

Modoc County

The Modoc County Courthouse in Alturas (2006).



Modoc County Data

Population: 9,449 (Rank: 56)

Land Area (square miles): 3944 (Rank: 12)

Even during the summer when one would expect tourists, campers and fishermen, you don't find very many people in Modoc County. It is not hard to get to. It has two major highways that cut through the county. To reach Alturas by Highway 299 from Redding it is a 145-mile drive; from Reno it is a 165-mile drive.

If you like variety, Highway 299 definitely is the scenic route. Mt. Shasta and Mt. Lassen frame the route which takes you through pine forests, up the edge of the Modoc Plateau, across the green pastures of Big Valley, and up over Adin Pass into the Warm Springs Valley. Highway 395 is the sagebrush route. It cuts a fairly straight path through parched Great Basin desert and rises up at Sagehorn Summit.

Modoc is geologically unique. It is a high plateau built by lava flows from the Cascade Mountains which include Shasta and Lassen. The 5,000-foot plateau is mostly flat with occasional hills. The Pit River cuts diagonally through the county dropping down the plateau on its way to Shasta Lake. Pacific Gas & Electric has built power

plants along the river to take advantage of this natural drop in elevation.

Modoc County was created in 1874 from Siskiyou County. Its name comes from an Indian tribe that lived along the Pit River. One version has it that the word "modoc" means the head of the river. Another version is that it is derived from the Klamath word "moatakni" meaning southerners

Most of the county is covered by the Modoc National Forest. It includes on the west the Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge. To the north is Goose Lake, which stretches into Oregon. To the east are the Warner Mountains and beyond the mountains is Surprise Valley with three lakes, Upper, Middle and Lower Alkali Lakes and the Surprise Valley Wildlife Refuge.

The Warner Mountains are the water divide between the Great Basin and the Pacific. The streams on the west side of the mountains form the Pit River. There is only one paved road across the Warners. The highest part of the mountains is preserved as a 70,000-acre wilderness area.

City: Alturas. Towns: Cedarville, Likely, Canby, Adin, Lookout, Fort Bidwell, Lake City, Eagleville.

Photo Trips

July 2002

We entered Modoc County on Highway 395 coming from Susanville. We photographed Alturas and then turned west on drove to Redding on Highway 299. Took pictures of Canby and Adin.

August 2003

This trip was through Siskiyou County and we entered Modoc County on Highway 139. We photographed Newell and Lookout.

July 2006

This was our most comprehensive trip to Modoc County. We drove up on Highway 299 from Redding. We visited Surprise Valley and drove through the area north of Alturas including the Devil's Garden and Goose Lake. There were a lot of lightning strikes and forest fires starting. There was a large fire fighter presence in Alturas.

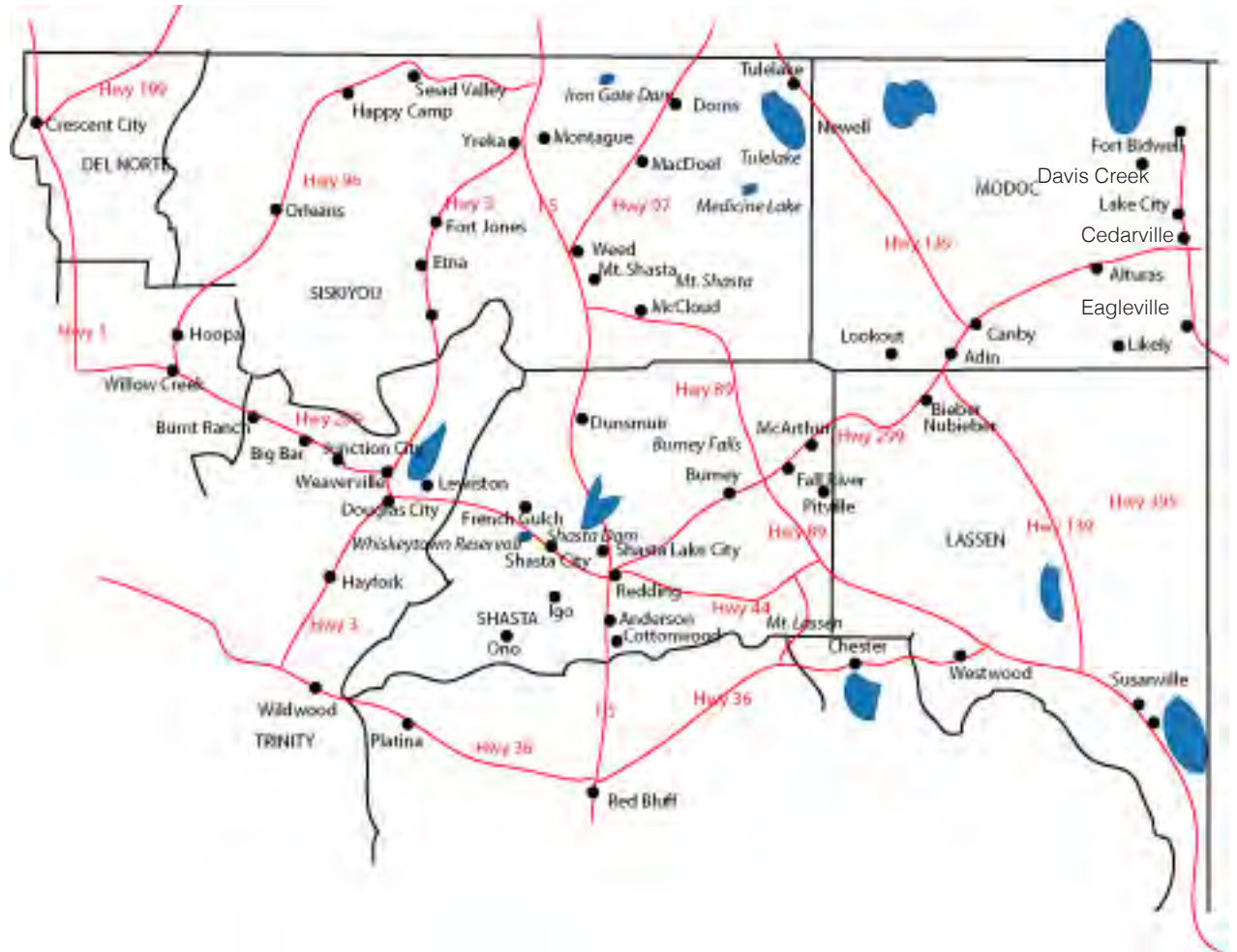
Introduction

California is comprised of 58 counties. The state, the third largest in the U.S., has the greatest diversity of geography of any of the states. It has huge deserts, high mountain ranges, fertile valleys and a 1000 mile coastline. Beginning in 2001 my wife and I began to travel and photograph the state as a retirement hobby.

In 2009 we published a CD containing about 4,000 photos of the regions of the state. Since that time we have added about 10,000 more photos to our collection. It was also at this time (December 2008) I began to send a photographic diary of our trips to friends and people with an interest in California geography.

Now we are organizing our collection by county using all of our photos dating back to 2001.

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Alturas

The old Sears store on Main Street. (July 2002)



Alturas

Alturas' main street which is Highway 395. (July 2006)



Alturas

This was either an old school or church on main street.
(July 2006)



Alturas

The hotel on main street. It was filled with fire fighters on this day. (July 2006)



Alturas

The coop warehouse on the northside of town.
(July 2006)



Alturas

The old movie theatre on main street. (July 2006)



Alturas

The main street and a sign advertising the big event of the summer. (July 2002)



Cedarville

The Cressler & Bonner general store on the main street. (July 2006)



Cedarville

(July 2006)



Cedarville

(July 2006)



Cedarville

The original Cressler & Bonner trading post in Cedarville. (July 2006)



Cedarville

Cedarville. (July 2006)



Warner Mountains

The Warner Mountains separate the Modoc Plateau from Basin and Range country. (July 2006)



Eagleville

Eagleville dates back to 1868. It has a population of 59. (July 2006)



Eagleville

(July 2006)



Eagleville

(July 2006)



Eagleville

(July 2006)



Eagleville

(July 2006)



Lake City

Lake City has a population of 61. (July 2006)



Lake City

(July 2006)



Lake City

This was probably the old school house. (July 2006)



Middle Alkali Lake

This is one of three dry lakes in the middle of Surprise Valley. (July 2006)



Fort Bidwell

The general store was founded in 1876 but the fort was built in 1865. The post office was established in 1868. The fort was built to protect travellers from the Paiutes. It was decommissioned in 1890. (July 2006)



Fort Bidwell

(July 2006)



Fort Bidwell

Another abandoned school. Fort Bidwell has a population of 173. (July 2006)



Fort Bidwell

(July 2006)



Highway 299 lava flow

The bed of lava that covers much of the northern part of Modoc County. There is the theory that this large lava flood was caused by an asteroid striking earth which cracked the earth's crust releasing the magma. (July 2006)



Davis Creek

(July 2006)



Davis Creek

(July 2006)



Goose Lake

Goose Lake is a large lake that extends into Oregon. (July 2006)



Goose Lake

According to Wikipedia Goose lake is about 26 miles long and 9 miles wide. It doesn't look that wide. It is a closed basin and only when lake levels are very high will drain into the Pit River. In 1992 the lake completely dried up. (July 2006)



Devil's Garden

(July 2006)



Devil's Garden

This is a wetlands restoration project in the Devil's Garden area. (July 2006)



Warm Springs Valley

Looking down into Warm Springs Valley with Alturas in the distance. (July 2006)



Likely

When Likely was founded in 1886 a resident said it was most likely that the residents could not agree on a name. Hence the name. (July 2002)



Likely

Likely had an unusual industry. Peat moss was harvested from a nearby valley. The peat moss ran out in 1987. (July 2002)



Likely

(July 2002)



Adin

Adin is located on Highway 299 just inside the Modoc County border. (July 2002)



Adin

Adin is named after Adin McDowell who established a famous flour mill here in 1870. (July 2002)



Canby

Canby is named after the general who was killed by the Modocs in the Modoc war of the 1870's. (July 2002)



Newell

Newell is the actual location of the Japanese Relocation Camp in World War II. Most books have the camp located at Tulelake which is 7 miles to the north. Today Newell consists of a farm labor camp and the school which serves the children of farm workers. (August 2003)



Newell

The bluffs overlooking Newell and the old Japanese Relocation camp. They are often seen in old photos of the relocation camp. (August 2003)



Newell

The farm labor camp at Newell. (August 2003)



Lookout

Lookout is known for two things – the large wildlife refuge next to the community where *Canada Geese* feed on their way to the Arctic and a lynching that took place in 1901. The Hall family, father Calvin and his four errant sons, were lynched for stealing a pitchfork. (August 2003)



Lookout

Only one of the mob was prosecuted for the lynching and he was found innocent. The name comes from the Pit Indians who used a nearby mountain as a lookout for marauding Modocs. This was a substantial town in the past. Not much is left. (August 2003)

