



CULTURAL HISTORY MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

THE MIWOK—MOUNT DIABLO'S EARLIEST INHABITANTS

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. [see map] 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.

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.

Mount Diablo played an important role in Miwok and Costanoan mythology. According to many tribes, Mount Diablo is the point where the creative forces, in the form of an Eagle, or Condor, came together with the mountain. Grandfather Coyote created the Indian people at Mount Diablo, along with everything that would be needed for life. The stories vary from tribe to tribe, but the feeling is always the same about Mount Diablo being a sacred place.

Suggested reading: Bev Ortiz, *Mount Diablo As Myth and Reality*; Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way and The Way We Were*; Smithsonian Institution, Handbook Volume #8, California.

This material was compiled from the publication "Mount Diablo State Park General Plan"—1989

Photo from *California Indians, and the Indians of Mt. Diablo* by Jose Rivera.

Also see the following article: [Early Inhabitants and Location Map](#)