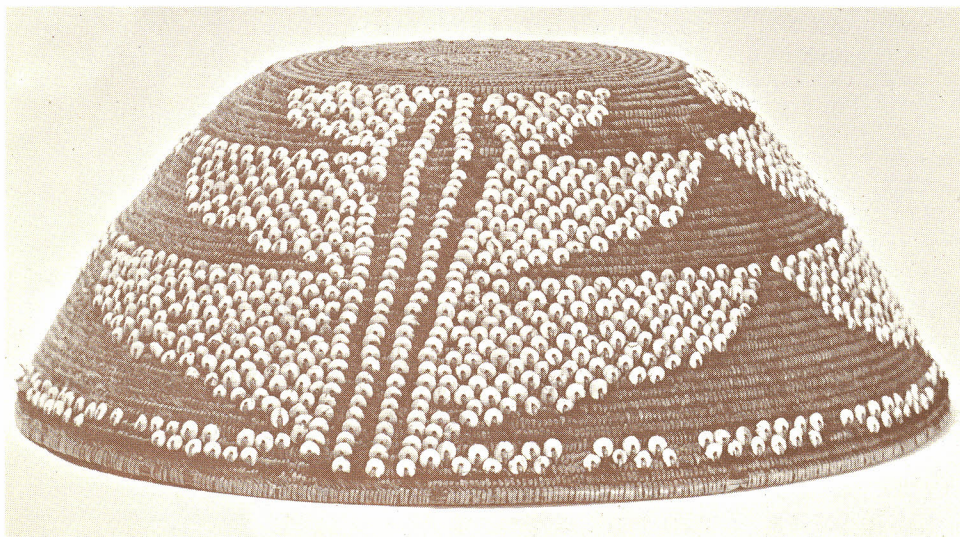


# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by  
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A fine basket believed to have been made near Santa Clara. It is covered with the red scalp feathers of the Acorn Woodpecker, designs in black and embellished with olivella sidesaddle beads. (Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution)

## THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE MONTEREY COUNTY INDIANS

Every few yards along the coastal headlands of the county even the casual observer may find evidence of Indian occupation — black soil, shell fragments and occasionally fire blackened rocks. These are midden sites, or if you like, places where the first inhabitants of the Monterey Peninsula prepared food, lived and died. Inland the occupation sites are less noticeable because they are covered over by grass and shrubbery. But Indian evidence is everywhere in Central Coastal California.

The local inhabitants were rudely known as diggers by people who had no anthropological interest and this unknowledgable term persists today, not just in coastal California but many parts of the West. Presumably the term stems from the non-agricultural traits of these first people. They gleaned their liveli-

hoods from the local landscape as seed gatherers, supplementing this wherever possible with protein from the ocean or in the form of an occasional deer. Even less occasionally they might have procured one of the local elk or even an antelope in the Salinas Valley. Rabbits, mice, and birds also entered the food picture. But acorns were the staple and the true sustenance of the Monterey County Indians. A blight in this food resource would have meant starvation.

Living in the way they did meant that the population would be geared to the wild food resources. Great numbers of people were impossible. Kroeber estimates that the Costanoan Nation included approximately 7,000 individuals, the Esselens 500 and the Salinan 3,000. If his estimates are correct, and they probably are, then slightly more than 10,000 people inhabited at any one time the coastal region stretching from San Francisco Bay through and including San Luis Obispo County. Probably somewhere around 100,000 people populated the entire state.

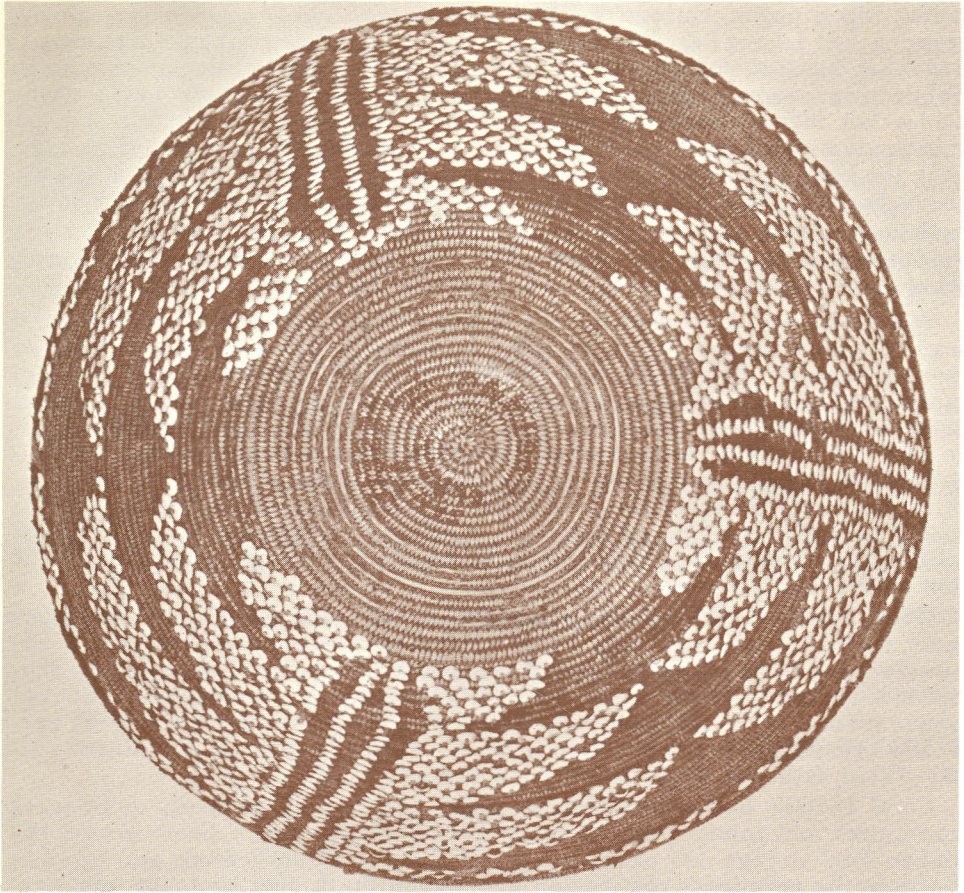
The Indians were scattered in towns or villages which likely never numbered more than a few hundred individuals. For convenience's sake, Kroeber assigned Nation names such as Costanoan to assemblages of Indians who had similar dialects. The Indians themselves would not have recognized this overall grouping, but would have identified themselves by their village or Rancheria. In Carmel Valley they were known as Rumsens, or Mutsun near San Juan Bautista. Other village areas were Kalindaruk, Shirkintaruk, Ekgiagan and Esselen. The village was the highest political unit. There is indication that raids between the various villages occurred though it probably was infrequent.

◁ The Costanoan group includes those Indians who lived coastally from the southern edge of San Francisco Bay to approximately the mouth of the Big Sur River. The eastward boundary is assigned as the summit of the inner coast ranges. The Esselens are said to have lived from Big Sur River mouth south to about Lucia and inland to Chew's Ridge. The territory from Greenfield south including the headwaters of the Salinas River was occupied by the Salinan Indians. Of these names only Esselen is thought to be of Indian origin. The other two are derived from Spanish. Costanoan refers to "people who live near the coast." The meaning of Salinan is not known. These people were non ceramic and what I prefer to call semi nomadic. That is, they moved around to make use of the food resources. They likely knew exactly when to expect the Black Acorn crop on Chew's Ridge to be ripe and made preparations accordingly. With the founding of the Missions the old culture began to fade and shortly became extinct.

The artifacts extant indicate that basketry was the coastal Indians' most developed art. As with other California tribes, the local people were highly skilled in this craft, using willow as the principal source of raw material, though Indian hemp, milkweed and other cordage was probably also used.

The problem here is that native Central Coastal basketry is extremely rare with very few authenticated specimens known. The character of work follows some elements of Chumash culture to the south and possibly Pomo on the north. The Smithsonian Institution possesses one feathered basket believed to have been made near Santa Clara. It is as fine as any Pomo work, being literally covered with the red scalp feathers of the Acorn Woodpecker. Included are designs in black from the same bird with the added embellishment of olivella sidesaddle beads. The work is not completely identical with typical Pomo basketry and very likely did originate south of San Francisco Bay. The Salinan Indians often used tule leaves for basketry which though not particularly beautiful served the purpose.





Another photograph of one of the few baskets from this area. The black designs are from the feathers of the Acron Woodpecker. (courtesy Smithsonian Institution)

With the arrival of the Missions, a new basketry form was taught by imported Indians from farther south. It superficially appears like southwest basketry but uses grass bundles rather than willow. It probably was much easier to make and the native style was discontinued except for the few Indians who managed to avoid the Spanish.

Stone artifacts include mortar and pestles, projectile points, scrapers, hammer stones and similar work present in many cultures. Tools of bone were awls for sewing basketry and a tool for removing abalones from rocks. Some of these are made from sea lion ribs and have the same shape as the old tire iron used in later years for the same purpose. Local stone artifacts are considerably inferior to those of other areas. This is probably due to the unavailability of obsidian which is relatively easy to work. Some trade obsidian is found on occasion but locally made points are principally of flint and chert. The source of the flint is the thin bands of this substance found in the local Monterey shale or "chalk rock."

Very few of the local Indian medicines are known. Much of the stock in trade of the medicine man would depend on psychosomatic benefit though some of the herbs are found in modern pharmacopeias. Some of these include



coffee berry, peony, cottonwood bark and vervain. Indian medicines are intriguing and I have heard local tales of the Indians being able to cure cancer and other diseases with their herbs. Such allegations are of course preposterous. While psychosomatic cures certainly would have occurred, the herbs themselves fall mainly under the classification of laxatives and diuretics. Some combinations also make good poultices. A common medical practice was to suck the body in the area of pain or in the case of a violently ill person to suck the body clean. This would include a prescribed amount of singing and dancing.

Failure to cure an especially important person had its hazards since the life expectancy of the doctor coincided with that of the patient. So a medicine man would have to either believe in his own cures or be an out and out charlatan.

Witchcraft was very much a part of the Indians' life style. It was a good way of taking care of things he didn't understand, and gave him a different mental attitude. Witchcraft was a means of controlling evil spirits, a belief which ensnares all primitive people. It also likely elevated the life style of some of the elderly people who would threaten to cast a spell causing a bear to raid the village if they were badly treated. Superstition was very much a part of the Indians' way of life. It furnished convenient explanations for problems that could not otherwise be understood such as scarcity of game, sickness in the village, or poor acorn harvests. Idolatry was practiced to some extent by blowing smoke to the sun and to the moon or throwing seeds and flour to the sun and moon.

When someone died he was never spoken of again, all of his possessions were destroyed and his dogs killed. There apparently was an immediate attempt to remove all evidence of the deceased. This may be the reason that most of the local burials were shallowly covered with no recognizable crypt preparation. Usually the body was flexed with knees to the chin with no particular orientation to the direction it faced. Normally artifacts are absent. To say "Your father is dead" would be a primary insult.

Local Indians had a great fear of bears. All indication points to frequent encounters and injury from these formidable beasts which likely raided the Indian food storage and were the source of many object lessons and legends. Bears in the primitive's mind could understand the Indian language and were closely related to the people. The Indians believed that a raiding grizzly was the reincarnation of a particularly bad Indian that had returned from the dead to plague them. They also believed that certain witch doctors or shaman could turn into a bear through some secret ritual. The presence of bear claws being associated with certain of the local burials seems to corroborate this belief.

When it became necessary to kill a persistent bear it had to be done with the bow and arrow, a particularly dangerous undertaking since a wounded grizzly would be very unpleasant. The killing of a grizzly was cause for jubilation. A record from the Mission Luis Obispo states that after the killing of grizzlies by Spanish troops, the Indians brought gifts of venison and wild grain to Father Palou.

Clothing was not an important consideration of the local Indians. Archaeological evidence suggests that the women may have worn a grass or tule dress. The men went naked or occasionally wore a skin over the shoulders.

Drawings from the Malaspina Expedition show a woman wearing a sea otter cape and a deer skin apron. The cape would not have been fashioned in the style of a modern furrier but more likely would have followed the method used by interior Indians in making their rabbit skin cloaks. This was to cut the skins in strips, knotting them together into a bulky blanket which could be worn.

Sweat baths were a daily custom of the Rumsens and much enjoyed by them as with other California tribes. The Mission Fathers were shocked by the

local nudity, setting about immediately to clothe everyone and stopped the sweat bath practice which they considered unhealthful. It was later again allowed because the Indians developed skin rashes and boils without their frequent baths. The Spanish custom of the time was to bathe infrequently and certainly not at all in winter.

Extinction of the Coastal Indians was inevitable. European domination came at a time when life was cheap. Thousands died of diseases foreign and therefore lethal to the local inhabitants. Secondly intermarriage further reduced the pure stock. Those Indians not associated with the Mission but inhabiting the more remote regions of the Santa Lucias met an unrecorded fate. One might speculate that their demise coincided with the discovery of gold in the Los Burros.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

In organizing the above thoughts I have borrowed freely from the following publications as well as other authors. The attempt was to help understand a people who lived in the Monterey area for more than a thousand years.

Heizer, R. F. and M. A. Whipple. **The California Indians.** University of California Press. Berkeley, California 1957.

Klimek, Stanislaw. **Culture Element Distribution: The Structure of California Indian Culture;** University of California Publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology. Vol 37 #1. University of California Press. Berkeley, California 1935.

Kroeber, A. L. **Handbook of the Indians of California.** Bulletin #78. Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution 1925.

Mason, J. Alden. **The Ethnology of the Salinan Indians.** University of California publication in American Archaeology and Ethnology. Vol 10, #4. University of California Press 1912.

VERNAL L. YADON

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### A. BOYD MEWBORN

The Monterey History and Art Association mourns the death on April 24th of this year of A. Boyd Mewborn, a long and valued member. He was with the mathematic department of the Naval Postgraduate School for twenty years before his retirement in 1966. He had served as Secretary Treasurer of the Postgraduate faculty and was a commander in the Naval Reserve. He served on the Board of Directors of the Monterey History and Art Association and was a past president. He was chairman of the local committee that arranged for the meeting in Monterey last year of the Conference of California Historical Societies. The association has been indebted to him for many of its forward steps during his time on the Board. We express our sincere sympathy to his wife Hazel.

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### COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

**GIFTS:** To the MAYO HAYES O'DONNELL LIBRARY — a collection of photographs of the Camino Real and the missions of California from Mrs. Van Court Warren; a collection of early California text books and teaching aids from Miss Eleanore Ziel; a collection of Californiana books and an oil painting by Evelyn McCormick from Mrs. A.



W. Elkinton; an oriental rug from Mrs. Pal Clark; books on early California from Mrs. A. A. Rochex; a collection of first copies of each newspaper ever published in Monterey, and a collection of maps, ads, pictures, and other memorabilia of early Peninsula days from Mr. Stuart Work; and cleaning services given by the Roth Rug Cleaners. To the ALLEN KNIGHT MARITIME MUSEUM — numerous volumes of rare books for the library from Col. Charles B. Richmond; another collection of fine books from Mrs. Elizabeth Hay Bechtel; sailmaker's equipment from Miss Theresa Barkhurst; three fine ship models and several books from Mr. & Mrs. Peter J. Ferrante; about 100 postcards of old ships from Prof. Wendell W. Simons; a brass port from wreck of S.S. Paul from Mrs. Margaret Allen Hudson and Mrs. Helen Allen Burnett; brass spike of wooden ship from Commodore Wilbur E. Kellum; wood from battleship Maine from Col. Louis G. Gibney; brass taffrail log, two old fire axes and several books from Mr. Otto J. Wittke; war medals from Miss Ethel Higgins; monetary gift for purchase of large file cabinet for library from Mrs. Alec Parnie; model of U.S.S. Constitution in a display case from Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Reid; bronze ship's bell clock from Mr. Cecil H. Barker; ship's spyglass from Dr. Rolf L. Bolin; a water color by Worden Wood and books from Mrs. Genieve D. Roach; book from Mr. E. T. Bradley; books from Vice Admiral Edwin B. Hooper of Wash. D.C.; two photograph albums on steamships from Mr. Watson A. Bray; books from Mr. Vincent R. Bliss; books from Mr. N. P. Greene; photographs from Mrs. R. E. Grabill; photograph of Monterey fishing vessel from Mr. Peter Cardinale; sailmaker's thimble and fid from Major Allis F. Hussey; a fine painting and a sketch for the Museum Seal from the artist Mr. Hans Skaalegaard; masthead lights, brass lantern and brass starbord running light from Mrs. A. Boyd Mewborn; a diary kept by her father during four years at sea and photographs from Mrs. John P. Behan; old newspapers from Mr. Frank Helderle; monetary gift for producing film or slides about the Maritime Museum from Mr. Gail M. Szafran; pictures books and magazine from Mrs. Duncan Murray; Mr. Charles Catron III made and painted several signs for the museum display; Mr. Claude T. Faw made a set of colored slides about the museum; locks for display cases from Major General R. L. Howze; old prints of sailing ships and a ship's log from Mr. & Mrs. Leet W. Bissell; brass ship's container from Mr. Joseph G. Ansel; an American flag with staff and holder from the Monterey Peninsula Herald; and a volume for the Maritime library from M. Lewis Clark. To the MEMORIAL FUND — In memory of IMOGENE NEVIUS from Mr. & Mrs. H. J. MacClean, Mrs. Josephine M. Fussell and Mrs. Myrtle V. Sollman. In memory of A. BOYD MEWBORN from Mrs. Charles V. O. Terwilliger, Mr. & Mrs. Joe L. Farrow, Mrs. George B. Bliss, Mr. James L. Underhill, Prof. & Mrs. William Malcolm Bauer, Mr. & Mrs. Rollo H. Payne, Prof. & Mrs. Harold M. Wright, Miss Ruth Rando, Prof. & Mrs. Jack R. Borsting, Mr. & Mrs. F. William Lawrence, Prof. & Mrs. Robert E. Newton, Mr. & Mrs. Wendell M. Coates, Miss Patricia Dick, The Group — Mr. F. Douglas Tellwright, President; Minna M. Goodwin, Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert Ford Kinney, Mr. & Mrs. Charles L. Taylor, Col. & Mrs. William McCaskey Chapman and Mr. & Mrs. Carl E. Menneken. To the HOUSE COMMITTEE — 40 cups and saucers from Mary Zannetta Lawrence.

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**SUGGESTED READING:** — The very interesting pictorial history of Monterey County published this spring. Entitled "Old Monterey County — a Pictorial History" it was compiled by Robert B. Johnston of Hartnell Junior College. The many photographs were carefully selected to show the development of Monterey County from the Indian period to 1900. This book can be obtained through the offices of the Monterey Savings and Loan Association. A second book is one that has been in print since 1966. "A Gallery of California Mission Paintings" by Edwin Deakin was published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Paul Mills, Curator of the Oakland Art Museum wrote the text. Edward Deakin (1838-1923) from the year 1870 expressed his interest in the old missions by sketches, paintings, exhibitions and publications. His work furthered the movement at the turn of the century to restore the missions and El Camino Real which linked them together. The volume can be obtained through your local bookstore.

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**ROLL TOP DESK:** — The library committee is hoping that someone will have an old fashioned roll top desk that can be obtained for the Mayo Hayes O'Donnell Library. Contact Mrs. Charles Bentley.

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**NEW MEMBERS** — Mr. & Mrs. D. M. Briggs, Miss Jean Wilder, Mrs. Allen Griffen, Mrs. Joseph D. Raney, Mrs. Walter C. Adams, Dr. Ada R. Martinez, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Wald, Dr. & Mrs. V. J. Marasco, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Henny, Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin E.

## NEW EVENTS PLANNED FOR THE PLEASURE OF OUR MEMBERS

**Number 1** — After much thought the Board has decided to inaugurate one field trip, or "Romeria", a year to historical places within the county, ones not generally frequented by people from our immediate area.

For our first trip we have chosen the San Antonio Mission on the old Hearst ranch near Jolon. The ranch was given to the army by Mr. Hearst and it is now called the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation. The ranch house is within walking distance of the mission and is a very distinctive example of it's type.

The trip, tentatively scheduled for September 25th will be made by chartered bus and details concerning time, lunch and one other interesting stop will be forthcoming at a later date. The price of the trip will be kept as nominal as possible.

**Number 2** — We also hope to have three free programs a year at one or another of the "public" adobes which can handle at least one hundred people at a time, in one room.

These programs, augmented by tapes of our wonderful "old timers" will also include a brief talk with nuggets of local history researched by our historian Miss Augusta Fink.

The first of these evenings will take place at Casa Serrano on August 10th at seven thirty. Refreshments will be served and it is hoped that old and new members will take this opportunity to know each other.

Now, in order to proceed with our plans, will you please fill in the questionnaire at the bottom of this page, tear it off and mail to me? Thank you—

Ruth Fletcher, Special Events Chairman

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MAIL TO MRS. GEORGE FLETCHER  
25391 Carmel Knolls Drive  
Carmel, Calif. 93921

- No. 1 I am interested in the September trip to San Antonio Mission  
Yes  No
- No. 2 I am interested in the evening program at Casa Serrano on August 10  
Yes  No



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