

Transcription  
of  
Alice Clark

Tape 1/Interview 1  
February 21, 1997

Done By: Victoria Gonzalez  
and Katie Heinrich

Argonaut High School  
Oral History Interview  
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: Alice Ellen Thurston Clark.

Address: P.O. Box 191 Plymouth 95669  
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Date of birth: Nov 16, 1916 Place of birth: Villa Park, Ca.

Date of marriage: Nov 28, 1931 Place of marriage: Fiddletown Ca.

Name of spouse: Fred Michale Clark (Fredrick)

date of birth: 1909. Place of birth: Fiddletown Ca.

Subject occupation: Mothers helper, deliver babies, house sitter, nurse at

Spouse occupation: PG & E, miner twice

Name of mother: Letisha Idabel Trembly

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: House wife

Name of father: Edward Francis Thurston

Date of birth: Oct 2 Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: office, blacksmithing, homesteading, mill

Subject's children and dates of birth: Jerry (Oct 2) Michale Clark.  
Edward Clark (March 5)

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: William (Bill)  
Thurston Robert Thurston (Aug 10)

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) <sup>grade</sup> Pogonip, Tonga, Fiddletown, Maral Bay, Pond, Fiddletown. HS. W. Hollywood, Fairfax, Settler Creek did not finish H.S.

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees) None

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where) see front.

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service) None.

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.) Local clubs, young womens democratic club. Moose club, Native Daughters ~~etc.~~

Miscellaneous information:

Fiddletown grammar at 3rd & 8th

Prepared by: Victoria & Katie

Date: April 19, 1997

Project: Kennedy Mine Project

We moved up into this county in 1928, but I was born in Phillip Park which is a suburb of Los Angeles and maybe encircled by L.A. by this time. My father worked for Cecil Bed Mill. We lived in a little town in a canyon which at the mouth of it was the city limits of L.A. and that included San Fernando even. Of course, San Fernando takes the whole valley up now (laughs).

The earliest I remember was when we were living in Paso Robles and we spent a lot of time at Kayuka Beach. We had a lot of family reunions there and then we spent a lot of time at Three Arch Beach below Laguna City because at one time my great, great Grandparents owned Alicia Canyon and it was below Three Arch Beach. They had come out from Idaho and when they came out, they were Mormons. They came out here and they turned Seventh Day Advents. So their lives changed quite a bit. But after they came out here, they had 14 children. They were all born in California. Rosetta was the first child that they had. A little girl. And she had bright red hair. The Indians just adored her because they had never seen a red hared child before and down there the Indians were

very friendly; they weren't war-like at all. They were always there and Grandma always fed them and everything. So they came one day and she said, "I'll go get something for you to eat." So she went in and she left the little girl outside to play because they wanted to play with her. When she came back out, the little girl and the Indians were gone. They took the girl. They never found her though. Grandma looked for her all her life. I think Grandma was up into her 80's when they finally found her and she was 62. The little girl had no recollection of it. She understood that she wasn't of the tribe, but she wasn't unhappy because she could speak Indian because she was taken so young. They treated her really, really well because she was a novelty to them and she married into the tribe and had a family. Well at least Grandma died in peace. She had finally found her "little girl." She was named Rosetta on account of her red hair was in Spanish for red.

I did have a cousin Flossy and she was in one of the old family homes which was across the highway from the beach. The highway was real close to the beach there and when that big fire come down, it wasn't 50 feet from the house. I turned the TV off and I couldn't just stand to see the house burn. Cousin Flossy was there and Flossy's father was an artist; William Gaylan Daws. He was a wonderful artist. In fact, I had picture that he had painted, but I have nothing now because it was all sold when I got sick and needed help. It's still a lot of in the family, but I know that that attic was full of his pictures that

Flossy liked and he would never try of sell because Flossy liked them. So I suppose that the fire took those too. It didn't leave much (laughs) and I had watched that fire down there just like I watched the flood pictures up here. It was awfully hard.

Then from my Grandparents on my father's side we went to Paso Robles and Grandpa had a big place on Holly Acres. He had given his three sons a part of the acreage. He had given my mother and father, I think, about 35 acres. They got to build a house and they were living there when all of a sudden, my father, that was about the time people began homesteading in Canada, and it was a very good offer. He was young and he wanted to take that adventure up there. They were married and my mother was 18 and my father was 19. He was going to college and he decided he wanted to get married of they did and nine months later I was born. So that had slowed him down a little bit, but he did go up there because I was born in 1916. So from there, he went to Canada. I was 5 years old and I remember that trip very well. I remember dad had a model T Ford. My mother wanted to learn how to drive so he let her drive almost up to the Canadian border. Because you have this traffic behind you, he wouldn't let her drive this now (laughs). I guess they drove differently, but I don't remember now (laughs). We did very well until we got up... I know the car was packed level from the front seat to the back of the back seat with our possessions and we kids. There were three of us because Bob was born

while we were still at the Paso Robles place; and he was 7 months old at that time. My other brother was just 14 months younger than I was. Then we did fine until we got up to the Columbia River. There had been a big storm and it was in flood, so everybody was camped along the Columbia River until they could cross. There was a so-called Ferry which was a barge with big chains all the way around it. The only building they had was about like an outhouse that housed the motor that took it across the river. I remember we waited there for three days and then we went across in that. I remember my Dad and I were always the adventurous ones. We were hanging off the chain looking off into the river. I know that had been my kids right now, they wouldn't have had a chance to do that (laughs). Well it was muddy and it was probably 3 miles across at the mouth there. It is still 3 miles across, that's where they have the Astoria Bridge now. They have eliminated the big ferries they used to have there because the bridge takes it all. My dad and I later on rode the ferry back, came down and we crossed the ferry at Sacramento, the little one way up the Sacramento River, and he stopped and he said, "hey, there are ferry signs there."

I said, "yeah, lets go back." So we went back and we went on the big ferry. There was cars and people dancing and eating in the restaurant there and it (the little one) was still bigger than the one we crossed the Columbia on. When we went to Canada (laughs).

I remember my mother lost her canary. She loved canaries and she was taking Dickey bird up to Canada. I'm glad the poor thing never got up there, he would have froze to death (laughs). But he got out of the cage and we think one of the little boys that was in the camp, who was fascinated by the bird, probably opened the cage and he got out. But he flew right over the river until we couldn't see him anymore and that was the last of Dickey bird.

Then from then on, I remember when we crossed the Canadian border. Dad bought a pair of horses and a wagon and he bought some things to use to get settled. You had to have \$1800 to go up in cash, for the homestead so that if you didn't like it, you had money to get back home again. He had had it because he had sold the ranch so he had a little more than \$1800, but getting started up there, buying the horses and the wagon and all other equipment, he didn't have so much. But we were only up there 18 months and I remember we went clear up the Peats river which is pretty far up. We went up past Poscupi, which is cutthumb and French and we went up a little farther till we settled at Rounwalla, B.C. We stayed there and landed in the cost wonderful, friendly community you ever saw. Everybody helped everybody else we were new so this was somebody else to help (laughs). I remember they went out and showed dad how to cut ice out of the river for his ice house because we didn't have refrigerators up there at that time, nobody



did. It was a big sawdust house we put these blocks in and if you had something you knew was safe from bears getting into, high enough up you would put things to freeze outside, but most things you buried in there (the ice house) because everybody went out in the fall and they all hunted together and they divided the spoils up among everyone so everybody had some. There was fish, sage hens, bear, goose, they ate a lot of bears up there. I don't remember if I liked it. I was too young. They said, "eat it" so I ate it (laughs). We lived in a log cabin and I can remember this was a pretty good sized cabin, but somebody had built it and then gone off and left it and it was called the Old Nickel Place. That is all I really remember about it. Except dad used to take the horses and a sledge and go back in the woods to what they called a scoop-out hole and that is where we would get our water. He put that water in a barrel and I remember all around that hole was high bush cranberries. He and mom would gather those and they would dry some and make jam out of the others and everything because everyone used anything wild that was edible out there, and they would dry or can it. They never let anything go to waste.

Then Christmas time, when I think of Christmas time now, I can't believe what it's turned into. Up there everyone made things. For one thing, there wasn't much sugar that came up there. I don't know why, if it was too expensive or what, but I know that it was really rationed out. I remember one lady by the name of Annie Christensen. She was

always famous for her sugar-sour cream cookies. And she brought us kids these cookies. Her niece lived with her and she made us a scrap book from magazines. Everyone who got a magazine, saved it, and everyone for 10 miles around read them before they were ever discarded or done something with. Well, they took these magazines and made a scrap book for us for Christmas. Somebody else would bring us apples, or some meat. Everybody brought something. Bill and I were told that Santa Clause was coming so we weren't supposed to look, but dad had made us a trundle that slipped under their bed, and it was just like a big shelf, but slipped out. That year dad got a round log and he had a wood rasp. He cut rounds off of it and he smoothed it all up. I don't know what he used for the axle, but he made a wagon for Bill. He sawed the log by hand with a hand saw. It wasn't like lumber. He made me a sled. I remember he had somehow got an old barrel and somehow used the barrel stays (rings?) for the runners (laughs).

We used mostly candles up here because you couldn't get oil or anything. I mean things were freighted in by wagon that far up. So we used a lot of candles and we went to bed early so that we wouldn't use them that much (laughs). They made my little brother, who was two years old when we went up there, a crib with high sides on it so he couldn't crawl out of it because he was a crawler and he'd try to escape every chance he got (laugh). That was our first Christmas up there.

My dad loved to travel and that's why I love to travel so much. He and Mom used to go to the skating rink, That and the Ladies Aid, which was comparable to the P.T.A. today were the two main social things that happened. They would go skating and there was a big high board fence around the rink and some benched for spectators. But we were too young to leave out in the cold for too long so what they had across from it, they called a hotel. Looking back, I don't know what it was, but it was a single wall building, two story, and it was very, very frugally furnished, but it did have a window with glass in it. We kids would go up there and they would rent a room (the parents) and we'd all get around the window so we could look at the skating rink (laughs). We thought it was so funny when anyone fell down. We'd just roar! (laughs)

One time we went camping because we were going to get Saskatoon (?) berries and Mom was going to make some pies, can some, and freeze the pies. Dad made a great big screen cooler on the outside of the ice house and they didn't do that until it was all frozen. That was the first frozen pies that I ever knew anything about. I don't know if the rest of the neighbors did it. But I know that if Mom looked down the road and saw someone coming (everybody stopped when they went by), she would put a pie in the oven right away. In the winter you would have your stove going all of the time, so the oven was always prepared.

During harvest time, everyone followed the harvest around, and when it was your turn, everyone came to your house, got it finished, and then they would go to the next house. The lady of the house always cooked the meals for the harvesters. The Indians would like to follow because they were always asked to join the meal. There was one old Indian who was pretty smart, and he waited until everyone else was gone and then he would go in and he was sure to get plenty of food that way. He would go in when the lady had already cleaned up the table and had everything done, but he would come in late. During the meal the lady would have a tablecloth on the table (they used their best tablecloths but they weren't very good - all darned and patched). ~~All the lady had on there~~ was this white oil cloth. It wasn't plastic like now, and every time it got warm it smelled funny. Anyway, the old Indian looked down at the table and said, "Put a rag! Put a rag!" He wanted a tablecloth! So she went and got a tablecloth (laughs).

I remember the first time Mom was alone. ~~We saw someone coming up the road~~ so we went and told Mom. He was so far away, but the land was so flat there that you could see it and it kept moving. So she looked and she couldn't tell who it was but it was coming towards the house. We weren't expecting anything and Dad was gone, so she was scared. I remember her pushing everything she could against the doors ~~and putting~~ blankets over the windows. She was especially scared when she looked out and saw that

it was Indians, because she had never been around Indians. One man had a big feather bonnet on, so he must have been the chief. They stopped and wanted something to eat. Mom told them, "I don't have anything. My husband is gone to get food" So they went on. But she was scared to death that they would get into the house and she didn't know what to do (laughs). They knew Dad wasn't there so she might as well have told them that.

It wasn't very long before we moved around to a couple of different places. I can't remember it had a great big barn on it and us kids played in it all the time. Then he worked at the big ranch out there at that time, during the harvest season. Then we moved out someplace and Dad would be gone for weeks at a time, following the job around. By that time, Mom wasn't afraid of the Indians because she knew they wouldn't hurt us, but she was scared to death the first time and of course that scared us.

My younger brother who was 14 months younger than I was, was always disappearing. When he got sleepy, he would lay down and had a little pillow and he would hold it by the corner and suck his thumb. He would lay down with the pillow, he called it his Poga, and Mama would go looking for him anyplace that was flat and she would find Bill out there sucking his thumb, fast asleep. Laying on his Poga.

Then it became Winter again and it was time for me to go to school because by that time I was six years old. It was twelve miles to school, the snow was deep and the only way I could get to school was to get a ride with a neighbor boy who drove a sleigh 12 miles to school and who was only 12 years old. My mother was in tears when my dad got home saying, "I'm not going to send my baby off to school with a 12 year old boy in 12 miles of snow." So guess what, we sold everything we had ever had up there and even what we had to get up there with so that we would have enough money to get back to San Fernando, California (laughs).

But Dad liked to travel. Even though he had half of the homestead done already, he had the cabin half built, he had the well done, and he knew where he was going to get the fence posts, he had the trees all picked out for that, but he just left everything.

Then, we came out and they were supposedly going to pick a day that was a good day for traveling because you had to travel in a sled in the winter time up there. He had hired a man to take us out clear down to the railroad at Victoria and then the man went back and Dad still had enough money to buy train tickets. We got on the train and came down to San Fernando. Then I started school. Kayuka is where I started school down there, I think.

Then he started to work for Cecil BD Mill out in Littleton Canyon. He loved that job. At that time it was a good paying job, because the Depression hadn't hit or anything and besides the mill paid good wages. He made a lot of pictures out there in the canyon. My brother and I, if he could run us down, he go us. But we were busy out there trying to scare a lizard with a wheat straw that we weren't interested in working in those old movies. All we'd have to do was drag around an old donkey or something. It was no acting part. They always paid us in a 5-dollar gold piece. Wouldn't it be nice to have one now? I would save mine and buy shoes. My brothers would buy candy and Ice Cream (laughs).

Then Dad decided he wanted to get a ranch of his own. Mother's mother had a bell, a Claude bell. Her brother up here in Fiddletown worked on what they called the Old Lauden Place. They were an old family, but there aren't many Lauden's left in the county now. Last I heard, there were some up on the hill as you are going into Sutter Creek. Not this side (Plymouth), but the other side. And he knew it was for sale. So when Dad was looking for a place, he wrote and told my Mother's sister there was a place up there and he thought Dad might like it. So we came up there and Dad liked it, so we he went up there and he had enough money from working with the mill to pay for the whole place. By that time it was the Depression and it was beginning to get scary. It wasn't really bad,

but it was "js it or isn't it." He thought he could do it so he only paid half. In the long run, he lost all he had saved because there were no jobs at all. I mean now people talk about being ... It's only a recession now, it's not a depression. Unless you've gone through a depression, you can't imagine the difference. I mean people were actually hungry and everybody was helping somebody else. My mother made clothes for little kids from out of other people's clothes that the welfare lady, who heard that Mom sewed, brought over and Mom would make clothes for little kids, coats and things. She would take coats and if they were washable, she would take and rip them apart, wash and iron them, and then make coats for the kids and dresses and things.

Then we raised a big truck garden up there on the ranch. And we got by very well because we had a cow and we had a truck garden. So we got by all right. Then times got pretty rough because he had to go to work in the valley and he worked for Standard Oil and he painted big tanks and he got paint poisoning, lead poisoning. They used Quinine to cure it and then he turned allergic to it and nobody knew what it was he was taking. He was almost dead and my uncle came up from Bensanita, he was my Mother's oldest brother, and he was an oil engineer. He had learned what had happened and came up and landed in New York and bought a car and drove across. Mom and Dad's was the first place he stopped and Mom saw what it was and burst into tears saying, "Leland's dying."



He knew and went in and he says, "give me a blanket" and picked him up. Dad was only about half conscience. He took him down to the Mercy Hospital and he was down there for about 2 months. They diagnosed what it was that was poisoning him and it was from the Quinine. If he wouldn't have come then Dad would have been gone. This doctor up here didn't know what it was. That time, Dad finally lost the ranch to the mortgage and he couldn't pay cash for it when he came up, but it is a good thing he saved that because that kept us half way through anyway (laughs). I took a job. We went then into the valley and he was working for Sandra Oil and Pond down there in Shank Farm and that was all finished and then we moved to Morrow Bay which was the time of my life. We spent it in our bathing suits at the beach (laughs). Dad worked at a farm up there where they took oil from the tank farm out under sea and oiled big ships and Dad, they didn't even want him to quit, but he wanted to start on something else. He had a job with him all his life and wanted because he had a couple years of college and he could go into an office, take over, no problem. He could go out if somebody didn't turn out at the blacksmith shop and do that. He could help with getting the oil out into the ships. There wasn't anything that he couldn't do and he loved the idea of being able to change. He never (laughs) got tired of that. Then he could fish when he wanted to. We did a lot of fishing when we traveled up and down. In fact, we went to Hearst Castle. We went up through Cabri

Pines. ~~The reason that we didn't go any farther was because they were building that road~~ from up there to Monterey Bay and they never had a road up there before. It was being built by prisoners so ~~you couldn't even go down the road to see how it was coming along.~~ We used to like to go up there and watch the animals and seagulls always try to race the cars.

Then my family came to the ranch again and by that time I was ready for high school. ~~There was no way to get to high school. There was no bus and there were no~~ kids who could drive a car. My dad was gone half of the time in the valley working. If I was going to school, then I had to get a job. ~~So I got a little job down there. It allowed~~ me to go to school in the daytime, get up and help in the morning with the two children, and it was in North Hollywood. ~~Then I went down and went to high school. I helped in~~ the evenings with housework and the children. That was how I got through North Hollywood High. ~~The people I was working for, the male was a contractor, well nobody~~ was building things much then. Everyday the school bus would drive by that big Hollywood sign and then we would turn and go back to school. ~~The big seagulls flew~~ over everyday and left streaks of white behind them and somebody would look up and go, "seagull" and ~~everybody would hide (laughing) and go into the arcade. If somebody~~ didn't make it, then they got laughed at.

Then they moved into Hollywood, but Hollywood then wasn't all big houses. The stars weren't so prominent, they were on Beverly Hills, but it was smaller and I went to school in Hollywood. It was a small distance into Los Angeles High which was Fairfax High School and it was a big school!

Then they got such a small house that it was hard for them to keep anybody in there because it was so small that I was sleeping on the floor in the closet. Then I found another job over at Carfay Circle where the earthquake hit in 1933. Old Ironside happened to be in there at the time it hit. They were scared that Old Ironside would be caught in a tidal wave, but it didn't and it survived. The streets were cracked and it was hard to travel. They wanted everyone to stay home who didn't have to be out because it was really a hard earthquake. I was where these people were, working, and it was in a two story apartment house and I remember all the cracked right down in the corners. Everybody got out and I hadn't felt very good that day so I thought I was fainting. I thought that I should go lie down. I started back to my room and I was in a narrow hall that I had just finished waxing. I had an awful time with it. I fell down a few times because the thing was really going. They had built a new bank above, about a block and a half from there. I was a brick bank and a small bank, but it was there. It had only been open a week when this earthquake hit and that bank was nothing but a pile of bricks with

iron cages. I remember the police were there cording it off (laughs). I just wanted to get out of there. If we would have stayed where we were standing, the buildings would have come down right on us. Nobody had ever experienced an earthquake before.

Q: When did you move to Amador County?

A: I moved to Amador County in 1928. I came back here and my last year I went to high school was... Well, I can't remember, but I had had three and a half years down south and when I sent for my reports, they said they had lost them. I never did get them and I got discouraged because they said that I would have to take the whole year over again. My senior year. I didn't want to because Fred and I were engaged and he wanted to get married. I was 18 and he was 25 so I said, "okay, I'm not particularly interested in school anyway." Now I would have fought for it, but then I didn't. But that is when we came up here.

Q: So you and your husband moved up here together?

A: No, he was born and raised here. Born and raised in Fiddletown. In fact, he was 14 years old before he even went into Plymouth. He had to stay home and take care of his sick parents. His brother and sister went to Heald's College. They sent them after and Fred had to stay home and take care of them and an uncle that had lived with them all of his life. He was insatiable reader. He was hungry for any book he could get his hands

on. He had a teacher who thought a lot of him and his father was a trustee of the school up there. She talked him into letting Fred come down at least once a day after he graduated from school. She taught him Trigonometry and Geometry. She taught him to love the classics and everything. Fred never quit reading. He read all of his life; anything he could get his hands on.

Then after we married, we lived out at the ranch for a couple months. Then we moved from there to the town house in Amador City. That was his Great Grandparent's that built that house. His Grandfather came over from Ireland and he had a bar. He built a home after he sent for his bride in Ireland. She came over and they got married. He built a ranch up on Rancheria Creek. Which the house is still standing. Then he bought another one up, you know where the roads come in from Fiddletown, Volcano and hit Silver Lake road? It's up above Volcano a ways. Well, down under the hill there, they had another big ranch. In the summertime, they lived on the Goodman Ranch up there. Not Goodman, but the Goodman place was next to it. Then there was their place, the old Mooney Ranch. When they lived on the first one built, on Rancheria Creek, they came down in horse and buggy to church and he built them the town house because he said he didn't think that a salon keeper should raise his family in town. He was a devote Catholic. His kids attended church or else (laughs). Then we moved there and then he went to

work at a mine up the road. There is hardly any sign of it anymore, it's only a few concrete pillars and stuff. It was a pretty deep mine and it was just barely out of town. There is houses above it now, but there wasn't then. The Amador something mine. I can't remember. They were trying to reopen it again, but it was too close after the Depression. It never made it. It wasn't a good pay mine. We had a friend of my husband come and board with us there, Buster Wolfie and he was born and raised in Fiddletown, too. Then, he came home on night and said, "I quit! That thing is getting too dangerous." Fred didn't say anything about it. A week later he said, "I hate to go to work. It is really dangerous."

I said, "I didn't marry you to become a widow, so quit."(laughs) We hadn't been married for too long. He quit and that night Hewlitt Beaver came over and said that he had been working in the Fort Anne Mine and they needed somebody up there because he was quitting. He said that if Fred went up there he would go back and tell Jess, "I got a good miner here."

Before we were married, he had worked in the mine in Sutter Creek. The deep one that is closed now. He worked there and then after that it was the one up on 49, up toward on Indian Reservation. It was about half way before you start up the hill to go to Placerville. Then we went up to Fort Anne Mine and they built us a cabin. It was 9x12.

He had a tept that was 9x12. An old cabin tent. They built a platform that had sided and we slept in that. We ate and cooked and lived in the cabin. A 9x12 linoleum just fit in that floor. I didn't have anything for curtains, or anything up there. I never tried to do anything much with the tent. Fred had a cupboard to put our clothes in and a bed. That is all we had in that. Then I got mosquito netting and dyed it yellow. He put up orange crated, when they had them with a divider in the middle along the wall and that was my cupboard to put my dishes, kettle and other things in. Then he put two orange crates by the little stove. We had a little tiny stove, but if we had anything bigger, you couldn't have lived in it (laughs). That's how small a place it was. My heavy kettles went in that and it was a place to put my spoons when I was stirring stuff. I made curtains across that and made curtains across the window by the stove, but I was afraid that the grease would pop on them, so I eventually got some oil cloth and made curtains for that one by the stove. It had two windows in it and they went out so I made curtains for that. Then there was a door in the front and one in the back and that was that cabin.

Fred and I have lived together in Amador County since I met him in 1928. We had three boys and they all grew up in Amador County. Amador county is the best place to live and raise a family.