

# A History of UCSF

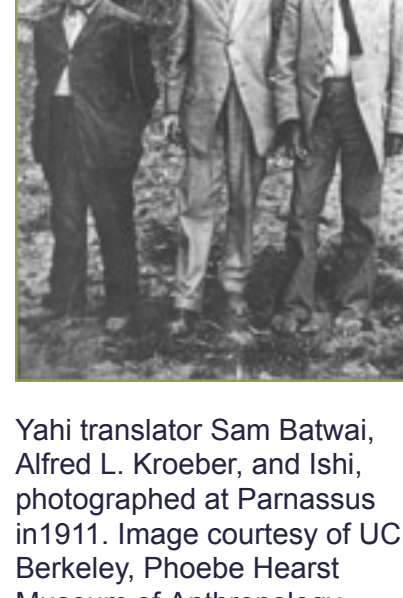
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THE STORY OF ISHI: A CHRONOLOGY by Nancy Rockafellar

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### INTRODUCTION

In August of 1911 a starving native-American man walked out of the Butte County wilderness into Oroville and became an instant journalistic sensation. He was identified by UC anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and T. T. Waterman as the last of a remnant band of Yahi people native to the Deer Creek region. The UC anthropologists immediately went north to Oroville and brought him back to live on the Parnassus campus, giving him the name "Ishi" which meant "man" in the Yahi language. During the next four years, the anthropologists and physicians at UC would learn much from Ishi, as he demonstrated his toolmaking and hunting skills, and spoke his tribal stories and songs. Newspapers frequently referred to Ishi as the "last wild Indian," and the press was full of anecdotes referring to Ishi's reaction to twentieth-century technological wonders like streetcars, theaters, and airplanes. In his writings, Waterman respectfully noted Ishi's "gentlemanliness, which lies outside of all training and is an expression of inward spirit," and the records of the time reveal much mutual respect on the part of Ishi and his scientist-observers. Each weekend, hundreds of visitors flocked to Parnassus to watch Ishi demonstrate arrow-making and other aspects of his tribal culture.



Yahi translator Sam Batwai, Alfred L. Kroeber, and Ishi, photographed at Parnassus in 1911. Images courtesy of UC Berkeley, Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology.

**HISTORICAL PERIOD**  
 1840s: Approximately 400 Yahi people exist in California; total Yana people estimated at 1500.  
 1849: California Gold Rush begins.  
 Ishi's birth ca 1860.  
 1865: The massacres of Yahi People begin, 74 killed.  
 1866: Three Knolls Massacre, 40 killed; Dry Camp Massacre, 33 killed.  
 1871 Kingsley Cave/Morgan Valley Massacre 30 killed.  
 1870-1911: Period of Concealment: a remnant band (five to twenty individuals) of Yahi hide in the Mill Creek area.  
 November 10, 1908: Surveying party surprises a band of four; Ishi escapes and hides; out of curiosity the surveyors take tools and artifacts from the camp.  
 October, 1910: T.T. Waterman leads an expedition into the Mill Creek area to attempt to find the lost band of Indians, finds "incontrovertible evidence of their existence in a wild state." No contact made.  
 August 1911: Ishi walks out of Butte County wilderness into Oroville.  
 September 4, 1911: T.T. Waterman brings Ishi to San Francisco  
 October 1911: Museum of Anthropology opens at Parnassus; over the next six months, 24,000 people visit the museum and watch Ishi demonstrate arrowmaking and firebuilding.  
 November 22, 1911: Ishi hospitalized for respiratory infection; all TB diagnostic tests are negative.  
 December 26, 1911: Ishi hospitalized with bronchopneumonia, photos and casts taken of his feet.  
 September, 1912: Ishi hospitalized three days for abdominal pain.  
 Ishi becomes acquainted with UC Surgeon, Dr. Saxton Pope; they begin archery collaboration.  
 May 1913: Ishi hospitalized two days for back pain.  
 May 1914: Pope does a complete clinical history of Ishi: "No Premonition of Illness."

Summer 1914: Ishi, Waterman, Pope and Kroeber Visit and map the Deer Creek area of Tehama county.  
 December 10, 1914 to Feb. 1, 1915: Ishi hospitalized for 62 days, First Tubercular Diagnosis in early 1915.  
 Summer 1915: Linguistics work with Edward Sapir; Ishi stays with Watermans at Berkeley for three months and is "carefully looked after."  
 August 22, 1915: Ishi hospitalized for six weeks, then moved to the Museum of Anthropology.  
 August 28, 1915: Kroeber informs T.T. Waterman and Gifford of plans for Ishi's convalescence: "We have got to handle the case. The physicians go by the book and rule, and it's up to us to apply our knowledge of the individual and our judgment to their findings and advice. He undoubtedly has had TB since last winter, though for the last 6 months it has been only latent... We must let the doctors get their crack at him, but unless he has really broken I don't think they'll find out much... If he gets back to where he was all spring, I believe the same treatment is the only one--reasonable air, exercise and distraction, with every ready tab on the progress of the disease with scales and thermometer. If ...the disease continues active even though mild, I suggest sending him preferably to our former watchman...himself a lunder of ten years' standing; or if he won't have him, then to the Appersons. Pope has the only right idea, which is to handle him as a person, not as a hospital case...I sail for Europe Tuesday...for about two months then back here. [New York and the Museum of Natural History]

September 30, 1915: Gifford replies, "Ishi has improved slowly, but he is a long way from being on his feet. The doctors feel that he will be better off in our building. ...the doctors say he is not in condition to move to the country..."  
 March 18, 1916: Ishi is readmitted to UC Hospital.  
 March 24, 1916: Kroeber writes from New York to Gifford. "I am very sorry. The temperatures made me lose hope some time ago. Please stand by our contingently made outline of action, and insist on it as my personal wish. There is no objection to a cast. I do not however see that an autopsy would lead to anything of consequence. I might be willing to consent if it were to be a strict autopsy in the ordinary sense to determine the cause of death, but as they know that, I suspect that the autopsy would resolve itself into a general dissection. Please shut down on it. As to disposal of the body, I must ask you as my personal representative on the spot in this matter, to yield nothing at all under any circumstances. If there is any talk about the interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell. We propose to stand by our friends. Besides, I cannot believe that any scientific value is materially involved. We have hundreds of Indian skeletons that nobody ever comes near to study. The prime interest in this case would be of a morbid romantic nature. Please acquaint Waterman with my feelings; and convey them also to Pope, toned down in form so as not to offend him, but without concessions. When the time comes, please see that the various people in the hospital are properly thanked. They have been more than white.  
 You can get an individual plot in any of the public cemeteries. Draw upon any money in our keeping, for this purpose without question or formality, on my responsibility. As to monument and care, we can see later. There is no use declaring an estate unless there is official demand. Whatever balance remains after we get through, I think should be turned over to the hospital for what they have done. All this, however, can be arranged later. Yours, ALK."

March 25, 1916: Ishi Dies at UC Hospital. Autopsy performed by Dr. Jean V. Cooke. Cause of death: Advanced Pulmonary Tuberculosis. Dr. K. F. Meyer of the Hooper Foundation is called in to consult on the route of infection.  
 (Waterman, Gifford and Pope are presumably present. Brain is removed, weighed, examined macroscopically and preserved).  
 March 30, 1916: Gifford reports to Kroeber, "Your letter of March 24 with instructions concerning the disposal of Ishi's body and estate was received too late to be of use. In disposing of his body I took the stand which you asked me to take some time ago: namely, that he have a Christian burial like any other friend. The only possible departures from your request lie in the fact that an autopsy was performed and that the brain was preserved. However, the matter, as you well know, was not entirely in my hands, as I am not the acting head of the department. In short, what happened amounts to a compromise between science and sentiment, with myself on the side of sentiment. Everything else was carried out as you would have done it yourself. I firmly believe. The Indian told Pope some time ago that the way to dispose of the dead was to burn them, so we undoubtedly followed his wishes in that matter. In the coffin were placed one of his bows, five pieces of dentalium, a box full of shell bead money which he had saved, a purse full of tobacco, three rings, and some obsidian flakes, all of which we felt sure would be in accord with Ishi's wishes. The remains are to be placed in a niche in the columbarium at Mount Olivet Cemetery. Pope and Waterman decided, and I agreed, that a small black Pueblo jar would be far more appropriate than one of the bronze or onyx urns which the Crematory has on sale. Tomorrow afternoon Pope and I are going down to place the ashes in this jar and put it in the niche purchased. Ishi died leaving \$369.52. His estate went into the hands of the Public Administrator. This official, however has certainly been very obliging throughout. He has given us every aid and every advice. The money has been expended as follows:  
 Floral Piece at Museum \$7.50  
 Funeral and Cremation \$150.00  
 Niche in columbarium \$40.00  
 County Tax \$1.00  
 Hospital Bill \$171.00  
 Out of the hospital bill of \$171 will be deducted the charges of the Public Administrator's office. He kindly offered to cut his fee in half. The normal fee is fourteen percent (seven for the administrator and seven for the attorney) It has been cut as you see to three and one half percent for each of these men. This means of course seven percent of \$369.50.  
 "The funeral was private, and no flowers were brought. Waterman, Pope, Loomis, Loud Warburton, Mason and myself were the only people who attended. We of course went to the crematory also. Sincerely, E. W. Gifford."

March 27, 1916: Private Funeral in the undertakers parlor. Waterman, Pope, Loud Warburton and Gifford accompanied the body to the cemetery where cremation occurred.  
 Mount Olivet files contain a receipt dated March 27, 1916 c/o Public Administrator for \$40.00 and an interment document describing name date of death, approx. age, color sex and place of birth. Cremation date listed as March 27, 1916.  
 March 31, 1916: Ishi's Ashes placed in a Pueblo jar and placed in the columbarium of Mount Olivet Cemetery.  
 March 31, 1916 Dr. Moffitt (Dean of the Medical School) thanks Waterman for his "kind note" and states "I do not think there ever was any idea of charging him [Ishi]."  
 October 27, 1916: Kroeber returns from sabbatical, writes to Curator of the National Museum, Ales Hrdlicka, "I find that at Ishi's death last spring his brain was removed and preserved. There is no one here who can put it to scientific use. If you wish it, I shall be glad to deposit it in the National Museum collection."  
 In January, 1917 the Anthropology recorder for the U.S. National Museum asks for clarification...stating that the museum "does not know certainly whether the specimen is deposited in, or presented to, the National Museum, nor whether it comes from you personally, or from the University through your good offices..." Kroeber replies, "Ishi's brain was sent to the National Museum as a gift with the compliments of the University of California. I believe there would be some question as to who was the legal possessor before it was sent to Dr. Hrdlicka. If you will enter as donor the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, I think your record will be as accurate as you can make it."

January 1917: The brain is shipped to Washington and accessioned by the Smithsonian, accession number 60884, museum number 298726. For sixty-four years it is stored in a ground glass jar in the "Division of Collections" of the Physical Anthropology Labs on the third floor of the Natural History Building. In 1981 the soft Tissue collections are rehoused and moved to Hall 25, stainless steel tank#6 and the catalogue number is attached by two permanent string tags. In 1994 the body part was moved to Third Pod, Museum Support Center. A 1999 observer reports that the brain appears to be still intact.  
**AFTERMATH**  
 Publication of various articles on Ishi, Yahi ethnology and the Indian massacres of the previous century.  
 Alfred Kroeber, "The Yana and the Yahi," Handbook of the Indians of California. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 78 (1925): 336-346.  
 Sim Moak. The Last of the Mill Creeks and Early Life in Northern California (Chico, Calif, 1923).  
 Nels C. Nelson, "Flint Working by Ishi,"Holmes Anniversary Volume. Anthropological Essays Presented to Wm. Henry Holmes. (Washington D.C., 1916):397-402.  
 Saxton T. Pope, "Yahi Archery," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 13 (1918): 104-152.  
 Saxton Pope, "The Medical History of Ishi," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 13 (1920): 175-213.  
 Edward Sapir, "Analysis of a Yahi Text," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 20 (1923).  
 Edward Sapir, "The Position of Yana in the Hokan Stock," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 13 (1918): 1-34.  
 T. T. Waterman, "The Yana Indians," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 13 (1918):35-102.  
 T. T. Waterman, "Ishi, the Last Yahi Indian," Southern Workman 46 (1917): 528-537.  
 1931: The University of California Department of Anthropology moves to new quarters at UC Berkeley and all artifacts connected with Ishi are transported to the east Bay; Medical records are housed at UCSF

**MORE RECENT TIMES**  
 1961: Theodora Kroeber publishes Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961).  
 1964: Theodora Kroeber publishes a children's book, Ishi, Last of His Tribe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin co., 1964).  
 The National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 mandates that the Smithsonian Institution inventory, document, and, if requested repatriate culturally affiliated human remains and funerary objects to federally recognized Native American tribes. The 1996 amendment establishes deadlines for the distribution of summaries and inventories of human remains and associated funerary objects which are to be completed and submitted to Native groups by June 1, 1998.  
 Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act is passed in 1990, requiring all federal agencies and museums receiving federal funds to inventory and identify the items, notify the affected tribes and make arrangements to return such items if the appropriate tribe made a request. The Smithsonian is exempt from NAGPRA, and would be governed by provisions of the 1989 NMAI Act.  
**THE CONTEMPORARY SEARCH FOR ISHI'S REMAINS**  
 Spring, 1997: Four federally recognized Maidu tribes (The Enterprise tribe, The Mooretown Tribe, The Berry Creek Tribe and the Mechoopda Tribe) unite to form the Butte County Native American Cultural Committee and elect Mr. Art Angle chair of the BCNACC.  
 May 14, 1997: The BCNACC passes Resolution 97-01 authorizing the BCNACC with the support of the Forest Service, City of Oroville, Chamber of Commerce, Butte County Board of Supervisors and the Native American Elders, to "locate and place Ishi's remains and spirit to his native Homeland."  
 June 6, 1997: Los Angeles Times article by Mary Curtius alerts UCSF officials to the possibility that the brain was not cremated along with Ishi's other remains. UCSF Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs initiates an internal investigation by a pathologist and a research historian.  
 October, 1997: Berkeley investigation fails to find further information on the brain's removal; letter sent to Arthur Angle and the BCNACC.  
 June 16, 1998: UCSF investigation leads to the Smithsonian, but the Director of the American Indian Program tells UCSF representative that the brain is "old folklore and it doesn't exist."  
 December 16, 1998: UC Research Historian meets at UCSF with Orin Starn, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Duke University, to discuss the research on the whereabouts of Ishi's brain.  
 December 1998-January 1999: Orin Starn recontacts the Smithsonian, finds new documents in the Bancroft library, proof that Kroeber shipped the brain in 1917.  
 January 27, 1999: Presence of the brain at the Smithsonian is confirmed personally in a meeting between Thomas Kilhon of the Smithsonian repatriation office, and Orin Starn.  
 January 28, 1999: Butte County Native American Cultural Committee is notified by Orin Starn, who expresses his "support and admiration for your efforts to see that Ishi is finally laid to rest in a proper way."  
 February 17, 1999: UCSF report filed by the UCSF Research Historian, calls for UC support for repatriation and reunification of Ishi's remains.  
 February 19, 1999: UCSF press release on the "Discovery" of Ishi's brain leads to national news coverage.  
 February 23, 1999: The Butte county Native American Cultural Committee holds a press conference in Oroville, and announces "It is important to remember that the Native Americans feel that a complete body is necessary to proper burial and release of the spirit. Ishi was the last Yahi Indian, the last of his tribe that was lost forever from mother earth...in this discovery of the missing body part, we now can proceed with the repatriation of our red brother." The BCNACC announces it's intentions to travel to the Smithsonian to view the missing body part, and "assuming the viewing goes well, we will be seeking the full cooperation of the University of California and the Smithsonian Institution in the proper repatriation of all of Ishi's remains for a proper Native American burial."  
 March 24, 1999: eight representative members of the BCNACC visit the Smithsonian to view the brain and conduct a cleansing ceremony.  
 March 23-25, 1999: Press reports the Smithsonian's announcement that it will repatriate Ishi's brain to lineal descendants or culturally affiliated people, and members of the BCNACC have no cultural affiliation with the Yahi. The press reports "No Happy Ending in Sight for Ishi's Brain."  
 March 25, 1999: Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 25 Relative to the University of California, "urges the Regents of the University of California to immediately take any and all actions necessary to ensure that the remains of Ishi be returned to the appropriate tribal representatives...urges the Governor to direct all affected state agencies to cooperate in the effort to return the remains of Ishi so that a proper Indian burial ceremony may take place and closure may be brought to this indignity..."  
 April 5, 1999: California State Legislature Oversight Hearing "on the subject of the remains of Ishi and the disposition of Native American remains and artifacts."  
 March 1999: After a month of investigation, the Smithsonian identifies the people of the Redding Rancheria and the Pit River tribe as Ishi's closest relations and therefore designated recipients of Ishi's remains.  
 April 12, 2000: The California state attorney general's office obtains a court order from San Mateo county for the removal of Ishi's ashes from the Colima cemetery for reburial by the designated Native American people according to their customs.  
 May 12 and 13, 2000: The Butte County Native American Cultural Committee organize a conference in Oroville to memorialize Ishi.

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