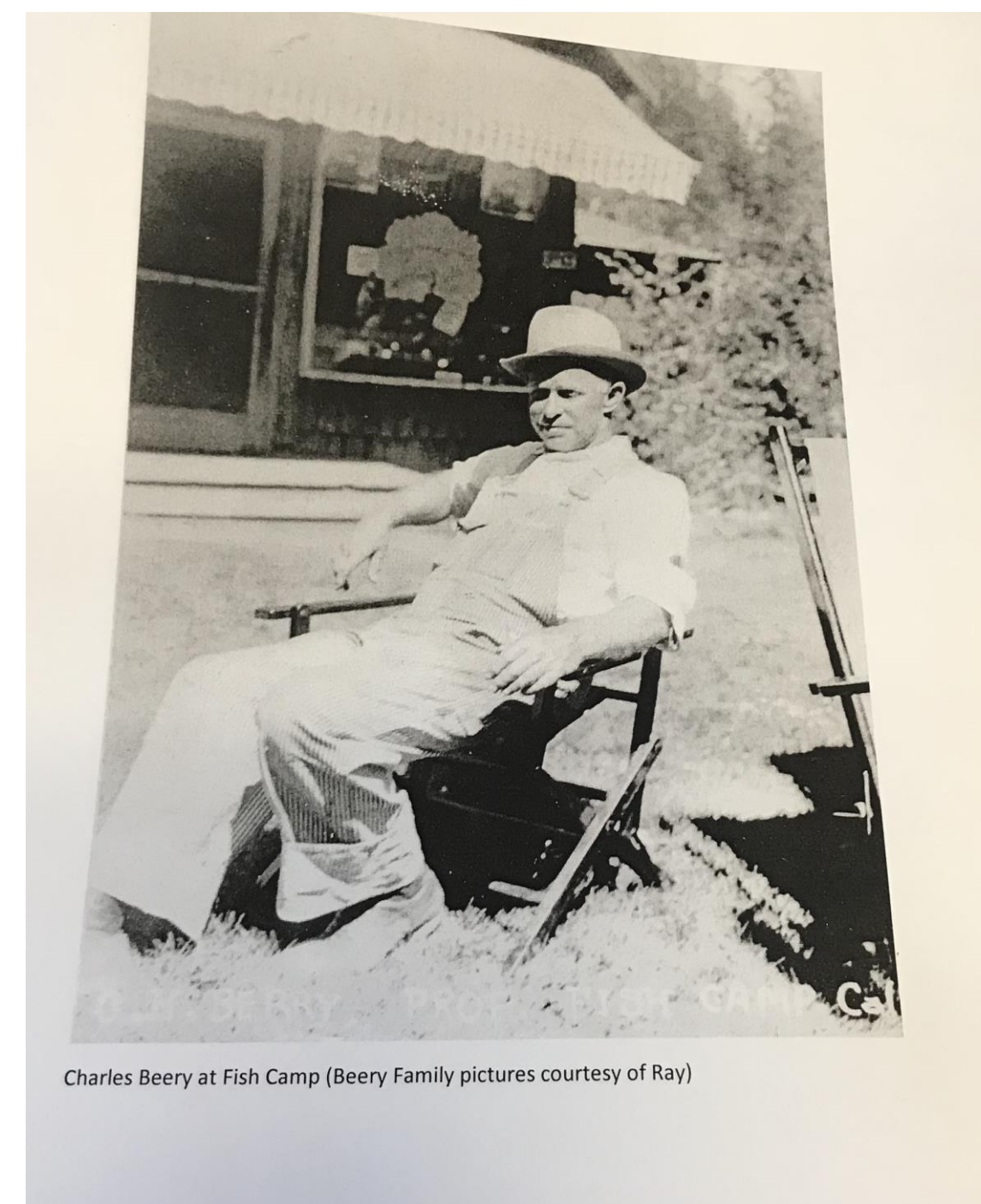
### Results

Along the banks of Big Creek Native Americans fished and collected acorns. We see evidence of their life here going back to the Middle Archaic (5000 years ago). Their trade with Native Americans on the east side of the Sierra is evident in the numerous flakes of obsidian. While historical accounts all too often suggest that the Native Americans disappear with the coming of Whites, they continued to play a role in the location and their story of survival and adapting to the White dominated world is an important part of our research.

The location has long been an important southern gateway to Yosemite. The community of Summerdale was a stage stop for travelers to this destination. There was a store and hotel there dating back to 1882 run by Albert Philp. With the growing importance of lumber in the area the community transformed into a company town for the Madera Sugar Pine Lumber company at the turn of the last century. With the shutting of the mill the property was acquired by Charles Beery and becomes a resort (1925). With the building of Highway 41 in 1931 this transformed the largely summer resort into a winter playground as well. Numerous incarnations of lodges were built and subsequently burned. The last, the Silvertip Lodge, burned as the result of arson fire in 1981. Today's proposed Silvertip lodge is just the latest in this rich history of hospitality.

### Future

Our ultimate goal is to combine archeology, archival research and oral history to produce a definitive history of Fish Camp/Summerdale that will tell the story of this place for the enjoyment of the general public.



### Rich Learning Experience

The project has provided a rich real-world learning experience through internships and this Spring semester a lab class. Our field work last Fall produced a rich treasure trove of artifacts that spans the 5,000 years that the site was occupied by both Native Americans and Whites. Through combining archeology and historical archival research, a detailed picture of life at this part of the Sierra Nevada has emerged.