



## CULTURAL HISTORY MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

### CULTURAL HISTORY OF MOUNT DIABLO AND THE CREATION OF A PARK

#### Native Americans and Mount Diablo

Mount Diablo is in the ethnographic territory of the Bay Miwok. This territory extended through the eastern portions of Contra Costa County from Walnut Creek north, northeast to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Bay Miwok spoke a Penutian dialect distinct from the language of other Miwok peoples. The estimated aboriginal population was approximately 1,700 people.

Five tribelets of individual political units have been identified for the Bay Miwok: the Scanlon, Wolwon, Chupcan, Julpun, and Ompin. The Wolwon, also called Volvon or Bolbon, resided closest to Mount Diablo. Their principal village was called Bolbon, and was reportedly located at the base of the southeast flank of the mountain. The Bay Miwok were missionized in the 1790s; most were sent to the San Jose Mission.

Indian grinding rock Like other California groups, the Bay Miwok were intensive food collectors, with their subsistence economy centering on intensive exploitation of plant food resources. The more important plant foods included acorns, buckeye, California laurel, digger and Coulter pine seeds, seeds from various grasses and plants, and Brodiaea bulbs, all of which are abundant on Mount Diablo. Acorns were the single most important food source in aboriginal California. Blue oak, valley oak, and coast live oak, three species found in abundance on Mount Diablo, produced acorns which were most commonly used by California natives. (Grinding mortars in sandstone at Rock City shown in photo).



Indian grinding holes

Mount Diablo played an important role in Miwok and Costanoan mythology. Several of these myths were recorded by anthropologist Alfred Kroeber in the early 20th century.

For additional reading on Native Americans and Mount Diablo see [\*The Miwok—Mt. Diablo's Earliest Inhabitants\*](#). You are also invited to visit the Native American exhibit in the Summit Museum.