Transcript of an interview with Mrs. June A. Reading, Director, Whaley House, 2482 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, California, 92110, recorded at the Whaley House on July 27, 1977. Mrs. Reading is interviewed by Aida Mancillas-Doyle, Staff Member, San Diego History Research Center. Phil Hopkins, also a Staff Member, was present to record the event on film. 

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The interview began with a general description of the history of the Whaley House by Mrs. Reading and proceeded to the topics of the Indian uprisings in San Diego, and the psychic phenomena connected with the house.

MRS. READING: The living quarters were built in 1856; the granary around 1855, and it was the first building erected on the property that Thomas Whaley purchased. He owned eight and a half acres here in San Diego, but he set aside these two lots. The house property was approximately 150 by 217½ feet and he owned the property across the street as well. That would be but approximately 4½ to 5 city blocks. He built the granary first in connection with his general store operation which was located on the Plaza, and the purpose originally was to store grain. Grain apparently was a commodity not only difficult to ship around the Horn, but one very hard to keep in this area owing to the large rat population. So when he designed and built these structures, he built this, as far as we know, the only brick, rat-proof granary to exist in the southern part of the state and I venture to say it's the only one remaining, the only one existing, in the State of California. Bricks cost a dollar apiece in the Gold Rush. Even to manufacture them would have been a very costly business at that time, and the result is, for its time, it was probably a very expensive structure. The walls of the building are 5 courses of brick thick and these extend around about 4 feet; and this certainly rendered it rat-proof, vermin-proof, and made it impervious to any kind of a vermin animal. This is why when he was able to obtain a great supply from the San Joaquin Valley [of grain] he sold all his 400,000 lbs. of grain in two years time. And the profit thereby went into construction of this house. The house walls were built right to the granary. Then as the workmen extended it this way they eventually came to the site where the gallows had stood, where part of the land had been an execution grounds, and they built over the site putting the walls in place.

AND: Are you saying that this part of the house is on that land?

MRS. READING: That area between the parlor and the music room was evidently part of the execution ground of the community because (at one time) there stood the gallows and when the workmen came this way with the house they took the gallows down.
But it was on this site in 1851 that James Robinson, alias Yankee Jim, was hanged in September for the attempted theft of the pilot boat schooner called the Plutus (?) 33; and Mr. Whaley was here in '51 because he had come down from San Francisco and he knew the circumstances of Yankee Jim's capture and his ultimate trial by the court of session and such he witnessed the hanging. He was also here prior to this time. Six months prior to Yankee Jim's arrival, the Indian uprising that San Diego suffered was terminated and two of the men, three of the men, were brought to San Diego for trial. I think they had been tried, one of them tried by court martial. That was the leader of the uprising. But the other two, William Marshall and Juan Verdugo, were charged with murder and treason and implicated in the Indian uprising were evidently brought down and hanged from this makeshift gallows that was erected. So that was the reason for the gallows being here and why it was still standing here six months later when James Robinson arrived and tried to take the pilot boat. So they used that for his hanging. All of the men, incidentally, are buried down the street in El Campo Santo but they are buried in unmarked graves. The third one, Antonio Garra, was taken down and with the termination of the uprising, taken down and stood before a firing squad of 12 men and shot over an open grave. The reason we know this is because Thomas Whaley tells us in a letter to his mother in Jan., and he mentions the fact, he says, "The painful duty to fall to me is to carry out the execution. So he was an eyewitness to that as well.

AMD: Was he a man that was involved in a lot of violence?

MRS. READING: No. No it's odd that he was, I mean even in these circumstances but San Diego was in such dire straits at that time during the Indian uprisings, they were outnumbered by such a large force of Indians, that they actually had to cease all business activities here and had to cope with the uprising whether they were capable of it or not. It was
this or lose the town because the Indians had threatened to wipe out San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. This wasn't just a little local thing. It was going to involve southern California. I don't think too many people realize the extent of it because by the time the Indians banded together, over what they considered the injustice of heavy taxation of their lands and their animals, they felt this was unfair because this was their own land, you see. The area around Warners held religious significance for them as well. This was the basis, the hot springs was the basis for all their beliefs as to their origin. And they felt the hot springs held miraculous properties that were, you know, very healing, in other words, miracles could happen. Any group of people that have that feeling about an area are certainly going to protect it. They're not going to give it up readily. So, as I say, this added fuel to the fire. And then when the Americans came in and this became American part of the United States, the Indians understood that this was now America but they didn't understand the taxation. And evidently, when they went out from the sheriff went up to notify them that the United States Attorney General's office had ruled that taxation was right and proper and that the Indians could be taxed, nobody bothered to explain it to them sufficiently so they understood their obligation. And they didn't want to be faced with the loss of their animals and land particularly in the area of Warners where they were doing very well with their herds and were on the verge of becoming quite self sufficient. You know, that was wonderful pastureland up there. And there were other complications insofar as the uprising--this is really a separate thing but it's part of the Whaley story of the Whaley family too, because Thomas Whaley was involved. Jonathan Trumbull Warner had received his grant under Mexican rule, he married a ward of Pio Pico, consequently he was loyal to the Mexican element rather than the Americans and he presented himself as a very loyal Mexican citizen in that when General Kearney came through it was Warner who intercepted the messages of the American Army so they could
not get through here to San Diego. Warner was the one. He sent his men out to intercept the riders and take the messages. He told the Indians to run away and hide because the Americans were coming and they would kill them all. He did all kinds of things to indicate his disloyalty to the Americans, as an American, and did everything he could to intercept the American Army from coming in here. Remember this was at the time of the Battle of San Pasqual. Well, there are all kinds of things that really should be researched in this and that we haven't even been able to ferret out. We ferreted out some of it. But, for example, the fact that according to some reports and some newspaper reports there was an Indian that went to meet Kearney and told him where water was up there and supposedly a treaty was made between Kearney and the Indians at that time saying that they wouldn't desecrate the land that the Indians held. And no one seems to know anything about this but the sad matter of fact is that the Mexicans were really responsible for urging the Indians to start the revolt because the Mexicans were not in the position to pay the heavy tax that they would have had levied on their ranch lands and their herds. The ranchos were so extensive; they were dealing primarily in hides and tallow. This was their medium of exchange. So when it came to putting cash on the line to pay taxes they were just as hard put as the Indians were. So they went to the Indians and encouraged them to incite revolt, and then when the Indians got themselves out on a limb, the Mexicans wouldn't back them up. Nor would they admit any implication and the result is the Indians were made to pay the extreme penalty for starting the uprising. One of the men who was involved locally was Jose Antonio Estudillo. And this is a fact that is currently, well, I did a paper on this some years ago, but we have in the records some of the notes written by Antonio Garra to Jose Antonio Estudillo, notifying him that they are going to strike the blow, that they were going to go after the Americans and drive them out and he expects him to support him. But somehow or another when the raid was made on Los Coyotes in the Indian village up there if the notes were discovered at that time they were destroyed. There was no evidence when the trial took place.
that there was this involvement between the Mexicans and the Indians. And so they never tried the Mexicans, they never questioned them, they simply made the Indians pay for the uprising.

AMD: That's the way it goes.

MRS. READING: Right. So I mean these are...there is some more to be researched, but we have the note from Garra which was translated by Thomas Whaley's partner, a man named Charles Davis and evidently when they made the raid on Los Coyotes they picked up one of these notes and he made a literal translation of it for Whaley. And it's been in the paper collection all these years. All sorts of interesting little things which don't appear in the history of San Diego that are here, and that's why I've always been interested in the Indian uprising: the fact that Whaley was involved with it. He tells about the letter which we have here which is the original copy and used a great deal in histories but everyone who writes to an extent on the Indian uprisings has their own version of it. And there are so many elements involved in it that you come up with many interpretations, you see. But these are the basic facts and they are quite interesting. We also found that most history books tend to give the wrong date of the beginning of the uprising and this was finally ferreted out with some letters from copies of military reports from the Library of Congress. And then also the Indian commissioners who were ranging around in the areas, you know, making treaties with all the Indian tribes, for some reason or another didn't get down to making any treaties with the Indians in the San Diego area. And these Indians were smart. They had runners who would pass the news along, or get the news from what would be going on in the other tribes and they were rather incensed to think that these other Indian tribes north of them were getting promises of food and clothing for children. They were going to build schools for the children and they were going to do all these things and nothing came to the San Diego group. And they couldn't understand this lack of interest on the part of the commissioners. And Oliver Rosencrantz, Dr. Oliver Rosencrantz is the man who made the treaties, and the funny thing of it is, you see,
these seventeen treaties made with the tribes were never ratified. But they kept stirring things up all the time, so we were as much to blame for the Indian uprising as the Indians were, really, because once it started we didn't do anything constructive to help it end.

AMD: It was typical American-Indian relations.

MRS. READING: It was good old politics, you know. And, of course, they managed to execute Antonio Carras who was one of the most educated Indians in the area, who received his schooling from San Luis Rey and worked for one of the priests. And they said he spoke English and Latin and Spanish, you know, and was kind of multilingual at that time and he would have made a very good marginal man in our history. He might have been the one to link the Indians with the Americans.

AMD: And you said he was executed.

MRS. READING: He was the one who was shot over the open grave. And, of course, San Diego was thrown into complete turmoil. But I mean it involved a tremendous number. When they banded together they organized well, into about 6,000 men... (inaudible) ...struck through the Sierra Nevada. And we had about a hundred men, Americans, and Whaley said that of these not the full hundred were able to go out and fight. You know, they had an awful time. They didn't have a large military force quartered here, the closest military fort in Utah. And we didn't have enough firearms, or enough ammunition to carry this thing out. And the time; it progressed so rapidly it was hard to get a force together. And these men did exceptionally well considering they went up to the post out in Mission Valley and borrowed condemned...

PH: They didn't know it.
MRS. READING: But they issued them condemned Army rifles and when they got out in the Gila River they found only, instead of trying them out, they found only half of them were in firing condition. John Bacon Magruder was responsible for that as the senior ranking military man in the area. Then we found, some of the more, if you can call them, humorous aspects of this thing would be the fact that they gathered up a bunch of the notorious hounds of San Francisco and brought them down here for, to help in the uprising, and they quartered them in the plaza and they were without prevent or any kind of provision so they were more trouble than they were worth. And one of them had a duel with the sheriff and shot him in the arm or something and they put him on a boat and sent him back to San Francisco. This happened in the uprising too. Complete organized chaos, you know. But as I say, you could do almost a complete story on this. It's one of the little known, never considered too much in the annals of San Diego history and yet it is very, very interesting.

AMD: I never really heard about the uprising in this area. I hadn't really thought that there was that much of an Indian population to do anything.

MRS. READING: Mr. Perrat mentions it. He quotes from our letter. Most of these historians come in and copy our letter and use it. But as far as really going into it, into detail, no. But those military letters from the Library of Congress are most revealing because you get a better idea of the general picture. And when the Indians started this raid, they began... see, they were smart. They were good military strategists. And then led by this fellow who was pretty well educated, who had mingled with the American enough, he knew exactly how to proceed. He started out by making raids on the military post around Gila River, Camp Independence.
AMD: These Library of Congress military letters, you wouldn't happen to know whose collection they would be.

MRS. READING: I think they're under the Indian Wars. We had quite a hard time running down the trail on that for some reason. You might try this record up in Bell, California. I finally got onto the use of the Library of Congress. It has the best set. These are a series of letter... Oh, another thing: the treaties made by these Indian agents are another thing that reveal the condition of the Indian in Southern California and what that problems were, and I didn't know it and so all I got was... I got a bunch of material. It's this high, you know, with correspondence from the different Indian agents. And its all, unfortunately none of it is in any kind of order. What you have to do is page through all of this stuff until you finally get to this series of letters related to your area. I didn't know it but John C. Fremont was an agent for up north in the area of Mariposa and he got along very well with the tribes up there and he didn't promise them anything that he wasn't able to carry out. There were two or three agents here, one of them became ill. I have it on the tip of my tongue like I used to because I was so interested in it but I haven't worked on it for a long time. There were three of them & one of them became ill and finally Oliver Rosencrantz came into the picture and the thing of it was down here it seems that these agents didn't communicate with each other, you know, and they didn't make available to the next fellow their information. They'd have to report back to Washington and Washington felt that this was so far away and so much the ends of the earth that they didn't have a record of the correspondence or something like that. And it was pretty hard to pick up the what the past action had been between these different areas.

AMD: So there was no coordination of Indian affairs at all.

MRS. READING: No, this was the story. The more I see of this early activity of California and southern California particularly, and I'm speaking of the
San Diego area, the more I realize how out of touch the government was with the important activities that were going on out here. For example, to make an example of things that were current at that time, there was a boundary survey commission, the American end of it, headed by Andrew B. Gray milling around over here trying to determine the boundary between the United States and Mexico and they even ran out of money. The government didn't appropriate enough money for them and they had to come into San Diego and borrow money from Whaley and his partner Warne because they didn't have enough to obtain the feed for the animals to bring them back to San Diego. And you see in those days, that's one another thing that made the Indian uprising so hard, they couldn't move the animals unless they had 135 pounds of feed for each animal to move them over the Gila River and back. And you have no idea how difficult it would be to forage around, even for a government contractor to get enough feed to move these animals. And that's exactly what happened to Gray. He got stuck over in the desert. Here was a government operation going on with no funds. Had it not been for the fact that he could borrow from somebody here in San Diego he wouldn't have been able to bring the boundary survey commission back to San Diego. They had another strange situation. Here was a group...well, this man was named Seagraves. He was a mapper in the area, recording the plant life, and he was on a scientific expedition and he got caught in the crossfire between the military and the Indians out in the desert and the military took him into custody under his protest because they were afraid he would be killed. So you can see all these interesting facets to this thing. It has fascinated me for a long time. Many people believe that the uprising began because of this taxation. It's a peculiar situation as far as we're concerned this Indian group here was the only one known on the North American continent that revolted over taxation, and almost a hundred years after the American Revolution. We revolted against taxation but we couldn't recognize it when another group of people, when it hit us, you see. Isn't it strange though? I mean the succession of events in our interests in being free. And yet these Indians tried for the same thing almost a hundred years later were virtually...well, as a matter of fact this
group that inhabited the Warner area is the one they moved over to Pala. The one that Helen Hunt Jackson later wrote about, how sad it was when they moved them bodily. And they moved them into the Pala area. They brought prefabricated houses from New York to house them and they're still up there, some of them. They're living in them, and of course she felt this was a terrible injustice to move them out that way but this is actually the final outcome of the whole thing, the movement of the Indians. Oh, you could do a whole... there's a whole study to be done on anybody.

AMD: You could probably do your M.A. thesis on something like this.

MRS READING: Yes, and I've only hit the highlight because I haven't really had an opportunity to get too deeply involved in it. To me it's perfectly fascinating. It even involves this William Marshall who was in love apparently with a, I'm not positive but this can be ferreted out too, I think it was Lugarda Osuna. Of course, Juan Osuna had been an alcalde. He had a position of, you know, substance in the community. And this Marshall was from, I believe, (inaudible) rode down and jumped grief. People here were very strict in inter... you know, they didn't believe in intermarriage with these Americans. They were not exactly opposed to them but they wouldn't accept them in their own station in life. And he fell in love with this girl. As near as we have been able to determine, that he'd tried to ask for her hand in marriage. And apparently the family laughed at him. How it was done, I don't know the circumstances are but he was so insensed over this that he made up his mind that he was going to get even. Indirectly he was the man who was responsible (this girl married into her own--one of the people that her own family approved of. He was Mexican. These were the men that were coming back from, they numbered among the ones that came back from the Battle of San Pasqual and they camped at and we understand that this Marshall, in an effort to get even, was very vindictive, was the man that told the Indians that these were the men that had helped in the Battle