



The Sentinel

Newsletter of the San Ramon Historic Foundation

Winter 2010

Before it was California

Before European explorers first entered the San Ramon Valley in 1772, indigenous people in a number of small tribes had lived on the land for up to 5000 years. Tribes or tribes of 50 to 250 members all speaking different languages hunted and gathered throughout these lush lands. A mortar and pestle found locally provides evidence that they lived along Oak Creek on the modern Forest Home Farms. Indian remains found during 20th century renovations support the claim.

The South San Ramon tribe was called Suesan by the Spanish. The tribe hunted local deer, rabbits, antelopes and other abundant animals described by Spanish sea captains and soldiers who explored the area. A Russian explorer, Otto von Kotzebue, found “geese, ducks, and snips [snipes] were so tame that we might have killed great numbers with our sticks.” When he and his men acquired horses from the missionaries they chased “herds of small stags, so fearless that they suffered us to ride into the midst of them.”¹ (See *Indigenous Life* pg. 2)

Feasibility Study Results

Last year, the City of San Ramon partnered with the Historic Foundation and a group of community leaders, to hire a consultant. The consultant, Susan Carsen of Carsen Consulting, was asked to help us assess our ability to raise the large amount of money needed for the programs, restoration and preservation of Forest Home Farms. Many of our buildings need significant restoration before the site can be fully utilized and approximately 5 million dollars is needed for the work to be completed.

The consultant interviewed 32 community, business leaders, and potential major donors. They were asked a number of questions to determine if our historic park was valued by the community, what level of support the community was willing to commit, and whether the foundation and other volunteers in the community had the skill and knowledge needed to embark upon a major capital campaign to raise the needed funding.

In December, the consultant’s report was completed and presented. The findings concluded that:

- ✓ Much good work had already been accomplished at the site
- ✓ Many see the historic site as valuable to the community
- ✓ The interviewees were concerned about the timing for raising funds
- ✓ Wide spread knowledge of the site is limited

(See Study, pg. 3)

Holiday on the Farm

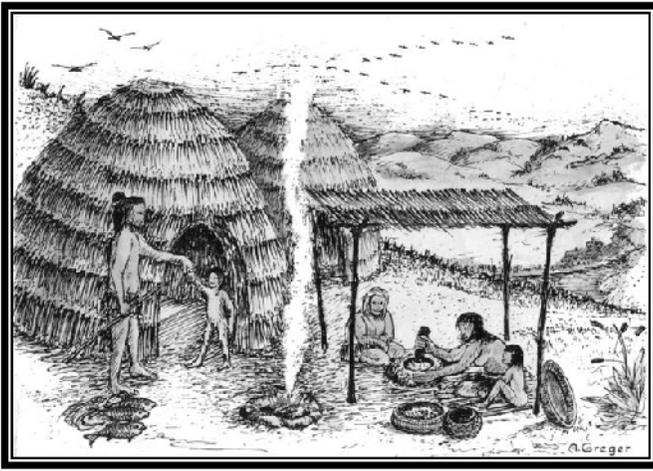
The holiday season is behind us, but before heading into the upcoming events, the foundation would like to thank everyone who made Holiday on the Farm such a success. The vendors, the wonderful crafts, the carolers, the puppet show and the other surprises that filled the December Sunday were there all because of the hard work of a foundation member Jane Jennings. She heard the city couldn’t sponsor the event in 2009 and volunteered to run it.

The goal was to keep a tradition alive in San Ramon and give families a wonderful place to take their children. Santa had handmade toys for each child; tractor rides were available and many crafts such as ornament making and cookie decorating all made the little ones smile.

We are proud that Jane’s hard work and the financial and physical support of the Foundation made a tradition live on.

Your membership fees and donations make our financial support for this and other events possible.





Indigenous Life

(from Pg. 1)

The Indians killed local wildlife not only for food; they used the skins to clothe themselves, the feathers for decoration and the bones for utensils. The small number of Indians and their reliance on acorns, seeds and other plants meant that the wildlife was kept abundant, but within a few generations of Europeans and their guns, “some birds and animals had become totally exterminated, while others survived by greatly increasing the distance between themselves and people.”²

In addition, to hunting and gathering, tribes from great distances came to trade. These Indians brought items not available locally such as obsidian and salt and took home seeds, acorns and other local items.

“For the most part, the native peoples who occupied California before European contact . . . reached levels of social-cultural development and complexity rarely encountered among peoples with a hunting and gathering or protoagricultural subsistence base . . . These many distinct peoples lived side by side in a relatively stable socio-cultural milieu maintaining separate identities and, at the same time sharing ideas and assets.”³

Life was not completely tranquil between the tribes although trading and marriages were common. Sometimes feuds did erupt and alliances were made with some tribes against others involving trespassing, poaching or violation of the economic reciprocity system that controlled trading. Most arguments did not lead to violence but to “song fights” as one method of venting anger. The songs involved up to 8 days of insulting the opponent.⁴

Many local tribes built a structure frame that was somewhat permanent and added tule and branches to complete their residence. Ceremonial structures were built including sweat houses where hunters cleansed themselves before a hunt. Medical and religious practices also could be reasons for a cleansing session. Local Indians were proficient basket makers. An Indian scholar declared that “California Indians are as world-renowned for the artistry of their basketry as any culture in the world.”⁵ The baskets included a variety of sizes and styles for food gathering, storing, food preparation and serving.

Thus the indigenous people lived from generation to generation. But all their ceremonial customs and the traditions were about to be threatened by the arrival of the Europeans who came to convert, job train and westernize the indigenous people. *Next issue we will look at the Mission Period.*

. Footnotes

¹ Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way*. (Berkeley: Heyday Books) 1978, p.11.

²Ibid.

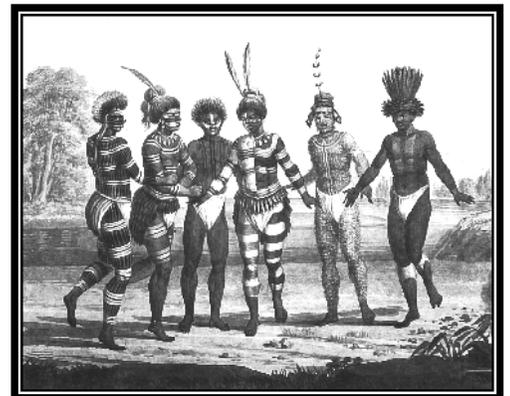
³Lowell Bean “Indians of California: Diverse and Complex Peoples.” *Indians of California* (San Francisco: California Historical Society), Fall 1992, p. 303.

⁴Bean, p. 320.

⁵Bean, pp. 313-315.

The village picture was drawn by Al Greger and is from *Images of America San Ramon Valley Alamo, Danville and San Ramon* by Benerly Lane and Ralph Cozine for the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. (Arcadia Publishing) 2005, pg 20.

The Dancers were drawn in 1806 by a Rezanov expedition artist who visited Mission San Jose. It is also from *Images of America*, Pg 19.



Thanks to Beverly Lane and Ralph Cozine for their assistance with this article

Foundation forms Auxiliary Group for Special Projects

The Board of Directors of the San Ramon Historic Foundation is excited to announce the establishment of a community member auxiliary that, in conjunction with City staff, will plan and conduct Foundation events and special projects and events at Forest Home Farms which includes the David Glass House.

The Board felt that the auxiliary would provide foundation members and the community at large an expanded opportunity to be involved with the exciting events happening on our historic property.

The auxiliary will be headed by a chairperson who will serve on the Foundation's Board of Directors. Subcommittee chairs will be appointed as activities and projects are identified.

An informational meeting will be held at 7 pm on Thursday, February 18 at Forest Home Farms. For more information contact Dall Barley at dall.barley@sbcglobal.net or by phone at 735-7855

Annual Crab Feed is January 30

By the time you receive this newsletter, members of the community will soon be joining together to enjoy the San Ramon Historic Foundation's annual Crab Feed. The event is January 30 and usually sells out. This year in addition to the wonderful fresh crab, unusually good pasta, salad and French bread, and the foundation will sponsor a cake auction featuring variety of cakes from local bakeries that will be auctioned off. And of course our popular 50/50 will give tickets winners one half the ticket pot.

Carol Lopez chairs this event and puts together a great party! New this year is complimentary hors d'oeuvres during the no-host social hour from 6:00 pm – 7:00pm

Hope you got your tickets!! If not, and time allows, call 828-0586 for ticket availability.

Study (from Pg. 1)

- ✓ Several people found the name confusing
- ✓ There is a need to increase the skill level of organizational fundraising experience within the Foundation Board and community leadership

The results led to a recommendation of some key interim steps needed before moving ahead with a capital campaign. The foundation was advised to begin planning for a smaller major gift initiative. The planning will include increasing the park's visibility and developing a team of trained volunteer fundraising leadership for a future successful capital campaign. We will be looking for people with these skills to serve on the Foundation Board or serve in some other capacity. If you, or someone you know, would like to be considered to work with this important project, or if you wish to have additional information, please e-mail Jean Ohman at jeanohman@sbcglobal.net.

Education Docents Needed

Forest Home Farms is now recruiting docents for its acclaimed 3rd grade education program! No prior teaching experience is necessary. You just need to have a love for 8-10 year old children and a desire to help the community. You will be trained and mentored by experienced docents. The docent hours are Monday through Friday 8:30am to 12:30pm. You select the best mornings for you (only 2 per month) and one of the four fun docent positions.

The docent positions include Grandma, who demonstrates period household items and shows the children how to make butter, make fresh orange juice and darn socks and Grandpa, who gives the children a tour of the property and shows children period farm tools. The Gardener demonstrates and leads activities in the farm's organic vegetable garden, complete with a compost pile. The children do gardening tasks and taste fresh vegetables. The Canner demonstrates canning techniques with hands-on activities including tasting and label-making.

Can you commit to only two mornings a month to help our children have a rewarding experience on a historic farm? Would you enjoy working with other great volunteers who share your interests and experiences? Then we're looking for you!

WINTER/SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 18 - Auxiliary Meeting 7:00pm

March 18 - - "Lincoln's Legacy in California"
6:30pm San Ramon Golf Club

April 9 - May 7 - Lincoln Exhibit at the Museum of San Ramon Valley

April 17 - Earth Day/Spring Clean-up
9am - 12pm

April 24- Civil War Living History Day
10am - 4pm *Gift Shop will be open*

May 1 - Farmers Market Opens
Every Saturday 9:00am to 1:00pm

May 1 - Gift Shoppe Opens
Every Saturday 9:00am to 1:00pm

May 2- Sheep Shearing Day
11am - 3pm *Gift Shop will be open*

May 15- Glass House Public Grand Opening
1pm - 4pm, Ribbon Cutting at 1:30pm



For updates check the
San Ramon Historic Foundation
website www.srhf.org

San Ramon Historic Foundation

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● **The SRHF needs your help!** We are looking for talented people like you to bring great ideas and help to the Tea
● Committee. Join committed local like-minded people who want to make Forest Home Farms the finest historic farm in
● the area. What better way to raise funds than providing a fun event for the community and honoring the memory of
● Ruth Boone, who donated Forest Home Farms to the City of San Ramon. Please contact Sue at 828-4684 for more
● information or come to our February 18 Auxiliary Meeting at 7:00pm at Forest Home Farms
●
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San Ramon Historic Foundation
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