



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

March 2022 Volume 45, No 5

The Palo Alto Historical Association presents via Zoom Webinar

BACK FROM EXTINCTION: THE MUWEKMA OHLONE TRIBE



with ALAN LEVENTHAL

Ohlone tribesmen in a tule boat on the San Francisco Bay, 1822 by Louis Choris

Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81554036318>

Please join us via Zoom as Alan Leventhal — archaeologist, anthropologist, and ethnohistorian — presents the history, heritage, and genealogy of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area.



Angela Colos of the Ohlone tribe, 1925

Long before the Spanish arrived in 1769 to colonize the future state of California, the area from San Francisco/San Mateo to Richmond/Oakland to Morgan Hill was home to the ancestral Muwekma Ohlone Tribes. The Spanish constructed 21 missions along the California coast in 54 years with the objective of Christianizing the native people and culture. Three missions were built

around the San Francisco Bay where many Ohlone were brought to be converted: Mission San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores), Mission San Jose, and Mission Santa Clara de Thamien (Asis).

Alan will be tracing Ohlone heritage from their aboriginal villages in the Bay Area, through life at the Spanish missions, to their rancherias in the East Bay where the surviving Bay Area Ohlone sought refuge. Learn why the Ohlone still struggle to regain federal recognition from the United States government.



Alan Leventhal

Alan Leventhal joined San Jose State University in 1978 where he was the Anthropology Lab Director for nine years and previously worked in the Dean's Office, College of Social Sciences until retiring in 2019. He is the author of numerous publications on Bay Area prehistory including California Indian ethnohistory. For the past 42 years, he has worked with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Region as a tribal ethnohistorian and senior archaeologist.

PAHA has an archive of over 100 video recordings of its programs. Most are available as DVDs at the archives. Programs since October 2020 are also available on the Vimeo website. For more information about our programs, and for Zoom instructions, you can visit our website at www.pahistory.org.

2021 Steve Staiger Award

2022 PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Brian George, recipient of 2021 Steve Staiger Award

The Steve Staiger Award was created in 2015 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to collecting, organizing, and sharing the history of Palo Alto.

The recipient of the 2021 Steve Staiger Award is Brian George, longtime PAHA member, board member, and volunteer. Brian was presented with the award at our December 2021 program.

Brian has been involved with PAHA for 16 years, starting in 2005 when he joined the Board of Directors. At that time, he volunteered to replace PAHA's retiring videographer. He recorded his first PAHA program in October 2005 and has continued in the role to the present.

During the past few COVID-dominated years, Brian has volunteered to step in and take up a variety of roles that needed to be filled. His role as videographer evolved into becoming our Zoom program

editor, not only writing scripts to ensure a smooth-running program, but also spending hours editing footage to make our programs look professional for people to watch online in the future.

Brian has been instrumental in coordinating the digitization of photos for our online collection—overseeing quality control and image editing. He's also played a key role in PAHA's partnership with the Palo Alto Children's Theater. He coordinated a project in which their at-risk film and videotape collection was identified and digitized. For this project he oversaw the transition of fragile film materials to a freezer that was purchased to properly store and preserve these materials in the Rinconada Library basement.

Brian has also taken on time-consuming leadership roles in PAHA's relationships with the city and library. He is at the PAHA Archives every week to check in and provide maintenance on our equipment, help move donations, and in general be a sounding board and support system to the historians and volunteers.

Thank you Brian, for your many years of hard work and dedication to preserving the history of Palo Alto.

The Palo Alto Historical Association, a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organization, was established in 1948 as successor to an earlier organization founded in 1913. Its main objectives are:

- Collect, organize, and preserve materials pertaining to the history and heritage of Palo Alto.
- Spread information about Palo Alto's history by means of programs, displays, and publications.
- Recognize and preserve historic sites and structures.

The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at Cubberley Community Center, K-7. PAHA continues to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and no appointments are needed during public hours. To contact the Archive or to make an appointment to visit, email steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org or call (650) 329-2353.

Until further notice, PAHA board meetings are held via Zoom Meeting at 5pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). Public programs are held via Zoom Webinar at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December, February-May). Program information and webinar links are available in the Tall Tree newsletters and on our website, www.paha-history.org. The public is welcome to join all programs.

Snowy Surprise 60 Years Ago by Jane Israel Honikman



Snow at 1991 Webster Street, 1962



Snowman with a tennis racket, 1962



The Israel, Holman, and Larson families on snowy lawn, 1962

Disbelief is the best word to describe a rare weather event that greeted Palo Alto on Sunday morning January 21, 1962!

My family was not the only one that stared out the windows at the inches of snow that blanketed everything. We lived in the 1900 block of Webster Street, between Santa Rita and Seale Avenues, and joined our neighbors in relishing the novelty of playing in this magical winter wonderland.

These 60-year-old B&W photos taken by my father, Delmer Israel, show both children and adults rolled snowballs and made one unique snowperson with a tennis racket!

Besides this notable 1962 snowy surprise, Palo Alto had snow in the winters of 1887, 1976, and 1988, but none compared with what we experienced 60 years ago!

What Happened to Palo Alto's Indigenous People?

by Board member Leslie Mills

When the first Spanish expedition arrived in Alta California in the late 1700s, there was an estimated 10,000 or so Muwekma Ohlone Indians (formerly called Costanoans) living within the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Although grouped under one name by linguists and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, they did not comprise a single tribe, but consisted of approximately 50 independent tribal groups with multiple villages ranging from 50 to 500 people and speaking around 8 closely related dialects. Each tribal community had its own chief, sub-chiefs, craft specialists, religious leaders and territory. Approximately 2000 Ohlone lived on the peninsula, largely near the shores of the bay due to the abundance of wildlife including elk, deer, waterfowl, shellfish, and fish.

The areas known today as Menlo Park, Palo Alto, and Mountain View were occupied by the Puichon tribe. They were the first recorded inhabitants of Palo Alto, with ancestry dating back over 4000 years. Within a century of the Spanish arrival, the Ohlone population would all but vanish due to Christian missionization, foreign diseases, attacks and prejudicial political policies.

The demise of the Ohlone population, as well as all of California's native population, began with the expedition of Gaspar de Portola in 1769. The Indian people under Spanish control constructed 21 missions along the California coast over 54 years with the objective of converting the native people to Christianity and "civilizing" their culture. In the Bay Area, three missions were constructed within the Muwekma Ohlone tribal lands: Mission San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores), Mission Santa Clara de Thamien (Asis), and Mission San Jose. Some natives voluntarily joined the missions, but most were forced to live there and essentially worked as slaves. As converted neophytes, the natives lived in dismal, crowded conditions in gender-segregated dorms. Many died as a result of harsh treatment and/or because of diseases brought by the settlers. By 1830, the Ohlone population had dwindled from 10,000 to 2500.

The open countryside where the Ohlone once roamed freely began to dwindle as both the Spanish, and later, the Mexican governments laid claim to California lands. During Spanish rule, land concessions were granted to retired soldiers. When Mexico took control in 1821 they issued larger land grants, called Ranchos,

to Mexican citizens and to several Mission Santa Clara Indians. Present-day Palo Alto was part of two ranchos: Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito, a 2230 acre rancho granted to the Soto family which encompassed the north end of Palo Alto, and Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito, an 8418 acre rancho granted to Jose Pena which included today's south Palo Alto and Stanford. Although "by law" the mission property was to pass to the Mission Indians, by the end of the mission system in 1833, most of these lands had already been deeded to Mexican citizens as part of the Rancho Grants and the requirement was all but ignored. Many of the Ohlone then worked as laborers, domestics and vaqueros of the rancho owners.

The fast tracking of California's statehood in 1850 with the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, would prove to be the final blow to California's native population. The newly admitted state's governor waged a "war of extermination" against California's native population, a period known as the California genocide. Thousands of natives were massacred by state sponsored militias and settlers in the wake of the gold rush. By this time, most of the Ohlone had been missionized or were deceased, and were not the target of the aforementioned attacks. However, those

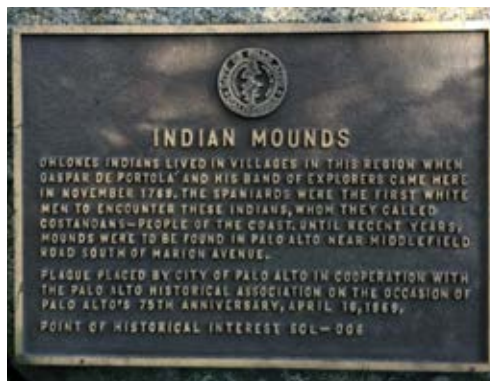
that remained were subject to the prejudicial effects of the state's Act of 1850 which legalized the slavery of Indians and robbed them of their legal protections. The state government also refused to acknowledge the 18 treaties presented to them in 1852 which were signed by 122 tribes and the federal government, setting aside 8.5 million acres of land in California for the Indians' benefit.

The 1870 census recorded only 12 Ohlone people in Santa Clara County and 8 in San Mateo County. Ohlone survivors either went into hiding, adopted Hispanic names, or fled to safe havens on rancherias in Pleasanton, Niles, Livermore, San Leandro/San Lorenzo and Sunol Valley. Within 20 years of statehood, the extinction of the Ohlone had been nearly complete.

Today, the only visible evidence of the long Ohlone presence in Palo Alto includes a few memorial plaques, one commemorating the location of an Ohlone village in Stanford and one recognizing the location of a shellmound (Ohlone refuse site) in Midtown.



Muwekma Ohlone Dancers, Mission Dolores, 1816



Historical plaque at site of shellmound in Midtown

March Jaunts

As we enter year three of the pandemic, be sure to check telephone numbers or websites for the latest Covid protocols before you “jaunt”.



Image courtesy of Moffett Field Historical Society Museum

Take yourself and your family to the **Moffett Field Historical Society Museum** to learn about the early days of American aviation and view exhibits that tell its story from 1931 to the present day. Docent tours provide explanations of the artifacts, displays, and people involved in Moffett Field’s history. The Museum is located at Building 126, Severyns Ave., Mountain View, and open Wed-Sat, 3:00 –7:00 pm. For more information, call (650) 964-4024, or visit their website, www.moffettfieldmuseum.org. Be sure to take note of the security requirement to enter Moffett gates.

There has been quite a bit of publicity over the last several years about the catastrophic decline in the Monarch butterfly population due to habitat destruction, environmental toxins, and global climate change. The good news is lepidopterists are guardedly optimistic about a Monarch comeback! Take the opportunity—before the end of February—to visit the **Monarch Grove Sanctuary** at 250 Ridge Road in Pacific Grove. It is free and open to the public daily from sunrise to sunset. For more information on monarch viewing and a visit to the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, visit www.pgmuseum.org/monarch-viewing.



Monarch image courtesy of Wikipedia



Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum

The **Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum** is home to the largest collection of Egyptian artifacts in the western United States. Enjoy the museum and stroll through their garden with its medieval labyrinth. The museum is located at 1660 Park Ave., San Jose and is open Fri, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm and Sat/Sun 11:00 am – 6:00 pm. For information, visit www.egyptianmuseum.org. The labyrinth, inspired by the design at Chartres, is open daily from 8:00 am to sunset.

Speaking of **labyrinths**, several more are accessible nearby without appointment:

The **Courtyard at All Saints Episcopal Church** at 555 Waverley Street, Palo Alto

The **Memorial Garden at First Congregational Church** at 1985 Louis Road, Palo Alto

The **Healing Gardens at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital** at 725 Welch Road, Palo Alto

Sofia University at 1069 E. Meadow Circle, Palo Alto

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Welcome New PAHA Members

Donna Bohling and Doug Kalish
Lacey Berns
Oren Valek

Upcoming Programs

April 3: Palo Alto’s Greer Family
May 1: PAST Centennial Plaque
and Historic Preservations Awards
June 1: Parkey Sharkey Story
Check our website at
www.pahistory.org for
program information

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the Jan. 30th
program, *PART: Palo Alto “Rapid”
Transit*, you can find it and other
recent PAHA program videos on
Vimeo by following
this link:
<https://vimeo.com/672166689>

The Heritage Program

You can also watch the most
recent PAHA program on local TV.
Visit [https://midpenmedia.org/
local-tv/](https://midpenmedia.org/local-tv/) and enter the word
“Heritage” in the search box to
find the broadcast schedule
for PAHA programs.



The Tall Tree is published
eight times a year by the
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



Peggy McKee, Leslie Mills, Luana Staiger,
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Omega Printing, *Printing*
*Photographs courtesy of PAHA Guy Miller
Archives unless otherwise noted.*