



# Foothills

CITY OF PALO ALTO • COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT • OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND GOLF DIVISION

## The First Palo Altans

Don Gaspar de Portola and his weary band of explorers, camping along the banks of San Francisquito Creek in 1769, were the first white men to encounter the Native Americans of San Francisco Bay. Father Juan Crespi, official chronicler of the expedition, described them: “The entire port is surrounded by many and large villages of barbarous heathen who are affable, mild, and docile, and very generous...”

The Native Americans described by Fr. Crespi were the Costanoans, one of approximately 20 tribes in California at that time; eight distinct tribes inhabited the lands along the San Francisco Bay. When the Spaniards arrived, about 7,000 Costanoans occupied the San Francisco Peninsula, southern San Francisco Bay, and the Santa Cruz Mountains. Along the shores of the bay, they gathered plentiful shellfish from the tidal flats. Great shellmounds marked sites where bountiful harvests of clams and mussels had been eaten for hundreds of years. One mound in Emeryville was 1,000 feet long, 300 feet wide, and 22 feet high. Until recent years shellmounds were to be found in Palo Alto near Middlefield Road and Marion Avenue and in Mountain View near San Antonio Road and Central Expressway.

The shellmounds consisted mainly of shells, ash, dirt, rock and miscellaneous residue. As Indians continued to use the same sites, more materials accumulated, and the mounds increased in height. Older materials are found deeper in the mound. Artifacts such as bone implements, obsidian arrowheads, mortars, beads and charmstones have been unearthed by archaeologists in these mounds. They tell a chronological story of the habits and customs of these interesting people. The earliest mounds date back 3,500 years; beyond that there is no record of the shellmound people.

No Native American sites have been found within Foothills Park or Pearson-Arastradero Preserve. It is unlikely they would have established permanent camps away from the bay, with its abundant mollusks, fish, waterfowl and game along the shores. However, they probably did come to the foothills to hunt and gather acorns, manzanita berries, elderberries,

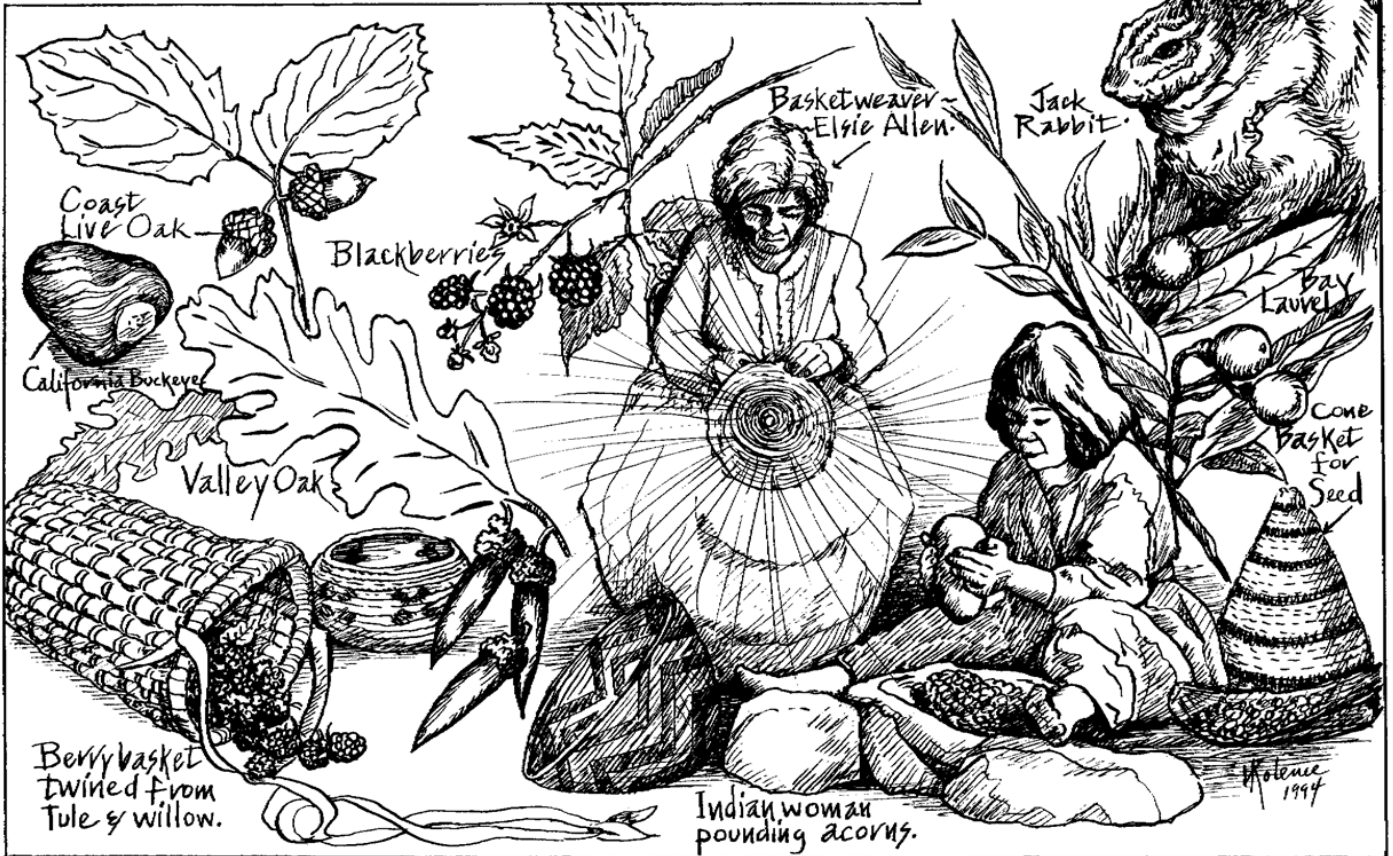




Canada Goose

Tule Grebe

California Quail



Basketweaver - Elsie Allen

Jack Rabbit

Bay Laurel

Cone Basket for Seed

Molenee 1994

Coast Live Oak

Blackberries

California Buckeye

Valley Oak

Berry basket twined from Tule & willow.

Indian woman pounding acorns.