

The Reactor

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A Touch of Pacifica Heritage

Before the great estuary now called San Francisco Bay was discovered by Don Gaspar de Portola of Balaguer, Catalonia, a "San Francisco Bay" was known to the world for more than 200 years. What is now Pacifica fronts the southern edges of the bay. San Pedro Rock forms its south corner. Point Reyes is its northwestern tip.

Most of this great shallow basin was fertile dry land 12 to 14 thousand years ago, during the Ice Age. There may have been Indians living here then. No one knows for sure. The possibility that men have lived on the peninsula for 70,000 years, as some have suggested, seems remote. But there have been Indians in South America for 32,000 years, we're told. They had to be in North America first, though there is precious little evidence of it.

All the same, there were probably people in settled villages living out near the Farallones. Presumably the ice melted so slowly that even the old men did not realize the valleys of their coast were flooding. Each year the water inched up. Each year the sea water battered higher beaches and eroded cliffs it had never reached before. As men closed out a long lifetime, they may have told their grandchildren of the times they walked to offshore islands

dry-shod. It may have become a part of the legends of the group known as the Ohlones, the coastal Indians whose fate it was first to be Christianized by Spaniards, then overwhelmed by hordes of white "Americans," most of whom were Scots, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and German.

I hope to learn more of the Ohlones next Sunday at San Pedro Valley Park, when many Pacificans will gather for Indian dances and other events. The high point of the day will be a talk by Malcolm Margolin, the man who wrote *The Ohlone Way*.

Like many people, I tend to think the history of this area starts in 1769. Actually, that's only the history that is written down, dated, recorded in Spanish or English. It is the history that can be found in the archives of Spain, or the microfilm of the Federal Archives in San Bruno, or the Society of California Pioneers.

Actually, for at least 160 generations human beings lived, and lived well, in what is now Pacifica. Their wars were laughably bloodless, compared to our civilized confrontations, but after all, they were mere savages. They greeted the Spanish happily. The Spanish had guns to kill the marauding grizzlies, which were a problem. Unfortunately, the Spanish cattle were a treat for the bears. More bears existed 50 years after the Spanish arrived than ever before. The Indians suffered the fate of some Vietnamese villages. They were destroyed in order to save them.

If you haven't been out to San Pedro county park, next Sunday would be a great time to check it out. If you aren't interested in the Indians, take a picnic lunch and keep an eye out for the bobcats and the foxes.

As for me, I think I'll ask Margolin what the Ohlone tribes in this area ate, what they worshipped, what kind of goods they traded and to whom? I'm looking forward to an enjoyable afternoon.