

A Maidu Legend: Rock House: Why the Sun Follows the Moon

Found at: http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/Rock_House_Why_The_Sun_Follows_The_Moon-Maidu.html

Father Sun and Mother Moon lived inside the huge hollow rocks of Rock House. Their light did not shine from the sky, so the People and the Animals lived in darkness.

Now Coyote, who was always playing tricks, thought it would be great fun to dump some fleas on Father Sun and Mother Moon. So he began to gather the fleas and place them in bags. On his way to Rock House he met Rabbit. When Coyote bragged about his bags of fleas, Rabbit would not believe him. They began to argue. Between them, Rabbit and Coyote began to tug on one of the bags. As Rabbit yanked it from Coyote's grasp, the bag opened and the fleas spilled out on the ground. And to this day, Rabbit and Coyote are always scratching fleas.

Rabbit liked Coyote's idea of taking the fleas to Rock House. So together they trudged up the peak to Rock House carrying the bags of fleas. As they walked they tried to think of a plan to get the fleas inside of Rock House.

Along the path they found Gopher digging a hole. They decided to include Gopher in their trick. Gopher could dig a hole down through the soil to Rock House. When they reached the top of the peak, Gopher began to dig quietly so Father Sun and Mother Moon would not be alarmed. As soon as Gopher backed out of the hole, Coyote and Rabbit shook the bags of fleas down the opening. Then they plugged up the hole and ran away feeling very pleased with themselves.

The fleas soon covered Father Sun and Mother Moon. When Mother Moon could no longer stand the fleas, she flew out of Rock House and began to circle the Earth. Father Sun followed Mother Moon out of Rock House. They raced around the Earth trying to get rid of those fleas.

That is why, to this day, the Sun follows the Moon across the sky.

This legend is sometimes listed as a Cherokee legend. It is in fact a Maidu legend. The story was collected in Yuba County by Don May, a Cherokee and told to Barbara Warren in 1990. Don originally heard the story in 1980 from his eighty year old Southern Maidu friend, Frazier Edwards.

Frazier had lived in this area all his days; this was the home of his ancestors. The Maidu are a Northern-Central Valley tribe of California. Originally their territory encompassed both sides of the Sacramento River. The Maidu are among the most gifted basket makers in the world.

As a legend which has never been previously recorded, it is being placed on Cherokees of California's webpage so that others may "hear the words" once again.

Rock House is the Southern Maidu name for Paines Peak. The twelve hundred foot high Paines Peak is a jagged out-cropping of volcanic rock. It is located within a circle of the foothill roads of Old Marysville, Fruitland, Loma Rica and Scott-Grant in northern Yuba County.