

CAPTAIN JACK'S STRONGHOLD

Historic Trail

\$1.00



Lava Beds
National Monument



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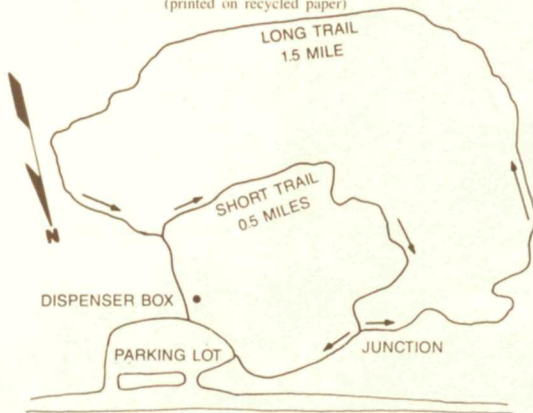
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April, 1873, William S. Simpson, artist,
and *Harpers Weekly*, June, 1873

(printed on recycled paper)



-- IMPORTANT --

The Stronghold trail will take you through the rough lava that the Modoc Indians used as a place of defense from their enemies. It is a wild place just as it was when the Modocs were here, so be careful, and think about the following precautions before walking it:

Use common sense.

Wear sturdy shoes.

Know where your children are and protect them.

Watch out for loose rocks.

Be aware of snakes - they are sometimes seen when least expected.

Be aware of the hot, dry heat of summer. It can be very tiring.

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years the Klamath Basin has been a home for people who come to live and to enjoy the richness of the land. First were the Ancients, who left only tracings on the rocks as a record of their time here. Then came others, perhaps descendants of the Ancients, or perhaps those who wandered here in search of a richer life. How many groups came and went is not known. What is known is that those who lived here in the 1840's began to object to the ever-increasing stream of people from the east.

The new people were of a different race. They had complex tools and many domestic animals. Many passed through, but some stayed. By the 1860's they had ranches and settlements in and around the Basin. The Modoc People began to feel crowded and threatened. The Whites were annoyed by the persistent Modoc presence and by their periodic raids and threats.

Government administrators persuaded the "people of the south lake," the Modocs, to leave their traditional lands and move north to live with their neighbors, the Klamaths. Although the life styles of these two groups were similar and they were related, they could not live together in harmony. The Klamaths resented the Modocs and badgered them. The Modocs felt like aliens and claimed they did not receive all of the supplies they were promised by the government. Unable to find relief, the Modocs left the Klamath Reservation and returned to their traditional land on the Lost River near the Oregon-California border. The Modoc leader, Kientpoos, or Captain Jack, tried to keep his people clear of trouble with the settlers, but it was not always possible.

Captain Jack wanted a reservation on the Lost River but the settlers pressured the Army to move the Modocs back to the Klamath Reservation. The settlers prevailed, and on November 29, 1872, a detachment of the First Cavalry from Fort Klamath, Oregon, entered the Modoc's camp and ordered Captain Jack's men to disarm and return to the Reservation. As the Modocs were complying, words, then shots, were exchanged. When the combatants separated, one soldier was dead, seven were wounded and the Modocs were headed for the lava beds.

On the same morning that Captain Jack's band was confronted by the cavalry, a group of Volunteers attacked the camp of another band of Modocs under a sub-chief known as Hooker Jim. In the fight several Modocs were killed and during their retreat around the north side of Tule Lake, Hooker Jim and his followers took revenge by killing 12 male settlers on isolated ranches in their path. When they arrived at the Stronghold, Captain Jack was dismayed at the killing spree but took them into the sanctuary. The Modocs waited and the Army gathered its strength.

On January 17, 1873, a two-pronged attack was launched on the Stronghold from the east and west. A coordinated effort was impossible because of the rough terrain and a dense fog which covered the area. The first attack failed with the Army's suffering 37 casualties. The Modocs lost no one.

It became obvious to the Army that more troops would be required to dislodge the Modocs and reinforcements were dispatched. Meanwhile, public opinion in the East forced the President to order attempts at peaceful reconciliation and a peace commission consisting of five white men, under General E.R.S. Canby, was organized. Captain Jack's cousin, Toby Riddle, who was married to a white man, acted as interpreter.

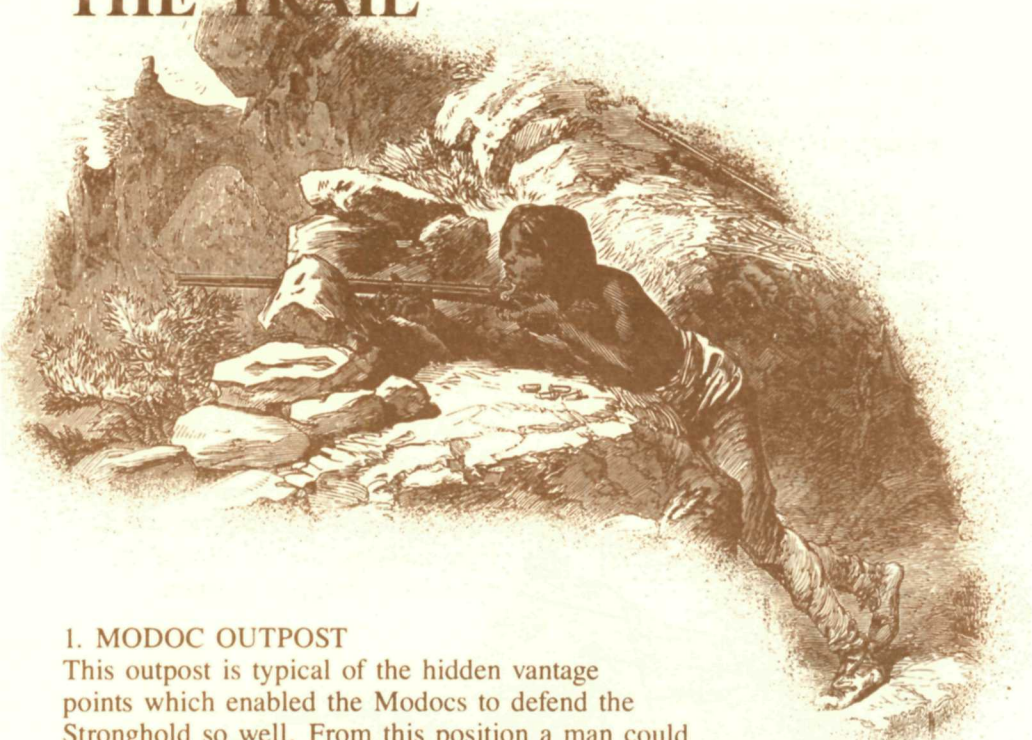
Little progress was made. The Army was unwilling to promise the Modocs their own reservation. Captain Jack refused to give up Hooker Jim and the others who were responsible for killing the settlers.

As the talks dragged on, the Army forces continued to grow in size and strength. Some of the Modocs became concerned that their chief might agree to the Army's demands. During a war council in the Stronghold, Hooker Jim and his followers ridiculed Captain Jack into swearing he would kill General Canby. At the next peace meeting, General Canby and Reverend Eleazar Thomas were killed. Three days later, on April 15, 1873, the Army again attacked, supported by fire from four Coehorn mortars and two mountain howitzers. After two days of hard fighting, the Modocs' situation became serious. They were cut off from water, and were harrassed by mortar shells exploding nearly every 15 minutes during the night.

Under cover of darkness, the Modocs withdrew to the south along a secret route through the rough terrain, and were again loose in the lava beds. Pursuit by the Army brought more fighting and bloodshed, but the outcome was no longer in doubt. Half-starved, encumbered by the women, children, and old people, and divided by conflict over leadership, the Modocs were finally captured in small bands.

The Modocs never got their reservation, but for nearly five months the Stronghold fortress enabled the Modoc fighting force of less than 60 men to hold off an Army 20 times their strength. Walk this trail and you will see how it was possible, but walk it with reverence. The cultural identity of an entire people was lost here ... so settlers could graze a few cows.

THE TRAIL



1. MODOC OUTPOST

This outpost is typical of the hidden vantage points which enabled the Modocs to defend the Stronghold so well. From this position a man could direct accurate sniper fire, but if he became in danger of being overrun, he could fall back to the main defenses of the Stronghold. "The Modocs were scarcely exposed at all to our persistent attacks ... One of our men was wounded twice during the day, but he did not see an Indian at all," lamented Colonel Frank Wheaton after the first battle of the Stronghold. Army tactics at the time had been proved during the Civil War ... the Army advanced in a straight line.

2. MAIN DEFENSE LINE

In front of you begins the inner perimeter of defense. The clefts in the lava are like crevasses in a glacier — formed as the solidified crust of the flow was dragged forward by movement of the still molten lava beneath. These fissures make the one-half square mile Stronghold area a fortress. Attack from any direction was very difficult. From a distance the terrain looks deceptively even and easily negotiable. The attacking soldiers soon found, however, that the deep crevices and jagged boulders were terrible obstacles to negotiate, especially under fire.

3. FIRING POSITION

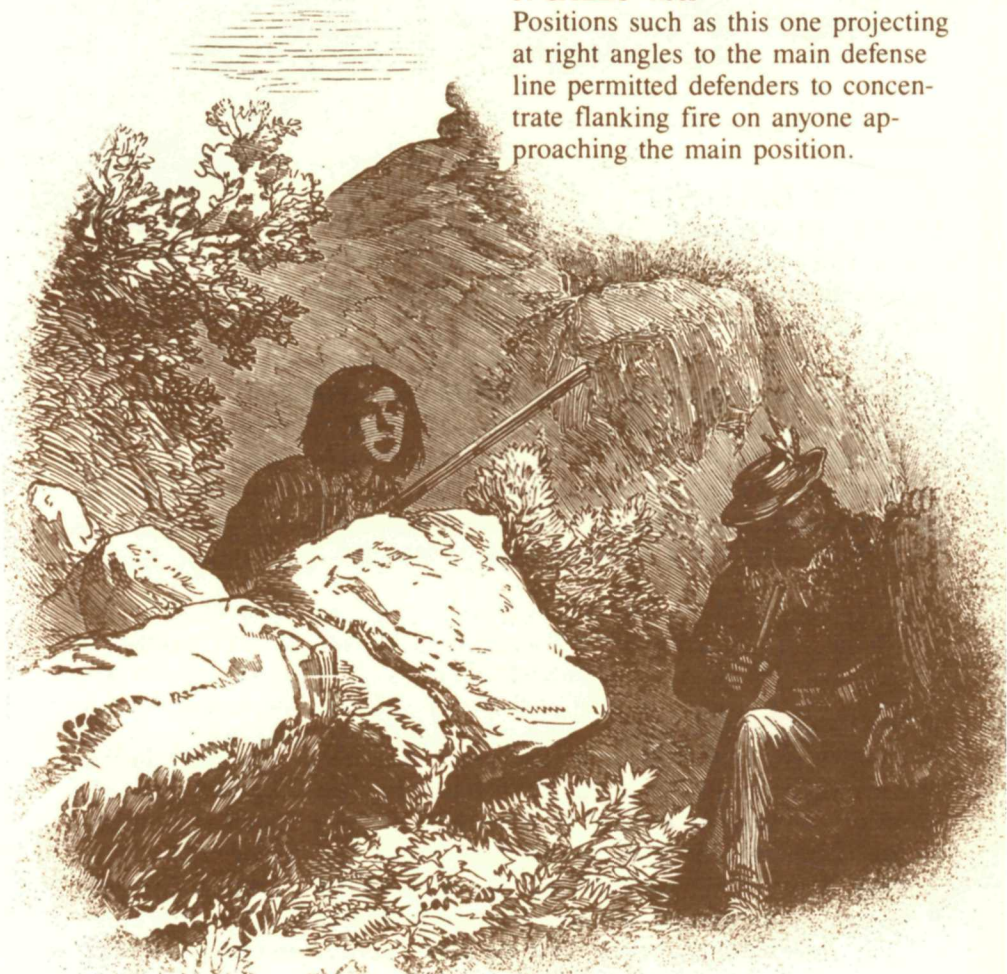
This position anchored the southeast perimeter of the Modoc defensive line. It offered an excellent view and field of fire against troops advancing on this sector. During the first attack a thick fog covered the field. Coordinating troop movements was all but impossible and consolidating enough pressure to dislodge the Modocs could not be accomplished.

4. SHELTER

Forced to spend the harshest months of the winter of 1872-73 in the Stronghold the Modocs suffered great hardships. With little fuel available among the rocks, most had to be used for cooking. Warming fires became a relative luxury. The small cave on your left was no doubt used by Modocs guarding this sector.

5. SALLY WAY

Positions such as this one projecting at right angles to the main defense line permitted defenders to concentrate flanking fire on anyone approaching the main position.





Medicine Flag of the Modocs.

Captured by K. troop, 1st Cav.
on the third day's fight.

Mink's skin
and hawk's feathers
with medicine head.

The stick would be about
four feet long, and is just as
it was cut from the tree.

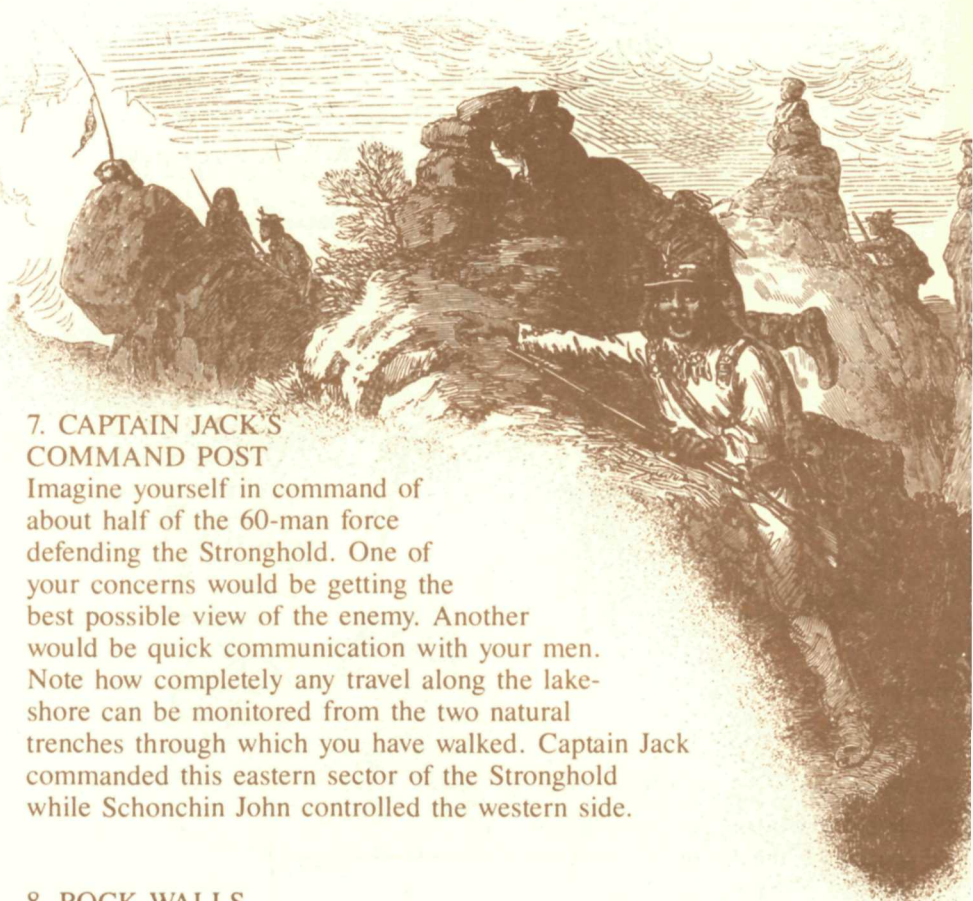
It is the Indian tribes' war
banner but is supposed to
have Medicine virtue or
magical powers against
the enemy. The medicine
head is white and small
and is placed among the
feathers. This standard
stood on a heap of stones
during the
fighting.

W.S.
April
1873.

6. MEDICINE FLAG

After the Stronghold was abandoned by the Modocs, an artist for the *Illustrated London News* entered the area and made sketches. This sketch shows one of the medicine flags which had special magical powers. It is believed that a medicine flag hung from the high point you see silhouetted against the sky 50 feet to the northeast. The fortification beside the trail at this stop was constructed by the soldiers after the Army occupied the Stronghold.

The principal Modoc shaman, Curley Headed Doctor, also braided a rope made of tules, dyed it red, and placed it around the defensive positions. The Modocs believed that the soldiers could not pass the rope and that the medicine flag rendered the soldier's bullets harmless. Throughout the first battle the charms seemed to support the claims, for the soldiers retreated and no Modoc was killed, but in the second battle a Modoc was killed when he picked up a mortar ball that exploded in his face.

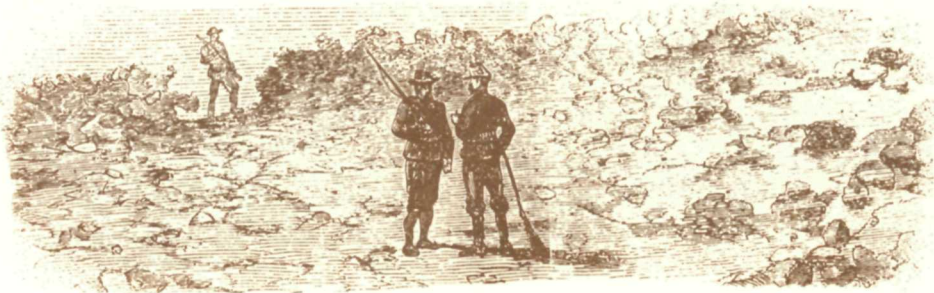


7. CAPTAIN JACK'S COMMAND POST

Imagine yourself in command of about half of the 60-man force defending the Stronghold. One of your concerns would be getting the best possible view of the enemy. Another would be quick communication with your men. Note how completely any travel along the lake-shore can be monitored from the two natural trenches through which you have walked. Captain Jack commanded this eastern sector of the Stronghold while Schonchin John controlled the western side.

8. ROCK WALLS

Where natural features did not exist, the Modocs continued their defense line by building low stone walls that wind snake-like through this part of the Stronghold. When the Army occupied the Stronghold after the second battle, they built additional rock walls and fortifications. In general, the Modoc-built defenses can be identified by their low profile. The soldiers built higher, more elaborate structures with square corners and plumb walls.

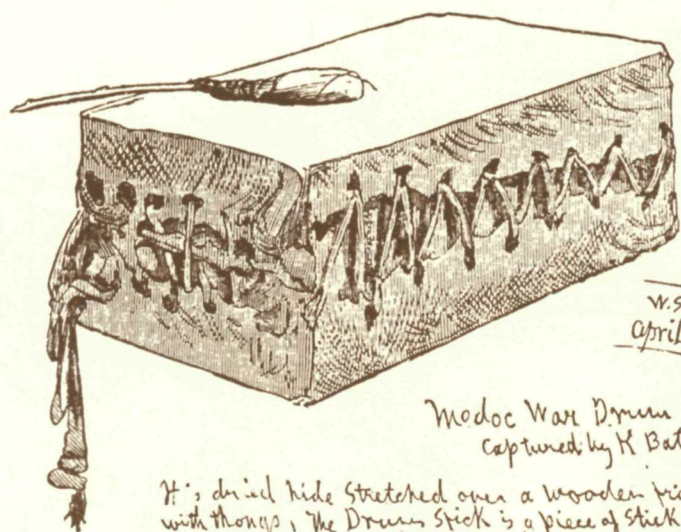




9. CAPTAIN JACK'S CAVE

Overhanging ledges and shallow caves in collapsed lava tubes offered protection to Modoc families during the siege. This small cave sheltered Captain Jack, and his two wives and daughter from cold winds, rain, and snow. Tule mats and blankets kept out the wind and softened rock edges, but the winter must have been very hard on the families of the fighting men.

The rounded rock knoll in front of the entrance has become known as "the rostrum" because it served as a speaker's platform during the councils of war. It was at this rostrum that the followers of Hooker Jim threw a woman's basket hat on Captain Jack's head, and called him a coward for not wanting to participate in a plan to assassinate General Canby. In order to remain in control, although he knew it meant his doom, Captain Jack agreed to kill the General. So it was then, that on this spot, the fate of Captain Jack and his people was sealed.



W.S.
April 1873.

Modoc War Drum
captured by K Battery Artillery

It's dried hide stretched over a wooden frame, and tightened with thongs. The Drumstick is a piece of stick with what seems to have been an old stocking tied on the end. This drum was beat all during the fighting at Capt. Jack's Stronghold.

10. DANCE RING

Although white men had long ago abandoned dancing as a serious part of religious expression, the Modocs continued to include dance in their shamanistic rituals.

During the Modoc War, the Modocs participated in rituals intended to strengthen their defense. Peter Schonchin, son of Schonchin John, years later spoke of one such ritual. After the placement of the braided tule rope, which the shaman claimed would protect the Stronghold, "The people believed him and danced with him all night, singing all the while."

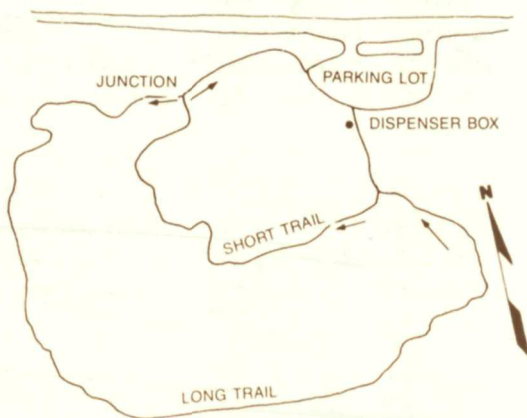
11. SCHONCHIN JOHN'S CAVE

Schonchin John, second in command to Captain Jack, occupied this cave. Like most of the other caves, the floor of this one is littered with rocks. The occupants undoubtedly piled them against the walls. Wouldn't you, if you had to live here? They have since been moved hundreds of times by visitors searching for artifacts.

12. TRAIL JUNCTION

The trail leading to the right returns you to the parking area in $\frac{1}{4}$ mile.

The trail to the left follows the Modoc's main defense line on the western perimeter. If you take this 30-minute walk you will pass some outstanding natural fortifications as well as Army fortifications which were built during the occupation of the Stronghold.



13. SCHONCHIN'S COMMAND POST

Schonchin John directed the defense of the western side of the Stronghold from this position. In the first battle, Army units met stiff resistance here. The thick fog, deep ravines, and heavy accurate fire from the defenders caused the attack to fail.

During the second assault, units from Gillem's Camp were able to edge along the lake shore, about where the road is now, and finally join with other troops moving in from the east. By holding their positions along the lake, the soldiers cut the Modocs off from their source of water. Was this an important factor leading to the eventual abandonment of the fortress, or was it because a soldier stepped over the magic rope?

14. CATTLE CORRAL

During the Stronghold siege, the Modocs found stray cattle roaming in the lava beds to the south. They rounded them up and brought them here. Had this meat supply not been found, it is doubtful that the Modocs could have held out as long as they did.



Bones are scattered among the boulders in this area and throughout the clearing beyond the point of rocks to your right. All of the larger bones were cracked open and the rich bone marrow consumed along with the meat.

15. THE WESTERN FRONT

The high, snow-covered peak usually visible to the southwest is Mt. Shasta. The round topped mountain to the right of Mt. Shasta is Mount Dome, and the long ridge running in a north-south direction in front is Gillem's Bluff.

Troops advancing from Gillem's camp at the base of the bluff had to cover rough terrain in full view of the Modocs. Although they could get within rifle range they could not begin to press the attack with enough force to dislodge the Modocs from these natural trenches.



16. FIRING POSITION

"The Modocs could pass along the long ridge of rock under perfect cover, with embrasures or holes from which they could fire with safety," wrote English artist William Simpson in an 1873 issue of *The Illustrated London News*.

Simpson was a special correspondent and artist. He had just arrived in San Francisco from China and Japan when he learned of the war in the lava beds. He hurried north to the fighting to make sketches to illustrate the scenes and incidents of the war. He then dispatched these to his editor in London. All but a few of the sketches in this booklet are from original copies of *The Illustrated London News*, on exhibit in the Visitor Center.

17. FIRING POSITION

"I have never before encountered an enemy occupying a position of such great natural strength," said Colonel Wheaton referring to the Stronghold. The position in front of you illustrates the point.

Extremely well-protected and requiring few defenders, this area was impossible to storm. The Modocs were able to shift men up and down their line, out of sight of the enemy, to compensate for any concentration of enemy fire.

18. FIRING POSITION

This unusual observation and firing position was accessible from the large trench below, through the narrow crawl space emerging here.

Years after the war, Jeff Riddle, the son of Toby Riddle, wrote, "The Indians being at home in the lava beds, knew the natural fortifications. They had the advantage over their enemy ... The Modocs kept up a heavy fire on the charging forces."

19. FORTIFICATIONS

After the Modocs vacated the Stronghold, the Army considered with some concern the possibility that they might attempt to return. To prevent this, an Army detachment was assigned to the area. During their stay, they built a number of high-walled fortifications. Spaced across the plateau on the south side of the Stronghold, these stone structures compensated for the lack of natural trenches on the flat plateau. Several additional fortifications will be seen farther along the trail.



20. STYLES OF FIGHTING

The fighting styles of the Modocs and the soldiers contrasted sharply. The Army depended on solidarity of fighting units and weight of numbers to carry their objective. The Modocs traditionally fought as individuals and individual coups or conspicuous acts of bravery were often more important than the outcome of the engagement.

The tortuous landscape of the lava beds became an equalizing factor, forcing both sides to modify their methods. The Modocs had used the Stronghold before when fighting occurred with neighboring tribes, but they had never faced opposition in such great numbers. Their "every man for himself" approach had to be altered to deal with the organized strategy of the Army. The Army found that its mounted cavalry was useless in the lava beds, so they fought dismounted as infantry.

The Army's howitzers were ineffective against the Modoc's rock citadel because of their low trajectory. In their place, the Army substituted Coehorn mortars to lob explosive rounds into the Stronghold.

21. ESCAPE ROUTE

How could 160 Modoc men, women and children, along with their dogs and horses, withdraw from the Stronghold overnight without alerting the troops bivouacked on either side? This question has puzzled both Army leaders and historians. Many have assumed that the Modocs "sneaked up" some "lava trench" or "gully", probably with the connivance and "help of the Warm Springs scouts." Aerial photographs and modern maps of the terrain, however, make it quite clear that the Modocs simply walked southward from their living quarters, keeping on the flat and easily-traversed surface of the lava plateau. Thus they avoided the rough and deep trenches. By dawn they could easily have reached a new supply of water in the ice caves, now called Captain Jack's Ice Cave and Frozen River Cave, which lie 5-6 miles to the south.

You are standing at one point on this escape route. Look to the north: the Modoc's living quarters in the Stronghold are less than the length of a football field from here. You can walk to them over this flat surface in one minute. Now look to the south and notice how easily you can avoid the heavily crevassed collapse basins on either side by staying on the plateau surface between them. The site of the Warm Springs encampment was more than a half mile off this route. The escape trail was well known to the Modocs. It is the same trail they used to drive stray and stolen cattle into the corral.

22. PAHOEHOE

Many flows of basalt lava have intricately wrinkled upper surfaces that resemble a patchwork of sections of coiled rope. Here on the turned up surface of a schollendome is a good example. Look above the wrinkled surface to the opposite side of the schollendome cleft and you will see the fretwork of a Modoc firing position silhouetted against the sky.

CHANGES SINCE 1873

A century ago the landscape around the Stronghold had a different appearance. All of the area to the north, which is now cultivated land, was covered by the 94,000-acre Tule Lake. Another striking difference was the plant life. Most of the northern end of Lava Beds National Monument was covered by native bunchgrasses and sagebrush. In the years after the Modoc War heavy grazing by sheep depleted the native perennial grasses so badly that non-native species became dominant. The annual cheat grass, an import from Europe, is the most notable example. It quickly spread and crowded out much of the damaged bunchgrass.

Wildfire is also an important natural influence in the grassland community. Frequent natural fires helped to maintain the native plants in balance. When the monument was established in 1925, fire suppression was an important protective activity. Juniper trees began to grow where none could gain a foothold before. Native grasses, which are favored by fire could not regain control. Available fuel built up so that when a fire did occur, it was quite intense, and recovery of the vegetation required much more time.

The National Park Service has re-introduced fire into the environment through a prescribed burn program. Prescribed fires destroy the less fire-tolerant plants, provide the seedbeds needed to re-establish the native plant communities, and begin the normal cycle of recurring fires again. An area has been established where any naturally occurring fire is allowed to run its course if it meets specific requirements. The monument is attempting to restore the native vegetation and historic scene through the use of prescribed fire, vegetation removal, and planting.

23. ARMY ENCAMPMENT SITE

While the Army held the Stronghold, the main bivouac area was here. Look around and you can find many rock fortifications and a stone fire-place. Note the large juniper tree which is growing from within one of the rock enclosures. Obviously having begun to grow after the war, it is a good indicator of the size to which these trees can grow in 100 years.

The staff of Lava Beds National Monument encourages you to visit other Modoc War sites nearby. Consult the map in your monument brochure for the locations. At the Visitor Center, located 15 miles south, the Lava Beds Natural History Association offers additional literature on the history and natural history of the monument. We hope you enjoy the remainder of your visit at Lava Beds.

