

The Acorn

Newsletter of the Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin

College of Marin Miwok Dedication

By Chris Coughlin, MAPOM Vice-President

Anyone who visits the College of Marin campus in Kentfield, California has to marvel at the beauty of the natural setting and environment. It rests at the base of Mount Tamalpais alongside the Corte Madera Creek and verdant marshlands of the San Francisco Bay. It is no wonder that the earliest inhabitants of the area found the location to be the ideal site for a permanent village. The Kentfield campus is built on land that was once a Coast Miwok village thousands of years ago. As campus buildings were constructed many artifacts were found, but not much was known about the history. Retired College of Marin Anthropology instructor, and MAPOM Board member, Betty Goerke worked with her students in the 90's to gather information about the excavation that took place as the Learning Resources Center was built.



Photo by Chris Coughlin

The plaque, with artwork by Edward Willie

Ten years ago, a committee founded by Betty Goerke and Fernando Agudelo-Silva started planning for a Native Garden to honor Miwok

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Mount Tamalpais A Coast Miwok Perspective

By Betty Goerke, Anthropologist

Many of us in Marin County think of Mount Tamalpais affectionately as "our" mountain, a personal close friend known as Mount Tam, and the hallmark of our county. We enjoy it as a refuge where we can hike, bike, picnic, attend the yearly Mountain Play, and even marry. But to Native Californians who once lived here, it could be a forbidding place, one to avoid, where Chief Marin believed evil spirits lived.

Coast Miwok culture in the 17th and early 18th centuries attributed calamities and illnesses to these evil spirits or to human poisoners paid to make people sick or kill them. Such poisoning could be counteracted by doctors hired to heal illness through singing, dancing, and sucking out a foreign object from the suffering person, although doctors themselves could be poisoners. Native people also believed in dangerous spirits living all around them:

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Join MAPOM at the Marin Show

By: Ralph Shanks, MAPOM President

The annual Marin Show of the Art of the Americas will be held February 20-22 at the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. This is the largest and best Native American art show in the United States and is not to be missed. MAPOM will have our table there offering excellent, often hard to get books for sale. Our table is staffed by MAPOM Board members who look forward to meeting you and talking with you. This event is an important fund raiser for MAPOM and we deeply appreciate all those who purchase books from us. We hope to see you there!

MAPOM President's Message

Ralph Shanks, M.A.

I am really proud of the work the MAPOM Board of Directors and our Class Coordinator Kristin Kirk have done to set up the largest array of California Indian classes we have ever offered for 2015. We will be scheduling a class nearly every month throughout the year.

We are providing our classes in cooperation with the College of Marin Community Education program. Our instructors will include Julia Parker (Coast Miwok and Kashaya Pomo) and Eva Salazar (Kumeyaay) who are two of the most respected and talented Native American basket weavers in the state. Betty Goerke, John Littleton and other fine teachers will be offering a large variety of other fascinating selections. Please consider taking some of our classes. We think you will be pleased.

Our classes will be listed on the MAPOM website. Students may enroll in our classes by going to the College of Marin Community Education website. You may also phone College of Marin Community Education to enroll as well. For more information see Class Coordinator Kristin Kirk's article in this issue.

I also want to thank all our members who donated to our Annual Appeal. The Indian Studies Program is in large part the result of your support. MAPOM makes little from our classes and so your help is really needed. Thank you very, very much!

We hope to see you at the Marin Show in February!

Miwok Dedication

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history. On Thursday, October 9th, 2014 the garden, along with a beautiful bronze plaque, was officially dedicated at the College. COM President David Wain Coon gave the opening remarks and introduced speakers who included members of the Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria (Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo) and of course Betty Goerke. Tribal Elder Joanne Campbell said a Wee'a, a prayer, to bless the garden. FIGR Council members Gene Buvelot and Lorelle Ross spoke of the history of the Tribe, its many cultural traditions and current day activities. In addition former students and Graton Tribal citizens, Alexander and Jenna Coughlin, shared their positive academic experiences at the College.

The garden is located near the Student Services building and includes plants that are indigenous to the site and have traditional uses by Native People. Many thanks go to all who worked on this project and helped to honor the Coast Miwok Indians and bring awareness of the history this land holds.



The Acorn is produced and distributed annually by the Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin. MAPOM is a volunteer based, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and welcomes new members and public input. We also encourage members to join our Board of Directors and help our ongoing mission to educate with MAPOM programs such as the California Indian Skills classes, and through our publications.

Annual MAPOM membership fees are \$10 for seniors, full-time students, \$20 for individuals, and \$25 for families. The Acorn is received as a membership benefit. For more information and to join MAPOM, visit our website at www.mapom.org, or call (415) 899-9494.

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Native American Studies at College of Marin

By Kristin Kirk, Class Coordinator

The Miwok Archaeological Preserve of Marin (MAPOM) offers California Indian studies through the Community Education program of College of Marin. This program was created in collaboration with the Point Reyes National Seashore to promote awareness and understanding of Native people and the history of their culture, with a special emphasis on the Coast Miwok. This gives the general public an educational opportunity to see how Native people once lived, and how they continue to maintain their traditions today.



Photo by Chris Coughlin

MAPOM basket weaving instructor Eva Salazar (Kumeyaay) and her son, Micky, a well respected Bird Singer. Eva will be teaching a MAPOM class in April.

The program includes several classes that are taught throughout the year and students are welcome to enroll in as many as they'd like, or to focus on obtaining a certificate by taking the core class and four additional courses. This California Indian Studies Certificate of Completion recognizes the students' commitment to preserving the knowledge of Native skills, environmental wisdom and cultural awareness.

The Certificate of Completion Award Ceremony takes place each July near the Big Time Festival in Point Reyes. This Native American festival is held each year at mid-summer for all people to gather at Kule Loklo, a reconstructed Miwok village, to

demonstrate their traditional song and dance and celebrate their heritage. Booths are also available with crafts, jewelry, and opportunities to practice hands-on skills.

College of Marin registration for the California Indian Studies Program can be made on line at www.marin.edu/CommunityEducation or by phone at: 415-485-9305.

The classes scheduled for 2015 include:

Core Class: Cultural Overview, January 31

Traditional Storytelling, Tule Crafts, and Cultural Wisdom, February 21

Flintknapping, March 28

Weaving a Kumeyaay Coiled Willow Basket, April 18-19

West Marin Petroglyphs and Miwok Cultural History, April 25

Animal Tracking and Nature Awareness, May 2

Big Time Lectures, July 18

Introduction to Paleotechnology, August 15

California Basketweaving, September 19-20

California and Oregon Indian Baskets, October 17

All classes are held on Saturday and some are full weekend courses.

There are two ways to register for classes: online at www.marincommunityed.com or by either mailing or faxing the registration form at the center of the Community Ed catalog. You can phone COM at 415-485-9305 for more information. You can also find information on the MAPOM website www.mapom.com.

Classes will fill up, so early registration is recommended.

Mount Tamalpais

A Coast Miwok Perspective

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in the wind and air, as well as in the redwoods at the base of Mount Tam where "little folk" known as Sekah lived in the darker areas and could cause you to go "crazy." (1) Some evil spirits had mountain in their names: mountain snake (with a head as big as a cat), mountain fish, and mountain man, but it is not clear if they originated or were encountered on the mountain. (2)

Native people considered Mount "Tamalpais" (a Coast Miwok word) and other high places to be significant places of power because, for example, from ridge tops one could have a good view of striking celestial events such as the equinox. In this case the sun can be observed rising between two peaks of Mount Diablo from a site near Pan Toll on Mount Tam, where archaeologists have found evidence of native tool and food preparation.

Another high spot in southern Coast Miwok territory contains a major rock art site. Native people were probably aware that on summer solstice morning when they stood facing the rock art on the most prominent boulder, the sun appears to rise directly over the rock. (3)

Tops of mountains figure in creation stories of some central California tribes, because these few spots were thought to be exposed when the rest of the world was considered flooded. One of these narratives, told to the ethnographer C. Hart Merriam by an elderly Coast Miwok woman, asserted that humans originated from feathers that Oye, Coyote Man, threw from Oo'n-nap pi's Mount Sonoma. (4)

Mount Tamalpais is the center of a traditional narrative told to Merriam about the "Rock Giant" known as Loo-poo-oi-yes, who once lived there and spoke through his throat of abalone shell. According to this story, he told two young boys playing nearby that their dead father used to play there. The curious boys approached, and pulled on what turned out to be hairs from his nostril. Angered, the Rock Giant chased and tried to kill them, but instead was killed by the boys, who shot an arrow at his abalone throat, the only spot of his rock body that could be

penetrated. The Rock Giant then split into many pieces, revealing his inner core of human flesh. (5)

Different versions of this story were told by two Coast Miwok elders interviewed in the 1930s. In one, ninety-year-old Tom Smith of Bodega said that the Rock Giant lived on Mount St. Helena, and had earlier killed the boy's father, well before the boys shot at his shell throat. (6) In Maria Copa's version, a squirrel had hunted Old Man Rock. The Rock in turn chased the squirrel, and today all rocks "on top of the hills are drops of sweat" from the exertions of the Rock Giant. (7) The story must be of great antiquity, because various versions are found in different languages from tribes north, south, and east of the Coast Miwok. (8)

A more recent story of historical interest involves Chief Marin (a Coast Miwok born in what is now Mill Valley), who believed dangerous spirits lived on the mountain. In 1833, when California was still a part of Mexico, Jacob Leese undertook a survey of San Rafael Mission lands, accompanied by an Indian crew including Marin. The surveyor's plan was to set a point on the mountain for his survey, but the Indians refused to accompany him up the mountain, because it was "inhabited by evil spirits." Climbing the mountain alone, Leese placed a limb across a tree, forming what looked like a cross, so that when he returned, he could show the Indians he had made it unscathed. Chief Marin, not to be outdone, then climbed the mountain, ignoring the protestations of his fellows, and, reaching the cross, hung his shirt on it. When he returned shirtless, his fellow Indians thought at first he had been attacked, but were soon assured that he himself had placed his shirt on the limb. He thereby became in their eyes, "the bravest of the brave." (9) Even today, the Kashaya Pomo caution natives about "bad spirits" on Mount Tam. (10)

It is significant that there is so little archaeological evidence on Mount Tamalpais, indicating that the mountain was rarely frequented. Two adjacent sites at approximately 2000' elevation contained quartz crystal fragments and a piece of human bone suggesting the use or preparation of doctor's kits for

curing or for sorcery. (Tom Smith's doctor outfit contained five quartz crystals.) (11)

Native people had an oral history, rich in imagery and unknown to most non-Indians. The surviving stories about the mountain speak to their real fears of the supernatural. From evidence we have today, the Coast Miwok looked on Mount Tam in culturally determined ways, not as a place of recreation but as a place of power, warranting respect and caution.

Betty Goerke is the author of Chief Marin: Leader, Rebel, and Legend and Discovering Native People at Point Reyes. She taught anthropology for thirty-seven years at the College of Marin.

Notes

1. Merriam, C. Hart, 1910, *Dawn of the World*, University of Nebraska, 228.
2. Kelly, I., 2003, *Interviews with Tom Smith and Maria Copa*, MAPOM, San Rafael, 99, 453, 456.
3. Goerke, B., 2007, *Chief Marin: Leader, Rebel and Legend*. Heyday Books, Berkeley, Figure 4b.
4. Merriam, 1910, 203-205.

5. Merriam, 1910, 232-235
6. Kelly, 2003, 436.
7. Kelly, 2003, 445.
8. Merriam, 1910, 231-236, Ortiz, B. 1994, "Chochoeno and Rumsen Narratives" in: *The Ohlone Past and Present*, Ballena Press, 136; Barret, S.A., 1933, Pomo Myths. *Bulletin Public Museum Milwaukee*, 15. 230.
9. Munro-Fraser, J.P., 1880, *History of Marin County, California*, Alley, Brown, San Francisco, 145-146.
10. Eric Wilder, 2013, grandson of the spiritual leader Essie Parrish, 1902-1997.
11. Kelly, 1975, "Coast Miwok" in Heizer, R., 1978, *Handbook of North American Indians*, Ca.v.8, 420, Figure 5.

Editor's Note

By John Littleton, Acorn Editor

Thanks so much to each of our good author's and to Gordon Bainbridge who created the lovely layout for this edition of the Acorn.

Betty Goerke's article was originally published in the Mill Valley Historical Society Review in 2013.

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