



Gillems Camp, 1873

Gillems Camp Trail

This level quarter-mile trail will guide you through an area that has held great significance for people from ancient times to the present day. Why has this place attracted inhabitants from many cultures over thousands of years?



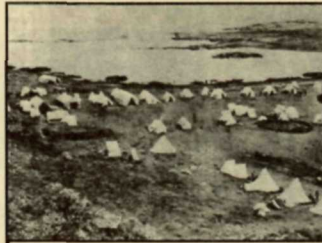
*Modoc women at
Gillems Camp*

*Civilian Conservation
Corps enrollees in training*



All historic constructions, cultural sites, and natural rock formations in Lava Beds National Monument are protected. Please enjoy your visit without disturbing them.

Many have contributed to the story of Gillems Camp . . .



Ancient Times to Westward Expansion:
Modoc Indian camps dot the shoreline of Tule Lake, which at that time extended to the site later known as Gillems Camp.

1850's:
The first white settlers come to the Tule Lake region, also drawn by its rich natural resources.

1873:
The U.S. Army establishes Gillems Camp as a command post during the Modoc War, occupying this place while fighting to remove the Modoc from their homeland.



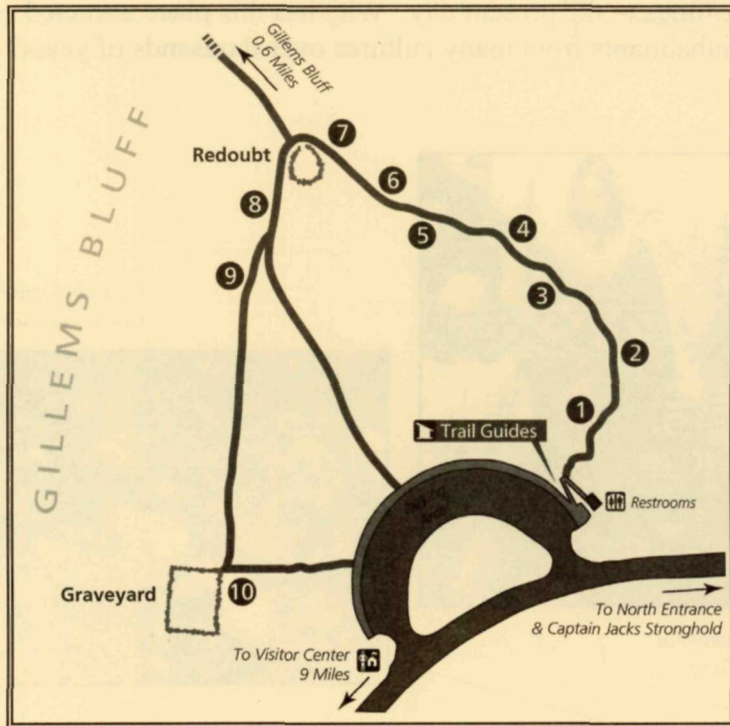
1908:
Homesteaders move into the area as Tule Lake is drained to create fertile farmland.



1933:
The Civilian Conservation Corps builds facilities for Lava Beds National Monument, and soon brings Gillems Camp to life once more as a headquarters for work projects.



1933 to Today:
The National Park Service provides services and shares the history of Gillems Camp with monument visitors.



INTRODUCTION

This is an area rich in natural resources and rich in many layers of history, at times the site of great human conflict and at others a place of peaceful existence.

For millennia, the waters of Tule Lake lay just over the low ridge before you. Its shores attracted people to live, hunt, collect water, and gather plants. The lake's resources later brought white settlers into this region as well. Differences between their way of life and that of the native Modoc created a cultural clash, which eventually escalated into war. Gillems Camp was first established as a distinct site during the Modoc War, when the U.S. Army erected a command post in this location.

Further settlement and homesteading greatly altered Tule Lake and the surrounding vegetation, resulting in the landscape before you today. The Civilian Conservation Corps revived Gillems Camp as a base of operations for their work developing and preserving this area's resources. Since 1933, the National Park Service has protected Gillems Camp as part of Lava Beds National Monument, so that its story will continue and grow through future generations.



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POST 1: A LAND OF ABUNDANCE

Evidence of human presence in the Tule Lake Basin stretches back over the past 11,000 years. Abundant waterfowl and game, edible and medicinal plants, and an easily accessible water source made this a lush homeland for the Modoc Indians and their predecessors.

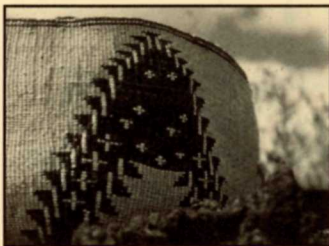
From permanent winter villages along the lake shore, the Modoc followed a seasonal round to hunt mule deer and gather nuts and berries at higher elevations during the warmer months.

The summer's bounty was dried and stored to sustain the Modoc through the winter in their earth lodges.



Tule reed canoe

Many plants in and around Tule Lake were used for food, medicine, tools, or a combination of all three. The tule reeds for which the lake was named provided material for clothing, boats, summer shelters, and baskets. Nets of woven tule fibers were used to catch fish, or to ensnare waterfowl as they flew low over ridgelines. The water lily, or *wocus*, provided a staple food when its seeds were ground into meal or flour in rock mortars.



Woven tule reed basket

Imagine that the lake shore still lies just over the gentle rise to your right. Can you hear the teeming flocks of birds? Can you feel the satisfaction and strength that would come of having a complete understanding of the lake's rich resources?

POST 2: GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

The Modoc residents of this area were intimately connected to its geology, as well as its plants and animals. Turn to your right, and you will see the



Obsidian on Glass Mountain

Medicine Lake shield volcano—the source of most lava flows in Lava Beds National Monument—filling the entire southern horizon. Is Glass Mountain visible on its eastern flank? It is nearly treeless, and is

often cloaked in snow well into the spring. The Modoc made knives, arrowheads, and other tools from the black obsidian of Glass Mountain. These were prized items of trade among tribes as far away as coastal California.

A profound knowledge of this area's geologic resources also allowed the Modoc to easily find water sources and hiding places among the lava beds. This ability would become crucial during the war, when the U.S. Army fought to remove the Modoc from the land they knew so well.



Graveurs and awls of obsidian

The small rock fortification you just passed represents one of the Army's attempts to make use of the area's geologic resources. For the most part, however, their lack of familiarity with this rugged volcanic landscape made it extremely difficult for the soldiers to live and fight here.

POST 3: SETTLEMENT AND CONFLICT

The Applegate Emigrant Trail, a southern alternative to the grueling Oregon Trail, was blazed through Modoc territory in 1846. In 1863, settlers began to claim land in this area. They introduced an idea of private, year-round land ownership and permanent agriculture that was foreign to local tribes who used different areas season by season.

Some settlers engaged the Modoc in trade and reached an understanding on land and water use; others wanted to drive the Modoc from their homeland and were not willing to compromise.

Ben Wright led other settlers in a massacre that killed almost ten percent of the Modoc population in 1852.



Settler Frank Riddle arrived in 1868 and married a Modoc woman. He and his wife, who took the name Toby Riddle, served as interpreters during the Modoc War.

With increasingly frequent contact, conflicts intensified, and attacks on farms and villages were carried out by both sides. Many settlers eventually demanded that the U.S. government move the Modoc, Klamath, and Yahooskin to a reservation on Upper Klamath Lake.

Due to bad living conditions, a lack of promised provisions, and conflicts with the Klamath, a group of Modoc led by Captain Jack returned home to Tule Lake. By 1872, some settlers felt they could not tolerate the situation. They began pressing the government to intervene again, and the stage was set for the Modoc War.



Kintpuash (Captain Jack)

POST 4: GILLEMS CAMP IN THE WAR

Though the U.S. Army camped here for only seven weeks in the spring of 1873, this site had many advantages over previous camps at local ranches. From this location, you are looking out onto agricultural fields that cover the old lakebed of Tule Lake. Gillems Camp had water close at hand for bathing and drinking, and soldiers could travel by boat to and from the Army's eastern post at Hospital Rock, several miles distant.

Looking at the image of Gillems Camp on the front cover of this booklet, what other compelling reasons do you think the Army had to camp here? Gillems Camp is one of the only flat, relatively rock-free spots in this entire area. It is also located at the base of a route over the steep bluff behind you, which allowed access to supply trains coming from the west. As with the Modoc, water and geology were deciding factors in the Army's choice of a camp location.



The U.S. Army had been dispatched to permanently remove the Modoc late in 1872. After the first battle of the war, the Modoc moved to the natural lava fortress now known as Captain Jacks Stronghold, and were able to hold off the Army for nearly five months. Attacking from the newly established post at Gillems Camp, much closer to the Modoc position than the earlier Army camps, soldiers were finally able to drive the Modoc from the Stronghold in mid-April of 1873. Six weeks later, all the Modoc had been captured, and Captain Jack and three other leaders were hanged. Modoc survivors of the war were exiled to Oklahoma, a land entirely alien to a people whose way of life depended on the resources of the Tule Lake Basin.

POST 5: A CORPS FOR CONSERVATION

Stop for a moment to contemplate this old concrete foundation. It is all that remains of the Civilian Conservation Corps camp that stood here from 1935 to 1942, and housed around 1400 enrollees. CCC Camp Lava Beds was built here on the same spot, and in much the same style, as Gillems Camp—you can locate the large Army redoubt in this photo. A few permanent structures eventually replaced the tents, and were later used by the National Park Service.



Camp Lava Beds in 1936

Sixty years after the Modoc War, the CCC program ushered in a new idea about land to this area—that some of it should be preserved and improved to attract recreational use, instead of being altered for ranching and agriculture. While some government programs were draining Tule Lake to make way for farming, the “CCC boys” at Lava Beds were hard at work on infrastructure for future visitors.

The enrollees cleared entrances and paths into many of the lava tube caves you may enjoy during your visit. In 1937, the CCC built the road from Lava Beds to the Medicine Lake highlands, allowing visitors access to one of the region’s most popular recreation spots. Another accomplishment was the Schonchin Butte Lookout, still staffed today to spot fires during summer. All of its materials, including cement and lumber, were manually carried to the top!



Schonchin Butte Lookout

POST 6: TULE LAKE HOMESTEADING

From this vantage point, the edge of modern-day Tule Lake is just out of sight to the north. In 1900, water would have come up into the foreground here, and extended almost to the base of the hills more than ten miles to the northeast. The town of Tulelake now sits near the center of old Tule Lake, which was almost seven times its present size.

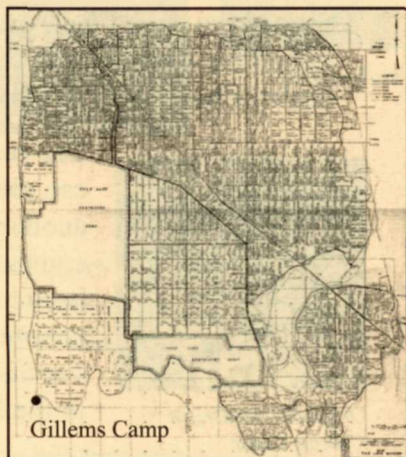


The coveted homesteads were granted through a lottery.

This change to the landscape began at the start of the 20th century, after the Modoc were removed from their former territory. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation gradually drained Tule Lake, exposing rich lakebed soils that attracted a new wave of settlers. Many of the homesteaders were veterans of World Wars I or II, and were awarded parcels by a nation grateful for their service.

The character of the land was drastically changed to accommodate the farms and ranches of homesteaders. These ongoing changes took place side by side with CCC work in the lava beds, where ideas of preservation and recreation were dominant. Both of these government programs had effects that attracted still more people to this area, and both played major roles in determining the landscape around you today.

This homestead map shows the former boundaries of Tule Lake filled with a grid of farm plots. The present-day lake occupies the two open spaces on this map.



POST 7: REMAINS OF THE ARMY POST

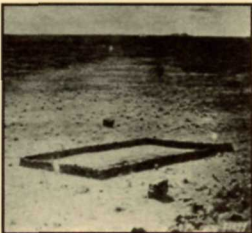


Though this large rock ring has been called a “Howitzer pit,” research suggests that the howitzer cannons were not located here, but on the bluff above. Since Gillems Camp was never attacked, the only indication of the ring’s use was when a Modoc was held prisoner in the “stone corral.”

Turn to your right and locate Signal Rock part way up the bluff—not the greenish rock protruding to the right, but the less prominent, reddish outcropping to the left and a little lower. The Army used signal flags to transmit messages between this spot and their camp at Hospital Rock, on the other side of Captain Jacks Stronghold. This allowed instant communication over several miles of rugged terrain. From Signal Rock, an officer saw the Modoc attack General Canby on the site now marked by Canby Cross. Although he tried to warn soldiers at Hospital Rock that they too might be attacked, the message arrived too late. These assaults rallied the Army to the second decisive battle for the Stronghold.



Sentries waving a message from atop Signal Rock



Original cemetery at Gillems Camp

The rectangular stone enclosure you can see further along this trail is another visible reminder of the Army command post. Though the wall has been rebuilt several times, it serves to commemorate the cemetery on this site that once held 30 soldiers killed in the Modoc War.

GILLEMS BLUFF TRAIL

If you would like to add a more challenging section to your walk today, continue to the top of the ridge on the Gillems Bluff Trail. You will be following the same route that was taken over 130 years ago by pack trains bringing supplies to Gillems Camp during the Modoc War.

On the trail, you will pass through a flat area under the junipers ahead where U.S. Army tents once stood. Later, a CCC structure was converted to the ranger residence seen in this historic photo. It's no coincidence that the same favorable spot was chosen time after time, as new generations of young men and women came from far-away places to live and work here.



In spring and summer, you will be rewarded with an abundant show of wildflowers as you continue up the bluff. The trail passes under Signal Rock and climbs to the top of the ridge, with an elevation gain of 550 feet. A grand view of the lava beds, the Medicine Lake highlands to the south, and Tule Lake awaits you!



Phlox



Yellow Bells



Return the same way to continue along the Gillems Camp Trail.

Lava Beds from above

POST 8: ENLISTED LIFE AT GILLEMS CAMP

While the resources of this region met all the needs of the Modoc, life here was not easy for the Army soldiers or the Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. The site of Gillems Camp had definite advantages over the surrounding terrain, but the men fighting and working here still had to contend with a rugged and unfamiliar land.

Many of the soldiers who camped here were new immigrants to the United States, with little reason to want to fight the Modoc. Camp meals consisted mainly of hardtack, bacon, and coffee. The soldiers endured long, cold weeks of waiting between battles. Having to stumble across torturous lava flows to reach the secure Modoc position at the Stronghold exposed the soldiers to an enemy that could inflict great damage without ever being seen. The wounded who returned from battle to the crude field hospital here at Gillems Camp received little comfort.

CCC life contained many of the routines familiar to soldiers, such as early morning reveille and hard work for little pay—though any pay at all was highly prized during the Depression.

The young men, having left homes thousands of miles away in very different parts of the country, may well have had initial feelings similar to those of the Army soldiers arriving sixty years before. However, the tone that pervades newspapers produced by the CCC enrollees suggests that they were often able to face their hardships with a humor and levity that would have been difficult for the soldiers to muster in the face of war.



A newspaper correspondent recording events at Gillems Camp, seen here in the background



CCC workers clearing snow

POST 9: CHANGES IN VEGETATION

Look over this landscape and try to imagine what it was like hundreds of years ago. Just as human use has changed this area's water greatly over time, it has also impacted the vegetation. Compare the cover photo of Gillems Camp in 1873 with what you see today. There would have been less brush, only occasional juniper trees, and more native bunchgrass here long ago. After the Modoc War and the introduction of agriculture, new seeds entered the land that later became Lava Beds National Monument. The vegetation was also transformed by domestic animals, which were grazed here until the 1970's.

Can you tell the difference between native and invasive species?



Bunchgrass

Native plants here tend to grow in clumps, while many non-native plants grow in a dispersed manner. Bunchgrass and cheat grass are perfect examples. The invasive cheat grass crowds out bunchgrass, and provides little nutrition for wildlife.



Cheat grass

Natural cycles of wildfire were essential to the native ecosystem that once thrived here. Suppression of fires by settlers and early federal land managers was another factor in this area's change of vegetation. Since the 1970's, the National Park Service has introduced prescribed fire back into the landscape, in part to reestablish the balance of native plants here. If you encounter a burned area during your visit, take a moment to look closely for young shoots sprouting from the ashes, and consider the significance of this change back to a natural cycle of life.

You may notice a path leading up the bluff from here. Please help the vegetation grow back—return a few yards and take the Gillems Bluff Trail instead.

POST 10: A LAND OF CONTINUED SIGNIFICANCE

This land still holds great meaning for people of Modoc heritage now living from Oregon to Oklahoma, for descendents of homesteaders and Modoc War soldiers, and for generations of national park employees and visitors to the lava beds. People today continue to be drawn to Gillems Camp to experience the rich historical resources that now match the land's natural bounty. Each person who visits this place and finds their own meaning in its past adds something new to the story of Gillems Camp.



Re-enactors at the cemetery paying respect to those on both sides who suffered in the Modoc War



Visiting students encountering Army life at Gillems Camp

To continue your exploration . . .

To learn more about the Modoc War, visit the Monument's other historic sites marked on the wayside sign at the end of this trail. For a more in-depth experience, walk the guided trail at Captain Jacks Stronghold, or hike out to the Thomas-Wright Battlefield. You can also get a glimpse into the world of ancient native peoples through their prolific artwork at Petroglyph Point.

To see the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps and get a great view of the entire area, hike the short steep trail to the Schonchin Butte Lookout. On a clear day, you can see the lookout from Gillems Camp—look for a knob atop one of the cinder cone hills to the south. Or, stop at the plaque commemorating the CCC at the Devils Homestead overlook, two miles towards the Visitor Center along the park road.



Enjoy your visit here, as you walk in the footsteps of so many who came before you.

