



## CULTURAL HISTORY MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

### EARLY INHABITANTS AND LOCATION MAP

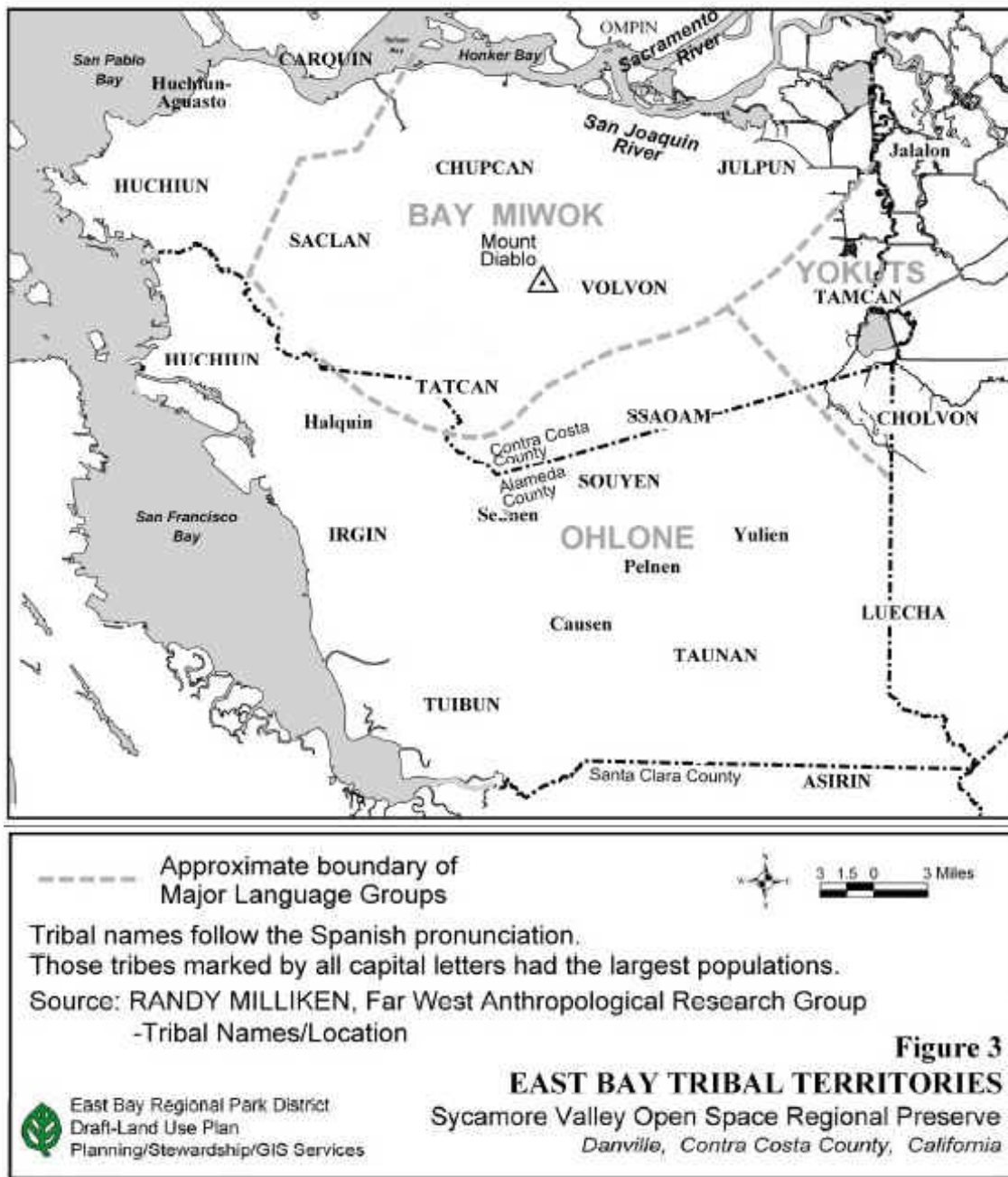
The following material can be found in the East Bay Regional Park Draft report for the Sycamore Valley Open Space Project located a short distance south of Mount Diablo State Park and provides information relating to this area.

#### Early History

Native Americans have inhabited the East Bay area for thousands of years. At the time of European contact in the mid-1700s, the San Ramon and Sycamore Valleys were populated by a Bay Miwok-speaking tribe called Tatcan in the area of present day Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon (See map below). The Tatcan people lived in villages of 50-200 people, organized within well-defined territories that delineated where specific groups had rights to hunt, fish and pray. Their diet included foods produced from acorns, nuts, seeds and various other plant parts, and animals they hunted including birds, deer, elk and fish. Large groups would meet for feasts and dances. Mount Diablo was apparently a focal point of their spirituality, with traditions and creation accounts that featured the mountain.

Native Americans undoubtedly traveled and lived in the vicinity of the Sycamore Valley Open Space Regional Preserve; however, little evidence has been identified at the parkland. A literature review was conducted of records at the Northwest Inventory Center at Sonoma State University and no site records were found for the parkland. In addition the previous long-time landowner, Don Wood, was interviewed about the land's history and reported that the only Native American artifacts he remembers hearing about were two or three portable, stone mortars reportedly found by his family in the mid-1900s (Imboden 2004b). These were presumably removed from the site. Typically within the East Bay Regional Park District lands, the most likely sites with Native American resources are found on high peaks (e.g., Mount Diablo and Brushy Peak), on the bay shoreline, or on relatively undisturbed and often level ground that is located near creeks or ponds with fresh water and food resources such as oak and buckeye trees (Fentress 2003; EBRPD 2003, 2004).

While Sycamore Valley Open Space Regional Preserve supports oaks and buckeyes, and while water has historically been available from Sycamore Creek (on a seasonal basis), the landscape has primarily steep-sloped ridges and gullies that would have been more difficult to traverse on foot than the surrounding, wide valleys. In addition the entire parkland was extensively farmed for many years. This may suggest why few Native American resources have been encountered here.



## Spanish Contact

In 1772 Father Juan Crespi, a Spanish Franciscan priest, was the first to record European contact with Native Americans in the San Ramon Valley, which was then a possession of Spain. Father Crespi was traveling with an expedition led by Captain Pedro Fages. Crespi noted the good quality land and high suitability of the area for locating a Franciscan Mission. Following this encounter, the Spanish Franciscans began to encourage the Tatcan and neighboring tribes to move to Mission Dolores in San Francisco, to leave their traditional ways and be converted to Christianity. Records show some went to Mission Dolores in the 1790s, but after an epidemic killed many Native Americans there in 1795, a large number of Bay Miwok returned home and fought to remain in their traditional homelands (Danville 2004).

The hostility of the local Native Americans caused the Franciscans to reconsider the desirability of the San Ramon Valley for their new mission site. Instead, Mission San Jose was built in the area of present-day Fremont in 1797. The San Ramon and other inland valleys then became grazing land for the mission, and the missionaries continued to recruit Native Americans from this area to Missions San Jose and Dolores (Danville 2004). Over the next 30 years, the Spanish influenced culture and lifestyle increasingly gained dominance in the Sycamore Valley, as it had elsewhere in Alta California. By the early decades of the 1800s, virtually all of the Tatcan people and other Native Americans in the neighboring valleys had either been assimilated into the mission culture or otherwise forced to abandon their traditional lifestyle. Many also succumbed to introduced diseases.

In 1835, after the Mexican government freed itself from Spanish rule, Mexico ordered the mission system dismantled, and the missions of Alta California began to be closed. The former mission lands were split up and sold or granted as large ranchos. Many of the Native American survivors from the missions, with no traditional villages to return to and unable to resume their former hunter-gatherer lifestyle, settled on the Mexican ranchos where they took jobs as laborers, vaqueros or servants. In the San Ramon Valley, the former Mission San Jose lands were divided into two ranchos granted by the Mexican government, both called Rancho San Ramon. The ranchos operated by selling cattle hides and tallow. Some former mission Indians from Mission San Jose formed a village called Alisal between the towns of Sunol and Pleasanton. Here, messengers from Nevada brought a new religion referred to today as the Ghost Dance. This led to a revival of old ways within the group, which held dances until around 1900 and continued to occupy the site past 1930.