



# THE ELECTROLIER

Newsletter of the St. Helena Historical Society, Winter 2008, Vol.6 No.1

## IMAGINING THE INDIGENOUS PAST

by Robyn Orsini

(Editor's note: The excavation of artifacts at Vineyard Valley in preparation for the flood control project, inspired the author to research the Valley's original inhabitants. This article is just part of her research.)

It is the year 1808, two hundred years ago. The people who live in what today is called Napa Valley (then *Talahalusi*) have been doing so for longer than anyone can remember, and there is as yet no sign that the ancient indigenous world will disappear forever. The people here do not mark time by the passage of years; their calendar is determined by nature's seasons. They have no watches; they awake at dawn's light and sleep when the fire has burned down at night.

Villages dot the valley in a generally north-south direction (see map). Within the city limits of what is now St. Helena, there is a large village called *Anakanoma*. Another village lies just to the east on Sage Creek, called *Tsekenoma*. (The ending *-noma* means village in the Wappo language.) Villages are continuously occupied by from 100 to as many as 400 people. Smaller settlements may be found at the outskirts of every village, and there are many fishing and hunting camps.

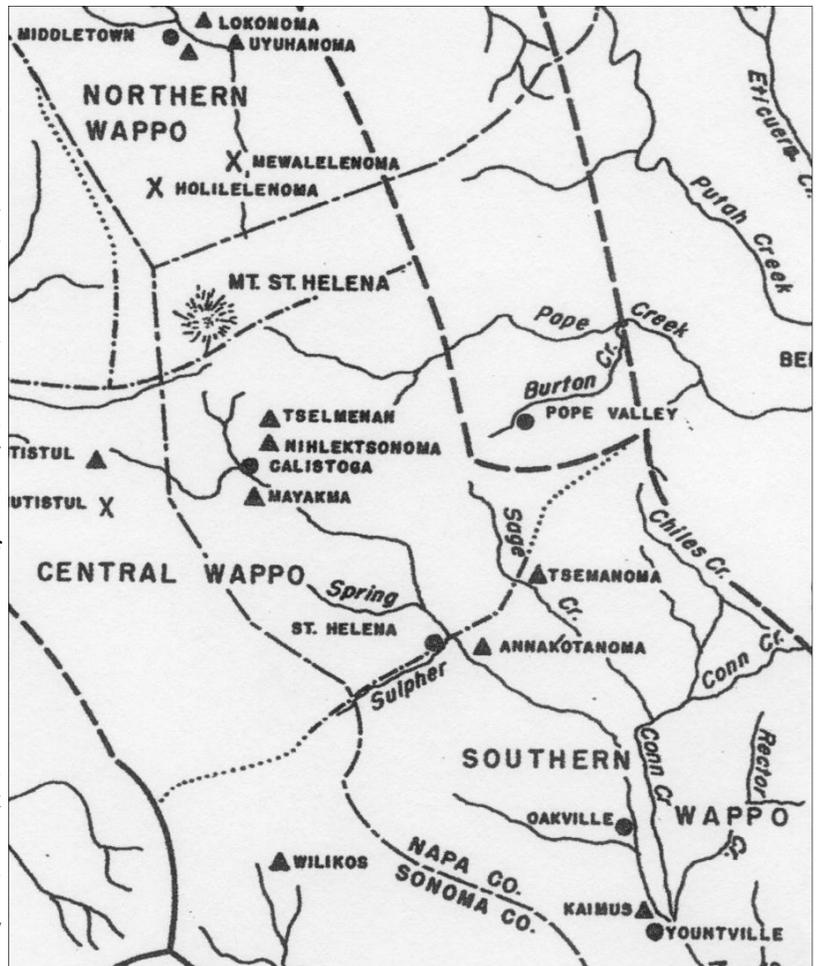
From *Anakanoma* or *Tsekenoma* one must travel ten miles or more in either direction before finding another large village: *Mayacanoma*, *Nilektsonoma*, and *Tselmenan* near present-day Calistoga and *Caymus* at present-day Yountville. Near today's Bale Mill lives a small band of Indians called *Callyomanas* or *Conahomanas*. Near Glass Mountain there are several obsidian workshops and residences.

The people (*Onastis* or *Outspoken Ones*) know themselves by where they live. Someone from *Anakanoma* is an *Anaka* and from *Mayacanoma*, a *Mayaca*. (Population was estimated at about 1,650 people in the valley, but George Yount counted some 8,000 people in the area.) They might also identify themselves as *Mayakmah* (north of Napa to north of St. Helena), *Mutistul* (around Calistoga), and *Mishewal* (Mt. St. Helena to Cobb Mountain/Geysers).

In 1808, an *Anaka* might marry a *Mayaca*, and the wife would usually move to the husband's village. The five or six tribes living in Napa Valley alone have such

strong dialects that (according to Yount) they have trouble understanding each other. Neighboring tribes might speak altogether different languages, as occurs in many parts of the world today.

The linguists and cultural anthropologists who come later identify people according to tribelets or tribes. In 1808, the tribal designation Wappo does not yet exist; Spanish colonizers nickname valley residents *Guapo* meaning brave ones, and American settlers hear and spell it as *Wappo*. Eventually, disparate tribes are categorized according to their dialects and languages, as well as for physical characteristics bred over millennia, ancient customs and beliefs, and lifestyles and practices based on living in various environments. (Cont. on p. 3)



A portion of the map from *The Archaeology of the Napa Region*, edited by Robert F. Heizer (Berkeley: University of California, Anthropological Records, Vol. 12, No. 6)

● Modern towns, ▲ Permanent Wappo Villages, X Wappo Campsites

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Dear Members,*

Even in these dreary days of mid-winter, the Historical Society has been busy with a number of projects. On January 23<sup>rd</sup> we co-sponsored a gathering at the St. Helena Library to hear a report on the archaeological dig at Vineyard Valley which was recently completed. There was a standing-room-only crowd present for a fascinating presentation. We first got an overview of the history and culture of the Wappo Indians, who were in this area for many hundreds of years. We then heard a discussion, along with a slide presentation, of the dig itself. It made for a great story – the processes employed, the participants in the project, and the treasure trove of artifacts which were recovered. It will be some time before everything is analyzed and properly cataloged, but we are hopeful that these artifacts will become part of the Historical Society collection.

In the January 31 edition of the St. Helena Star there is a good article about the Library presentation. In that same issue is a letter from the Historical Society making a pitch for the City to grant us space to build a History Center on the Adams Street property next to the Library. As we receive more and more historical donations, it becomes increasingly apparent that we badly need a home for our expanding collection. We think the Adams Street location, which the City has owned for years, is perfect for us – we are a natural companion to the existing Library.

As the City moves forward in its General Plan updating process, we think it is essential to strongly make our case regarding the proposed History Center location. We hope all of our members will be supportive of our position.

Plans are moving forward for our big Antique Show and Sale to be held on February 23 at the Catholic school gym. It's a much larger event this year than we've sponsored in the past. More than 20 dealers will be represented and appraisers will be available. We're doing more this year in the way of publicity and advertising, hoping to produce a better attendance than we've had in the past. We hope that you'll plan to check it out and spread the word to friends and neighbors.

*Skip Lane*

St. Helena Historical Society  
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Voice mail: 707-967-5502  
Email: shstory@shpl.org  
Website: www.shstory.org

### Officers and Directors

Skip Lane, President  
Susanne Salvestrin, Vice President  
Mariam Hansen, Secretary  
Kim Farmer, Treasurer  
Donn Black  
Frank Harrison  
Mariana Olguin  
John Sales  
Tricia Westbrook

### Committee Notes:

The *Collections Committee* coordinates and manages the acquisition of new materials. It generally meets on the last Monday of the month at 9:30am in the library meeting room. Current chair of the committee is Susanne Salvestrin. Email her at Susanne@salvestrinwinery.com

The *Events Committee* plans and presents events to teach the public about our local history. Plans are underway for the Feb. Antiques Fair. Call Mariam Hansen, 963-5748 for more information.

Questions? Comments?

Call or email the Newsletter editor,  
Kim Farmer, at 963-0630,  
ksfarmer@seedgrain.com

### *I'd like to join the St. Helena Historical Society!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$30 Family \$50

Business/Organizatoin \$150 Life \$500

*I would like to:* Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Make a donation to the Society \_\_\_\_\_

### ◆ HELP WANTED ◆

#### ANTIQUÉ SHOW & SALE

Set up of Catholic Gym Feb. 22,  
3-9pm. On Feb 23 need help  
with more set up, café food  
prep, dealer assistants, admis-  
sions, etc. Work hours 6am to  
8pm with 3 hour shifts available.  
Contact Mariam at 963-5748 or  
[wartuhi@comcast.net](mailto:wartuhi@comcast.net)

### CORNERSTONE

In the last newsletter you learned about the important 1876 map of Napa County generously donated to us by Marie Oliver. The map is currently being restored by a professional paper conservator at a cost of about \$4,500. We are most grateful to Marie for this invaluable piece of local history and for her equally generous donation toward the cost of preserving it.

When you place a piece of St. Helena history into our care you are entrusting us with something very important to you, to be preserved and made available for the education and enjoyment of generations to come. We take that trust very seriously and want you to know a bit about the work we do in collections management.

In 2005, our Collection Committee underwent a year-long process of research and study of historic artifact collection management. Using guidelines of the American Association of Museums, we developed a Collection Policy and Procedures which address:

- Acquisition of artifacts
- Documentation and tracking
- Handling, storing and transporting
- Providing safe access for research and exhibition
- Legal rights to reproduce images in the collection and protection of intellectual assets
- Safeguarding of the collection through risk management and emergency plans.
- Special ethical considerations regarding culturally sensitive items such as those protected under NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act of 1990)

Collection Manager, Susanne Salvestrin, has received training through coursework, workshops, and consultations with professionals. We have also developed a network of resources in the archival and museum community to call on when we need expertise that exceeds our own. Our Collection Committee has accessioned approximately 900 items. Another 100 await evaluation. Artifacts are registered in a collection management database where we track storage location, ongoing care, provenance and potential use for research and exhibition. The database is ably managed by volunteer Betty Studebaker.

Historic photographs, garments, paper or other fiber artifacts negatively affected by variations in environmental conditions are housed in appropriate containers at the library. Less sensitive artifacts such as agricultural implements occupy well-secured rental storage. Anything we receive requiring a more strictly controlled environment will be stored on loan to another history institution with appropriate climate controls until the History Center is built.

Our collection is something that the St. Helena Historical Society holds in the public trust for the local community. We are committed to honoring that trust today and to putting systems into place that will continue to provide that assurance after we ourselves become part of St. Helena's history.

If you have items of historic interest related to St. Helena from any period or would like to make a monetary donation to help with costs for housing and caring for our collection, please call or write the Society.

Tricia Westbrook,

*Cont. from p. 1*

The valley is a busy place with people gathering and digging for food, hunting and fishing, trading, and visiting each other. There are no highways, no ribbons of cement. Nor are there horses or other means of transport besides walking. The valley is crisscrossed with trails and footpaths. There are no fences; it is geological features and territorial disputes with neighbors that cause impediments to travel. Well-traveled trails exist along the Napa River, generally following what are now the Silverado Trail and Highway 29. Other well-worn trails go from mid-valley to Berryessa Valley and from up-valley to Pope and Alexander Valleys.

The five or six Wappo tribes visit and trade with the Patwin (Wintun), who occupy land eastward to Lake Berryessa. Wappo and Lake Miwok peoples occupy Pope Valley. To the north and west are Pomo. The Coast Miwok occupy the city of Napa, southern Sonoma County and Mendocino County .

The arrival of George Yount in 1836, upon being given a land grant by General Vallejo, changes the indigenous landscape forever: within thirty years, the central California tribes have died from disease, alcohol, or poverty; been massacred in wars they are not equipped to fight; or been rounded up and taken to missions or reservations. We can, however, imagine them still here, find signs of their long presence still on the land and underneath it.



Audience listens to Indian representative Earl Couey and archaeologist John Holson talk about history of NV Wappo and recent findings.

## CALENDAR

Call our voicemail to reserve a space: 707-967-5502. See our website: [www.shstory.org](http://www.shstory.org)

### February

**Feb 21:** Board of Directors meeting, 4:30, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

**Feb 22:** Set up day for the Antiques Show & Sale, Catholic School Gym, 3-9pm.

**Feb 23:** ANTIQUES SHOW & SALE, 10—5pm, St. Helena Catholic School Gym.

**Feb 25:** Collections Committee meeting, 9:30am, Library Meeting Room

### March

**Mar 4:** "One Room School Houses of Napa County" at Rutherford School, 4:00pm. Reservations required.

**Mar 21:** Board of Directors meeting, 4:30, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

**Mar 31:** Collections Committee, 9:30, Library Mtg. Room

### April

**Apr 1:** "History of the Stice/Wagner Families" at Caymus Winery 4:00pm. Reservations required.

**Apr 17:** Board of Directors meeting, 4:30, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

**Apr 26:** "Museum for a Day", Native Sons Hall, 10– 5pm. *(Please note the date change from last newsletter)*

**Apr 28:** Collections Committee meeting, 9:30, Library Meeting Room.

### May

**May 6:** Annual Meeting of the membership at Sunny Acres B&B, Salvestrin family home.

**May 15:** Board of Directors meeting, 4:30, Library Meeting Room. (Open to all members.)

**May 26:** Collections Committee meeting, 9:30, Library Meeting Room.

### Mission Statement

The St. Helena Historical Society is a public educational organization. Its mission is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and provide access to historical materials of all kinds from our community as well as to promote public awareness and participation in the collection of such materials.

St. Helena Historical Society  
P.O. Box 87  
St. Helena, CA 94574



DISCOVER HIDDEN TREASURES

# ANTIQUE SHOW & SALE

SATURDAY, **FEBRUARY 23** 10-5PM  
ST. HELENA CATHOLIC GYM  
1255 OAK STREET AT TAINTER IN ST. HELENA

OVER 20 ANTIQUE DEALERS  
EVALUATIONS BY PRO APPRAISERS  
CANING REPAIR DEMO  
CHINA REPAIR ESTIMATES

BENEFITS ST. HELENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**ADMISSION \$5**  
WITH 3 EVALUATIONS: \$20

MORE INFORMATION  
CALL 707-967-5502  
EMAIL: SHSTORY@SHPL.ORG