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#### **Title**

Latta: *Tailholt Tales as Related to Frank F. Latta* by Thomas Jefferson Mayfield

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explanation of the weeping salutation.

The best evidence for the reliability of the native accounts recorded by Harrington lies in the recently reconstructed canoe (named *Helek*) and its performance.

One can only observe how remarkable it is to have brought to life, almost literally, this truly unique example of Native Californian achievement in technology. I repeat that Harrington could not have wished for a better group of redactors.



*Tailholt Tales as Related to Frank F. Latta* by Thomas Jefferson Mayfield. Frank F. Latta. Santa Cruz, California: Bear State Books, 1976. 323 pp., including 91 illustrations.

Reviewed by FRANKLIN FENENGA  
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Frank F. Latta's *Tailholt Tales* is a new and enlarged edition of the author's scarce but oft-cited account of the reminiscences of a San Joaquin Valley pioneer, first published as *Uncle Jeff's Story*. The pioneer, Thomas Jefferson Mayfield, spent his later childhood, from 1850-1859, in close association with the Choinimni Yokuts, inhabitants of a village on the Kings River across from the mouth of Sycamore Creek. The site is now covered by the Pine Flat Reservoir.

The first 150 pages of the present edition deal with Mayfield's memories of his experiences living with the Indians. It is a sympathetic account which reflects extraordinary recall of technological detail for manufactures, games, food harvest and preparation, but an absolute disinterest in social, political, or religious aspects of the native culture or such specifics as personal names. The professional reader will react negatively to the appearance of over-directed questioning which led to such selective responses.

When it was first published in 1929, many of the details had not yet been recorded, and some—e.g., the salt stick and the outsize balsa rafts—are still best reported by Mayfield. The account certainly will be used to augment the more organized accounts of Yokuts material culture and economy by Gayton, and Latta's own *Handbook of the Yokuts Indians*.

None of the reservations I have expressed about the ethnographic section of the book applies to its second half. The local historian will find rich details of place and time and persona in Mayfield's lusty and candid reporting of late nineteenth century events centered at White River on the Kern but extending into Death Valley and the Mojave Desert. His good-humored judgments about who were the good guys and who the bad reflect a refreshing folk value system denied us in a degree, by cultural relativism on the one hand and "western" stereotypes on the other.

The principal additions to this new edition consist of a substantial number of Choinimni words for items in the environment (the orthography is non-professional, and unexplained) and some 90 photographic illustrations (several of which are important documents, the majority are stills from a movie about the Yokuts which Latta supervised). There is also a foreword by John P. Harrington and some biographical notes on Harrington by Latta.

Frank Latta's long sustained contributions to the ethnohistory of the southern San Joaquin Valley are rich in substance, and it is encouraging to see that Bear State Books is continuing to bring out new editions of these works.

