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Plant of the Season: Oaks

A History Lesson

In grade school, history for me was primarily about memorizing dates, names, and places. It wasn't so much a matter of it being boring or relevant or interesting, it was just something I had to do if I wanted to get through the many years of formal education my parents willed upon me. It wasn't until much later in college that I realized its power in providing a knowledge needed to unlock secrets about my past that had been hidden (in this case, my own ethnic heritage) and a tool to address the many problems facing our society.

But even this understanding only went so far. In my current forays into local history I have many times become entangled in the day-to-day political turmoil of egos and individual wills. History became an abstract academic subject or something of a hobby I used to be interested in. Until recently, I have to admit my mind has drifted back to my grade school days of memorizing dates, names, and places, or currently in my case, forgetting dates, names, and places. With my parents and grade school teachers no longer present to give me a reason to remember, I have wondered what's the purpose and why does any of this "history business" matter?

With winter quarter came a veritable whirlwind of incidents: the bomb threat, the energy crisis, the falling of the big oak tree in front of our building (see page 10), to name a few. I have felt overwhelmed by it all. But, I have come to realize that these incidents, as disturbing as they are, have actually given me a deeper appreciation of the significance of history education and why what we do here can truly "matter."

Facing with many other Californians, daily "stage three" energy alerts and "rolling blackouts," we asked Jim Williams, former executive director of CHC, current De Anza history department chair, and a member of the CHCF board, to give a talk on the energy crisis for the center. Williams is one of the state's experts on the history of California energy issues. His presentation helped renew my faith that historical examination is not just an academic exercise but a way to ground us and to provide a starting point for solving problems that directly, and in this case, immediately, affect us in our daily lives. In other words, things just don't happen to us out of the blue, but have a history that we are part of whether we like to remember it or not.

At the end of January a potential tragedy was averted. A young man apparently had the will and the means to cause tremendous loss and grief to our community. It seems he had an idea of what he wanted as his place in history, and it was a place none of us were willing to share. It made me not only count my blessings and cherish life more, but wonder what was lacking from the lives of such individuals. Why are some of us so terribly disconnected from the flow of history that brings the rest of us together?

Lastly, we quite unexpectedly lost one of our oak trees that provided shade and shelter in front of the center. Felled by root

rot, the oak was perhaps well over one hundred years of age if not two hundred. I was moved by the strong feelings many campus and community people have expressed at the loss of our tree. It made me realize how its life had connected many people to this place, and, perhaps, how it had done the same for others of whom we have no record. I looked at its up-turned roots, broken and damaged by disease. It reminded me of how tenuous the hold of our own "roots" and connections can be without the "grounding" a common history can provide.

History connects all of these incidents and helps us make sense of them and helps us to see beyond them no matter how disturbing. It provides us with a vision that demands all of us be present and connected. This is why it is so important and brings up so many deep feelings and emotions as well as higher aspirations and a deeper sense of purpose. As historian Gerda Lerner says in her book, *Why History Matters: Life and Thoughts*,

"By perceiving ourselves to be part of history, we can begin to think on a scale larger than the here and now. We can expand our reach and with it our aspirations."

And that is why our center is so important. Perhaps through it, we can give people a sense of their place in history.

We are delighted to announce the hiring of Joni Motoshige as our new administrative associate for CHCF (See page 14). She brings a love of community history and a dedication to education to the center that we have already greatly benefited from.

We celebrated the recent publication of Marjorie Pierce's *The Martin Murphy Family Saga*, and look forward to the upcoming release of a new edition of *Passing Farms, Enduring Values* by Yvonne Jacobson. We deeply appreciate the hard work and dedication of both of these authors, and I would like to give a special thanks to board member Mary Jo Ignoffo for spearheading the coordination of our publication work.

Next year we will continue exploring our theme of the environment, but with a special focus on the tremendous changes in Santa Clara Valley in the physical, social and cultural environment.

Thanks to all of you for your wonderful support and understanding this year and I look forward to an exciting Fall 2001!

Tom Izu, Director

COVER: California oak trees are discussed in the feature article (see page 6).

CALENDAR

4/17	Artist Flo Oy Wong discusses the Chinese American immigrant experience, 6-8 p.m., Euphrat Museum of Art, DeAnza College.	5/28	Memorial Day Observed
4/27-29	Social and Cultural History of Los Angeles Basin/Arts in California field trip	6/2	Historic Angel Island field trip
5/5	Arts in California field trip	6/9 & 6/16	Twentieth Century Traditions of Santa Cruz County field trips
5/12 & 5/19	Imperial San Francisco field trip	6/29	Spring Quarter Ends CHC Closes to the Public
		7/2	First Day of Summer Session

Women's History Month Celebrated at CHC

A series of special presentations and panel discussions were held at CHC and other campus locations during the first two weeks of March in recognition of Women's History Month. Under the theme, "Women Across the Disciplines," the series featured women involved in the visual arts, writing, music, and the sciences.

On February 28, students and faculty members of the college participated in a cross-cultural panel discussion on "Women and Immigration." The panel discussion helped serve as an introduction for a talk given the next day by artist Flo Oy Wong on "Stories from Angel Island and Other Histories of Chinese Immigration." Wong's art work, which is currently on display at the Euphrat Museum, documents the struggles of many Chinese against restrictive and discriminatory immigration laws.

Poetry readings, musical performances, and a special panel discussion on "Women in Science" were also scheduled. The commemorative activities ended with a special guest lecture by Sandra Harding, professor of education and women's studies at UCLA, who discussed

"Is Science Multicultural?"

The Women's History Month Program was sponsored by CHC and a number of campus and community organizations, including the De Anza Associated Student Body, the Visiting Speakers Series, Women's Studies, AAWJCC

(American Association of Women in Junior and Community Colleges), and the Asian Pacific American Staff Association.



Poet Harryette Mullen of UCLA read from her work.

EDUCATION

State and Regional History

The following courses will be offered Spring Quarter through the California History Center. Please see the California History Center class listings section of the DeAnza College Spring Schedule of Classes for detailed information (i.e., course ID #, call #, and units.) For additional course information, call the center at (408) 864-8712.

****And don't forget, as a benefit of being a history center member you can register for history center classes (CHC classes only, not other De Anza classes) at the Trianon building.*

The Arts in California: *Betty Hirsch*

California is a festival of the arts. This course will examine the arts in both the Bay Area and the Los Angeles Area. Included will be a three-day trip to Los Angeles April 27, 28, 29, 2001, where the class will be treated to a live performance by the Los Angeles Opera, under Artistic Director Plácido Domingo, of Gaetano Donizetti's comic opera "Don Pasquale" starring Ruth Ann Swenson, Simone Alaimo, and Thomas Allen. Lodging will be enjoyed at the beautiful and grand Ritz-Carlton, Huntington Hotel and Spa in Pasadena. Sites visited will include the Norton Simon Museum with its fabulous collection of Impressionist Art; Charles and Henry Greene's masterpiece, the Gamble House, one of the five finest house museums in America; the Huntington Museum with its art gallery, gardens and landmark research library; Richard Meyer's beautiful Getty Museum high on a hill overlooking the whole city; a performance of a play at the historic Pasadena Playhouse; and the incredible new Walt Disney Concert Hall designed by Frank O. Gehry at the L.A. Music Center. Also included will be a performance in the San Francisco Bay Area. Join us and experience the arts in all their glory.

Lectures: Wednesday, April 18, May 2.

Field trips: Friday, April 27, Saturday, April 28, Sunday, April 29, Saturday, May 5.

Social and Cultural History of the Los Angeles Basin: *Chatham Forbes*

This course will explore the "art and intellect" of the Los Angeles Basin. Through a combination of railroad promotion and boosterism, the Los Angeles region has evolved from sparsely populated *ranchos* and *pueblos* to the nation's second largest metropolis, with a highly diversified economy and an equally

diverse population. The many communities that comprise Los Angeles have produced a regional, cultural and intellectual life notable for its vitality, abundance of talent, and multiplicity of institutions. The class will study and experience selected examples of this distinctive and influential culture. Included is a field trip to the Los Angeles area in conjunction with "The Arts in California" class.

Lectures: Thursday, April 19, May 3.

Field trips: Friday, April 27, Saturday, April 28, and Sunday, April 29.

Imperial San Francisco: *Jean Libby*

The movers and shakers who built the Pacific Coast financial empire emerged from the "get rich quick" mass movement to San Francisco during the 1849 gold rush. The gold rush became corporatized with its extension into silver ore and quicksilver (mercury) mining. It is the money made from this industrialized mining and subsequent real estate development that created the financial center and world crossroads at Montgomery and Sansome streets where Field Trip #1 begins on Saturday, May 12. The group walks through the financial district, stopping at the Palace Hotel of the William C. Ralston empire, proceeding to the South of Market area which was formerly the industrial center of mining equipment manufacture and workers' residences, now vastly redeveloped and the center of arts, history, and convention

tourism in the City. We will tour the California Historical Society's exhibit, "Splendid California: French Artists' Impressions of the Golden State: 1786-1900," and end with a streetcar trip to Fisherman's Wharf for lunch. Field Trip #2 on Saturday, May 19, takes the group to the New



The Crocker National Bank, San Francisco, 1915.

Almaden Quicksilver mining Museum in San Jose, and to Filoli, the estate of William Bowers Bourn II, owner of the Empire Gold mine of Grass Valley.

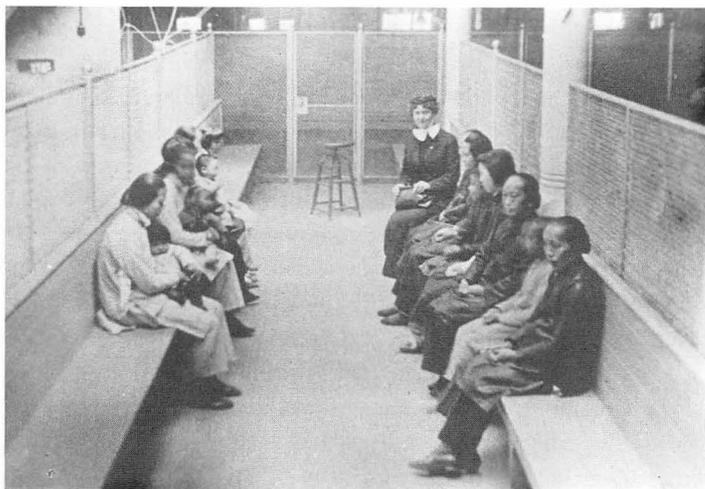
A lecture will be held for the class on Tuesday, May 8, 6:20 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the CHC. The course will use Gray Brechin's *Imperial San Francisco* as a text, which is available at the college bookstore.

Lecture: Tuesday, May 8.

Field trips: Friday May 12 and May 19.

Historic Angel Island: Betty Hirsch

Angel Island, the largest island in the San Francisco Bay, was used as a Miwok ceremonial site long before it was "discovered" in 1775 by Juan Manuel de Ayala, the first European to sail through the Golden Gate. While his officers explored and mapped the Bay, Ayala named many of the Bay's landmarks: Angel Island (Isla de Nuestra Senora de los Angeles), Sausalito (Saucelito—little thicket of willows) and Alcatraz (Isla de los Alcatrazes— island of the pelicans). During the War between the States, the Union Army built garrisons on the northwestern shore at Camp Reynolds. On the opposite side of the island is Fort McDowell, a military garrison from 1898 until 1946. During World War II, Ft. McDowell was the biggest induction center in the U.S. Near the turn of the century, Angel Island was called the "Ellis Island of the West." Asian immigrants entering the United States were detained on the eastern side of the island until they



Asian immigrants entering the United States were detained on Angel Island.

could officially enter San Francisco. During World War II, it was a detention center for the Japanese and Italians and others considered "enemy aliens." Today, Angel Island is part of the Golden Gate National Park System.

Lecture: Thursday, May 24.

Field trip: Sat. June 2.

Twentieth Century Transitions of Santa Cruz County: Chatham Forbes

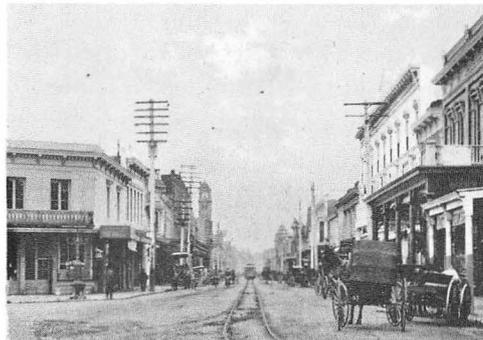
The Santa Cruz region came into the twentieth century with a Hispanic and American heritage of pastoral, agricultural, and largely extractive industry together with some tourism and seaside resort development. In this century, growth and change in population, transportation, and industrial technology have gradually transformed the culture and economy of most areas. The class will study and observe these influences in both

classroom and field.

Lectures:

Thursday, June 7 and June 14.

Field Trips:
Saturday, June 9 and June 16



Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, 1905

New Instructor for CHC classes

Jean Libby of the De Anza College History and Intercultural Studies Departments has edited and published Santa Clara Valley histories for *The Californians* and local cooperative and civil rights organizations. She has led historical field trip classes at San Jose City College, Solano College, Diablo Valley College, and City College of San Francisco. She prefers to be known as "the field trip and potluck teacher" in her regular United States and African American history classes.

FEATURE

Plant of the Season: Oaks

by David W. Peri

On Sunday, February 25, 2001, the CHC lost one of the large coast live oak trees that graced one side of the steps leading to the center from the Sunken Garden. The oak was toppled by fungus-induced root rot. Fortunately, any serious damage was limited to the balustrade and no one was injured in the fall. The CHC is saddened by the loss of such a magnificent tree with a history dating back perhaps well over 100 hundred years. In commemoration of this tree, the following article is reprinted from News from Native California magazine.

California, at the time of European contact, was one of the most densely populated regions in the United States, with between 280,000 and 340,000 people. To support such a population required adequate and reliable supplies of staples and the techniques for obtaining them; an adequate and reliable means of preserving and storing foods to span lean periods; and possession of a technological means to exploit the local ecological situation. Of all the available food resources, both plant and animal, the California Indians utilized the nuts of the oak tree more than any other.

Approximately 300 species of oaks are native in the colder and temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere and the mountains of the tropics, and all belong to the Beech family (*Fagaceae*) of plants. Additionally, they all belong to a genus identified as oak or *Quercus* (from the Celtic *quer*, fine, and *cuez*, a tree, signifying a beautiful tree.) Of the 300 species, some 68 are native to the United States; 16 of these are found in California, three of which grow nowhere else; the valley oak (*Q. lobata*), the blue oak (*Q. douglasii*), and the leather oak (*Q. durato*). Two others are narrowly confined to a given region, although neither is restricted to only California: the deer oak (*Q. sadleriana*) occurs only in the Klamath Mountain region of northwestern California and adjacent Oregon; and the island oak (*Q. tomentella*), which is the rarest of all, is restricted to the five Santa Barbara Islands of Southern California, and Guadalupe Island off of the coast of Baja California.

Although not a true oak, but referred to and thought of as one (it does bear acorns), the tanoak or tanbark oak (*Lithocarpus densiflora*) belongs to the genus *Lithocarpus* and not to the genus *Quercus*, the genus of the oaks. Occurring in California and southwestern Oregon, the tanoak is the only New World representative of the large genus *Lithocarpus*, which consists of some 300 species of broadleaf evergreen trees confined to the subtropical and warm temperate regions of southeastern Asia from Japan and mainland China to Indonesia.

Although all of California's oaks were, at one time or another, used as food, depending upon the failure or success of a year's crop, availability within a group's territory, and the group's taste preference, some nine species were generally the most preferred. In the following chart, a preferred species is rated 1, a commonly used species is rated 2, and an undesirable species or one used only when the crops of others fail is rated 3.

Species	Average Rating
Tan oak (<i>L. densiflora</i>)	1.0
Valley oak (<i>Q. lobata</i>)	1.9
Oregon oak (<i>Q. garryana</i>)	2.0
Blue oak (<i>Q. douglasii</i>)	1.5
Scrub oak (<i>Q. dumosa</i>)	2.5
Canyon live oak (<i>Q. chrysolepis</i>)	2.2
Coast live oak (<i>Q. agrifolia</i>)	2.0
Interior live oak (<i>Q. wislizenii</i>)	2.3
Black oak (<i>Q. kelloggii</i>)	1.5

Indications are that the tanoak acorns (*Lithocarpus densiflora*), rich in oil and sweeter in taste, contain less of the bitter tannic acid than other acorns, and were, and are still today, the most preferred species whenever available. Acorns of the valley oak (*Q. lobata*) were a great staple and are yet used today. They were usually not preferred, if other alternatives were available, possibly because they were considered difficult to hull. Other species were preferred in some areas. For example, the blue oak (*Q. douglasii*) was preferred in the northern Sacramento Valley, and the black oak (*Q. kelloggii*) in the Sierra foothills. These preferences may relate to the relative abundance of the trees, or perhaps simply to a group's established taste and/or



other preference. Acorns of the Oregon oak (*Q. garryana*) are in the same class as those of the valley oak, that is, they were a great staple, and are still used today, but were always thought to be less desirable, than acorns of the tanoak. Acorns from the scrub oak (*Q. dumosa*), canyon live oak (*Q. chrysolepis*), and the interior and coast live oaks (*Q. wislizenii* and *Q. agrifolia*) seem not to have been preferred and were possibly not much used if other alternatives were available.

Given the importance of the acorn as the staple food which—in the form of soup, mush, and bread—fed an estimated three quarters of California’s pre-European population, or between 210,000 and 245,000, it goes without saying that the distribution of oak trees exerted considerable influence on the settlement and subsistence patterns, social organization, and resource exchange networks among California Indians. Or, as Laura Somersal, a Dry Creek Pomo and Wappo, put it:

Those oak trees have been good to us for longer than I know how to remember about. They’ve been giving us food, I believe maybe since He first put us here on this earth. And even before then, I believe those trees were giving the birds and the animals acorns to eat too. All that is way before the time I know about; but, I still believe it’s so. That’s what my old grandma said, and she said that’s what her grandma said to her. When something is handed down like that, it must be as they say it; so it’s true. In those early days, seems like the people had all they needed; they even had some left over to give to the visitors when they went home. They didn’t have stores in those early days but it was like

California Oaks

California oaks, like all others, are divided into three broad groups or subgenera of oaks: white, black (sometimes also termed “red”), and intermediate. The white oaks occur around the world in the Northern Hemisphere; black oaks are found only in the New World from southern Canada to Colombia in South America; and the intermediate oaks are in the main restricted to western North America. The three groups are popularly distinguished, in mature trees, by the color of their bark: light grayish-brown or almost white in the white oaks, and a very dark grayish-brown or black bark for the black oaks. Technically, the groups are based upon their different patterns of producing fruit or acorns. The white oaks produce acorns in one year, while the black oaks take two years to produce a crop. The acorns which mature each fall grow steadily to full size over the course of that year, while those which take two years to mature develop only very slightly the first year, appearing as miniature acorns, and begin to increase perceptibly in size only at the beginning of the second year, reaching full maturity in the fall of that same year.

The kernel or “meat” of white oak acorns is usually whitish, sweetish, and palatable, while that of black oak acorns is usually yellowish and bitter with tannin. Additionally, black oak acorns have a higher fat content than the white oak acorns, which are often very low in fat.

The intermediate oaks are not really intermediate in most features; rather, in some respects, they resemble the white oaks, but in others they resemble the black oaks.

David W. Peri

that. The people lived next to where the food was. For some of the things they didn’t have to travel for, they were close by. When they went to Bodega Bay for the fish and seaweed, even in my time, it was fun, like vacation I would say. Those days the Indians had everything they needed to hunt, catch the fish, get the berries, the clovers, Indian potatoes, the acorns. The reason they had it is ’cause they made it. It’s not like now.

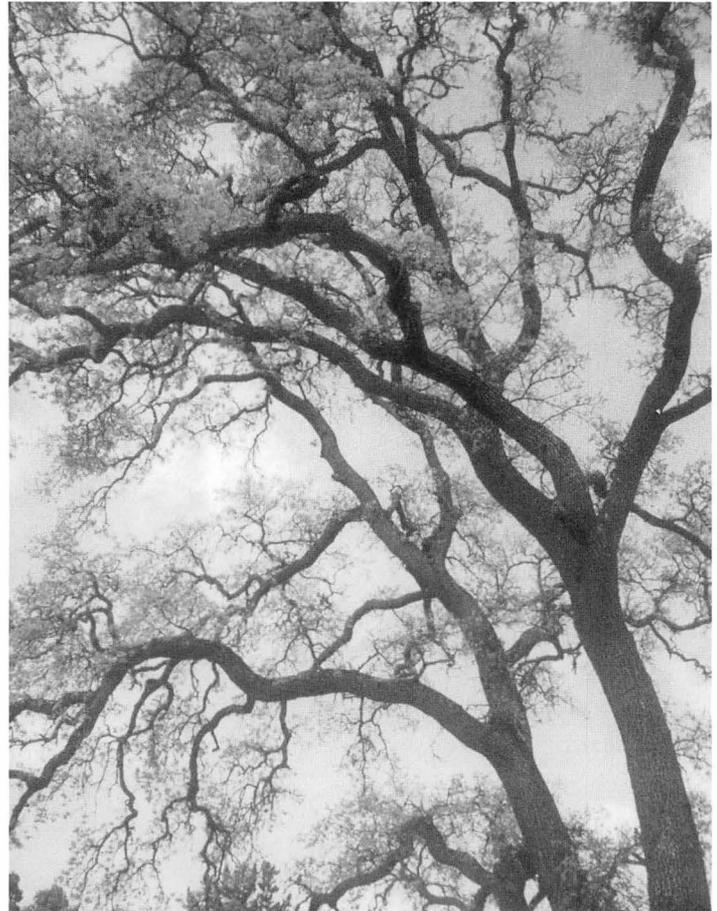
Variety and variation characterize California's oaks. According to one Pomoan text, the activities of Bluejay accounted for why there are so many different oaks in "Pomo country":

In ancient times, in the times before Coyote created humans, bird people lived upon the land. Although they were birds, they also talked and acted like humans would when it came time for them to be upon this land. It was then that Bluejay lived here and made his living on eating acorns. He used to store up his acorns in the woods, collecting them from the different trees. He knew where the oaks should grow and so he planted acorns at each of those spots. This way, Bluejay made sure that there would always be enough acorns for him to eat. That is why there are so many and different oaks at each of these places and why there are so many acorns.

Of California's 16 species of oaks, not including the tanoak, ten are trees (six evergreen and four deciduous); and six are evergreen shrubs. California's oaks also include one of the largest of the North American oaks, the valley oak (*Q. lobata*), with some growing to 150 feet high, as well as some of the smallest shrubby species, such as the huckleberry oak (*Q. vaccinifolia*), which grows to only some three to four feet. The oaks are also adapted to a wide variety of habitats; from desert border, the palmer oak (*Q. dumii*), to the coastal fog belt and sea level, the coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*), and to the subalpine slopes, the huckleberry oak (*Q. vaccinifolia*). Oaks occur then in most parts of the state, and are absent from only the most extreme environments; the true alpine areas of the highest mountains, the open desert, the region of severe winters east of the Sierra Nevada, and the coastal belt immediately adjacent to the ocean.



The most unusual oak in California is the deer oak (*Q. sadleriana*), with leaves more chestnut-like than oak-like, and with no close relatives in the Pacific Coast states. A thicket-forming shrub, four to eight feet tall, it only commonly occurs in the Klamath Mountain region. Given its restricted geographic range, its relative lack of variation, the fact that its nearest relative is in Japan and China, and its considerable Eocene fossil evidence, it appears that the deer oak is a remnant of an ancient species complex that was once a much more abundant and dominant part of early Tertiary vegetation of Asia and North America.



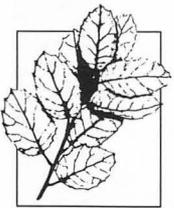
The valley oak (*Q. lobata*) is a deciduous tree and one of the tallest of the North American oaks. Although mainly associated with the Great Central Valley, it ranges from the Pit River in the north, through the alluvial plains of the Sierra Nevada foothills and valleys of the coast ranges to Pasadena and the San Fernando Valley in the south. Being one of the species preferred by California Indians, its production of acorns was significant. It is estimated that the average yield per tree, with a good crop one year out of three and only partial crops in the other years, is between 350 and 500 pounds.



The black oak (*Q. kelloggii*), a deciduous tree, is the most widely distributed, occurring in more than 18 percent of the state at altitudes that range from 200 to 8,000 feet, and was therefore of special importance to California Indians. It is found in the hills and mountains from Oregon through the coast ranges where it is especially abundant, and to San Diego County, and through the Sierra Nevadas. It is a good producer of large acorn crops between 200 and 300 pounds in a good year. It is also a regular producer, averaging more than one good crop in two years, and therefore was of special significance as a reliable food for those California Indians in whose territory it occurred.



The blue oaks (*Q. douglasii*) are also numerous and widespread, growing in some 17 percent of the state. Although found in the coast ranges, it is the dominant oak of California's foothill woodlands, especially around the Central Valley, and the northern Sierra Nevada foothills. It shares most of its habitat with the interior live oak, but prefers the drier spots. Although the blue oaks are numerous and widespread, the trees are not so large as some other species, and their crops are correspondingly smaller, so they assume somewhat less importance as a food source. An average tree in a very good year might produce 160 pounds. Moreover, it appears that the crop fails rather frequently, with a good crop no more often than one year in three.



The interior live oak (*Q. wislizenii*), an evergreen, inhabits the drier interior foothills and valleys, away from the fog. It occurs in the coastal ranges from Ukiah to Baja California, and in the Sierra Nevada foothills from Shasta County to the Tehachapi Mountains. Its maximum crop is in excess of 100 pounds per tree, and there is a good crop about one year in two. As such, it was a commonly used species.



The coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*) is probably one of the most familiar to residents and visitors alike, because it grows in the heavily populated coastal counties ranging from Sonoma County to Baja California, and is found in approximately 15 percent of the state.

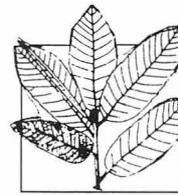
The trees and their acorns are both rather small, so the yields are not large, about 100 pounds or less on the average. In addition to being small, the crops are variable, with no more than one good crop occurring in two years.



The canyon live oak (*Q. chrysolepis*) occurs in 12 percent of the state and in a wide variety of habitats through the entire length of California. It spans forest woodland and chaparral sites, and is even found in a few disjunct populations in the Mojave Desert. In the Sierra, it occurs chiefly at elevations between 1,500 and 5,000 feet and in the coast ranges is scattered through most river valleys. The acorn crop in very good years could run up to 400 or 500 pounds but averages between 150 and 200 pounds. However, production is quite irregular, with probably not more than one good crop in three years.



The Oregon oak (*Q. garryana*) occurs over less than six percent of the state, occurring mostly in the northern coast ranges, the Klamath Mountains, and the Cascade Ranges into Oregon, and is often associated with tanoaks. Estimates of its acorn production vary between 100 and 600 pounds per tree, probably with an average of 200 pounds or more. In acorn yield, it is like the tanoak except that it frequently fails, having a good crop only once in three or four years.



The tanoak, which grows from 50 to 150 feet tall, is found throughout the coast ranges from southern Oregon south to Santa Barbara. It usually occurs around the redwood belt and is most abundant in Mendocino and Humboldt counties. The tanoak forms a major part of the flora in its range, and because of its significance as a preferred species, its acorn production was particularly important. Some estimate that it produces between 125 pounds per tree to over 200 pounds in a good year, varying from 30 to 300 pounds with tree size and situation. Although the size of its crop varies, and it takes two years for its acorns to mature, it is said to produce at least a partial crop every year. According to the late Essie Parrish, a Kashaya or Southwestern Pomo and religious leader:

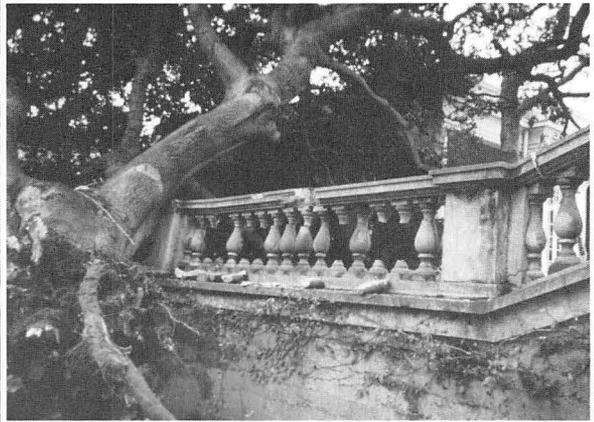
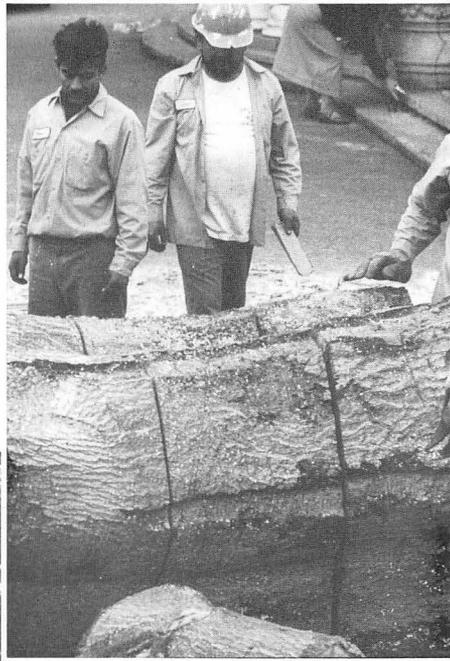
In our language, we call the tanoak chishkale; it means "The Beautiful Tree." It's beautiful to look at. I never get tired of

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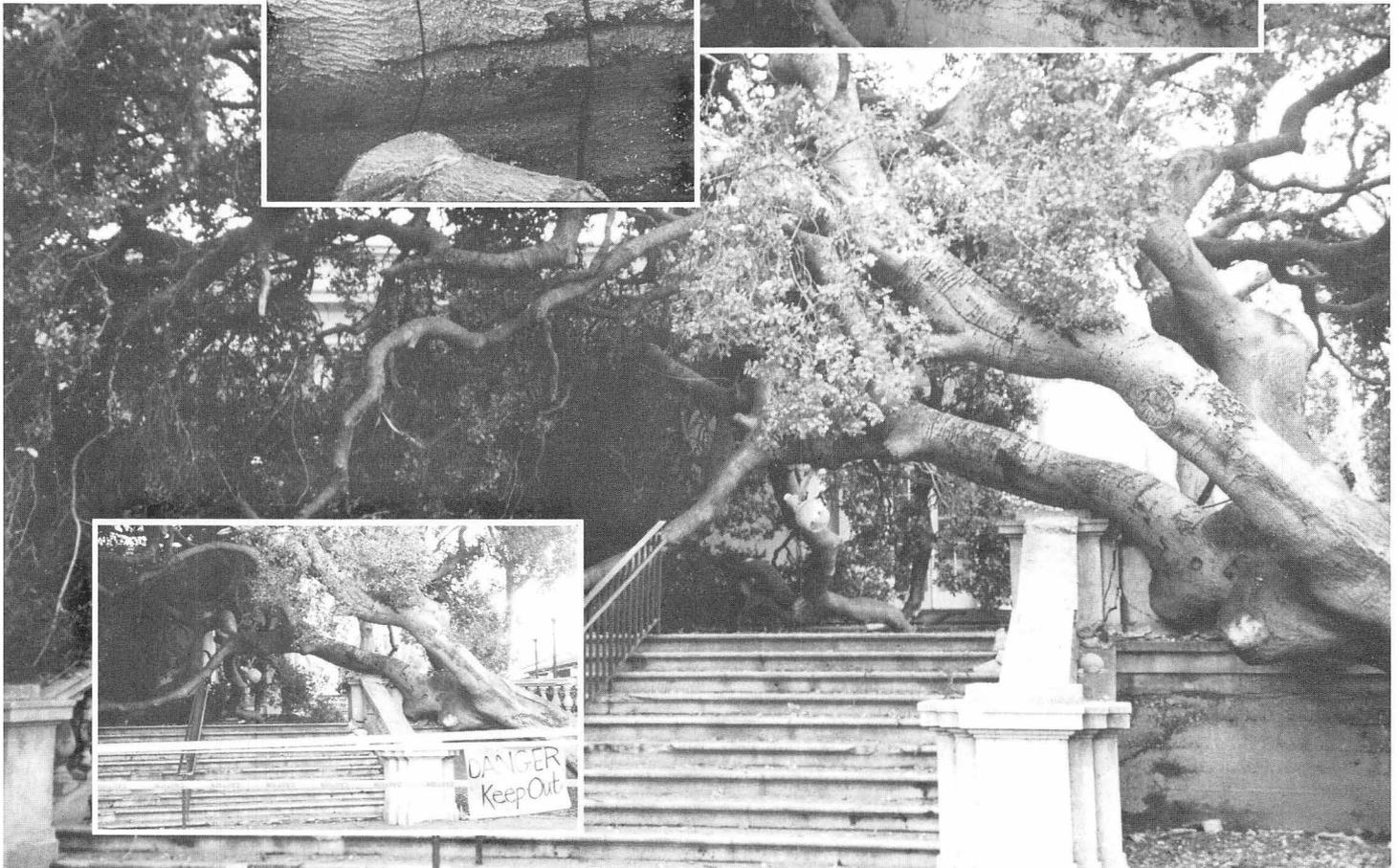
History Center Tree Falls



In February, one of the large coast live oak trees in front of the CHC came crashing down as the result of fungus-induced root rot. No one was injured and only an adjacent balustrade was seriously damaged. The tree was reportedly 100 or more years old.



Photos by
Darlene Thorne,
Nancy Canter



Our Old Oak Tree

*About a thousand years ago,
It might be hundreds less,
For when we can not know a thing
We only have to guess;
A tiny acorn rattled down
From some old tree that stood,
About a thousand years ago,
The monarch of this wood.*

*The tiny acorn rattled down
As soft the south wind blew,
To find a leafy hiding place,
From which this old oak grew,
But how it grew, or why it grew,
So crooked, rough, and low,
It has no tongue, and who can tell
What happened long ago?*

*While seated 'neath thy shade, old tree,
Upon my rustic chair,
The sea breeze rustling through thy leaves
Lifting my silvered hair,
I've wondered what thy past could tell,
If such a thing might be,
To weave a sympathetic chord
Between myself and thee.*

*Thy low bent trunk, deep scarred and gnarled,
Bears record of the past,
Of crushing harm from other trees,
Or tempests' fearful blast,
Scat'ring thy beauty to the winds
Like leaves before the gale,
Leaving a living monument
To tell its own sad tale.*

*Thus robbed of beauty, form and grace,
With sprawling head bent low,
Thy very worthlessness has saved
Thee from the axman's blow.
No woodman ever thought thee harm,
So thou has held the field;
Not one straight stick of four-foot wood
Thy crooked top would yield.*

*But naught, 'tis said, was made in vain,
I hope the doctrine true;
Some grains of comfort it might bring
To me as well as you,
Despoiled of beauty, not of life,
A mission thou wast given;
Some humble link in that great chain
Which binds all earth to Heaven,*

*Was it with every passing breeze
To sound His praise abroad,
To point the sluggish heart of man
Through nature up to God?
To welcome spring with buds and bloom,
And summer with her sheaves;
To deck the graves of parting years
With wreaths of russet leaves?*

*To welcome to thy cooling shade,
Through all the summer days,
The meadow lark, thy constant friend,
With all his merry lays?
To welcome to thy heart of oak,
With gnarly hands outspread,
The living things that God has made,
To shelter, board and bed?*

*'Twas but last summer, one fair day,
A wandering swarm of bees
Came swooping down to thy low top,
Past groves of finer trees;
In they low, rough, unsightly trunk,
To find a open door,
Where scores of squirrels had raised their
broods,
Five hundred years before.*

*Ah! yes, old tree, a mission thine,
I see it now more clear;
A lesson, too, it brings to me,
I have been slow to hear —
That scrubby trees should be content,
And faulty men as well,
To take what comes, and fill their niche,
And try to do it well.*

Los Gatos, California, March 17, 1883
From *The Story of a Bell and Other Poems* by G.W. McGrew, 1885

continued from page 9

seeing it; it always lifts up my heart and makes me feel good. Every time when I go about the country to doctor the people who call me to them, that tree, when I see it for the first time, lets me know I'm home and I feel good. Those who grow up here [Stewarts Point, Sonoma County] grow up with that tree also. It's like a relative or good friend. It may sound funny to the white people, but that tree is beautiful because it gives us good food too and it's sweet too; I'm always happy when it's acorn picking time; I don't know how to explain it better than that. Long ago, it was our most common food; we ate it every day. We stored up as much as we could. We still gather up those acorns now. Sometimes the people has hard times, no jobs, no work, but that tree still feeds us; sometimes it's the only food we have to eat. I guess that's why the people in olden days gave that tree this name, beautiful.

Quite apart from their beauty and grandeur, their significance in the state's settlement history, and their importance to today's wildlife, California's oaks are a living testimonial to the centuries-old culture and ongoing way of life of California's oldest continuing residents, the California Indians. Or as Elsie Allen, a Cloverdale Pomo, stated it:

The Indians and the acorn trees is just like the same thing. We wouldn't be the same Indians if there wasn't acorns. For as I know, the acorn trees has always been here and so have we.

This article is reprinted in memory of the author, David W. Peri who passed away in December 2000. Peri served as the chair of the Anthropology Department at Sonoma State University and was on the faculty of the university for many years. He was a Bodega Miwok, and a member of the Olamentko Tribe. He was chair of the board of Sonoma County's Ya-Ka-Ama Indian Education and Development Inc., and was co-editor of News from Native California magazine.

Reprinted with permission from News from Native California, Volume 1, Number 5, November/December 1987.

Want to Know More About California Oaks?

Available from the University of California Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Program, 163 Mulford Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720

Living Among the Oaks: A Management Guide for Landowners
Oak 'n' Folks: Newsletter of the Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program

Available from the California Oak Foundation, 1212 Broadway, Suite 810, Oakland, CA 94612

Oaks of California by Bruce Pavlik
Available in hardcover or paperback

Life of an Oak by Glenn Keator

Compatible Plants Under and Around Oaks by Bruce W. Hagen

Websites

Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program
www.danr.ucop.edu/ihrmp

Oak Mortality Task Force
www.suddenoakdeath.org

International Oak Society
www.saintrmarys.edu/~riensen/ios.html

Growing Native Research Institute
www.growingnative.com

U.C. Hastings Reserve
www.hastingsreserve.org

International Society of Arboriculture
www2.champaign.isa-arbor.com/sitemap.html

Guidelines for Developing & Evaluative Tree Ordinances
www2.champaign.ise-arbor.com/tree-ord/ordintro.htm

California Native Plant Society
www.cnps.org

Urban Forestry Ecosystems Institute
www.ufe.calpoly.edu

SelecTree: A tree selection guide
www.selecttree.calpoly.edu

California's Register of Big Trees
www.ufe.calpoly.edu/data/bigtrees/index/html

Institute for Ecological Health
www.thecity.sfsu.edu/users/IEF

Project Learning Tree
www.plt.org

California Futures Network
www.calfutures.org

California Natural Diversity Database
www.dfg.ca.gov/hdab/html/cnddb.html

National Tree Trust
www.nationaltreetrust.org

FOUNDATION NOTES

Burrel Leonard, Valley Pioneer and CHC Supporter, Dies



Burrel Leonard

He was a descendant of a pioneering farming family that first settled in Santa Clara County in the mid-1800s. He was a fruit grower whose orchard became Cupertino's Vallco Park development, and he was a major force in the incorporation of the city and its post-agricultural growth.

His name was Burrel Leonard, and he died Dec. 22 at the age of 89.

He also was one of the CHC's staunchest supporters over the years.

"We have lost a great friend," said Tom Izu, CHC director. "Mr. Leonard had a keen interest in the history of our region, and supported it in many ways. He will be deeply missed."

At the time of his death, he was president of the Leonard Company, a property development and management firm at the Vallco Financial Center.

A bachelor all of his life, Mr. Leonard was remembered by

Bill Hyland, a longtime friend and business associate, as "an exceptional man, always a gentleman, always himself at every occasion."

Speaking at Mr. Leonard's funeral service, Hyland said the county pioneer accomplished great things.

"Burrel, along with Will Lester and Walter Ward, began and completed the development of Vallco Park and rather against the odds. . . . The competition was fierce, the approval process was difficult at a minimum, and the financing was awkward," he said.

After Vallco Park was sold, Mr. Leonard invested in a number of properties in the county—some office, some industrial and some individual parcels of land.

But his favorite property, according to Hyland, was his facility on Llagas Road in San Martin, where he stored and maintained his collection of farm machinery, tools, photographs and other memorabilia from the Santa Clara Valley's agricultural past.

Born in San Jose, Mr. Leonard grew up on his family's 200-acre farm. John, his father, pioneered diversified irrigation farming and packed fruit under the John Leonard label. He died in 1975.

The Leonard packing plant operated on land near Wolfe Road and Interstate 280, where a large residential complex is now located. The facility was closed in the early 1960s.

A graduate of Stanford University, Burrel Leonard also played a major part in the birth of the city of Cupertino. The move to incorporate as a city was launched in 1954 by a group of residents, including Mr. Leonard, alarmed by the prospect of being annexed by neighboring cities. Cupertino was incorporated in October 1955.

New Staff Member at CHC



As the new administrative associate, Joni Motoshige is enjoying her work and the people she has met. She is happy to have found a job in history, her chosen field, and she appreciates the beauty of her new workplace and is excited about having “windows, natural light and being close to trees and the squirrels.”

Community and history have always been a part of Motoshige’s life. Born and raised in Hawaii,

Joni was active as a 4-H club member and participated in many other student programs. Her interest in civic involvement, nurtured in high school, followed her all the way to Greeley, Colorado, where she attended the University of Northern Colorado. From her second year to her final graduation with a master’s degree, she participated on search committees and discussion panels and assisted on the planning of various activities at the university.

Motoshige’s work in the Greeley community opened the doors to many opportunities to gain experience in community history education. She was asked to research and write the history of a local Hispanic church as part of the church’s 50th year celebration. Up to this time, Motoshige had not been sure of what she wanted to do with a bachelor’s degree in history and a minor in psychology. Her work on this particular project was the defining experience of her commitment to community history and community education.

Deciding to continue on to graduate school in History, Motoshige remained in Greeley. Furthering her commitment to community education, she worked at the Center for Human Enrichment at the university. As the assistant director of the Center’s McNair Scholars Program she gained experiences in grantwriting and counseling.

During the summer of 1998, Motoshige was asked to create and implement a curriculum for a pilot history camp for the Salvation Army of Weld County, Colorado. She served as the Salvation Army History Camp Director, working with youth from ages 8 to 15 years from all different ethnic and religious backgrounds. She found it challenging to stimulate interest and excitement for a topic that many of her students had thought of as boring. She remembers that, “The most rewarding part about it was to see all of these kids from very diverse backgrounds

working together to explore and learn about a community history they could share.” This pilot project was awarded the 1998 Colorado Historical Museum’s Josephine Miles Award for Best History Program in the State of Colorado.

After 7 years in Colorado, Motoshige returned home to take care of her grandparents. She continued her commitment to community education by working at her local YMCA and a 4-H, “Read To Me” literacy program.

In August 2000, Motoshige decided to return to the mainland and ended up in Sunnyvale, California. Between Hawaii and Colorado, Motoshige finds California as a good middle ground. California, according to her, is “a place close enough to family to visit but also far enough to venture out and explore the world a little.”

New Volunteer for the Library

A welcome addition to the Stocklmeir Library/Archives volunteer force is Roslyn Davis. Roslyn (who likes to be called Roz), hails from Long Island, N.Y., and now lives in Cupertino with her husband Homer and 11-year old son, Richard. Roz’s profession in the east was corporate bond sales on Wall Street. Now her “passion is for books” with a special interest in children’s books. Roz works as librarian at Lynbrook High School in Cupertino. She has taken on the task of repairing the Stocklmeir Library materials during her weekly Friday afternoon stint at the history center and will also volunteer time at the De Anza Learning Center in Technical Services. Roz is a great fan of “antiquing” and seldom misses the De Anza Flea Market.



Barbara Banfield, left, naturalist for the city of Cupertino, was the featured speaker in March for the CHC’s Brown Bag Lunch Series. Her topic was “Native Oaks: Past, Present and Future.” Above, she speaks to some of the attendees following her presentation.

Murphy Book Celebration



Marjorie Pierce, seated, author of *The Martin Murphy Family Saga*, poses with Murphy family members at a reception held in March to celebrate the release of the book, published by the CHC.

The Martin Murphy family's migration from Ireland and eventual settling in Sunnyvale are documented in a new book, *The Martin Murphy Family Saga*, recently published by the California History Center.

A reception was held at the CHC in March to celebrate the publication of the book and to honor its author, California native Marjorie Pierce.

The 163-page book features a forward by Michael Malone, journalist and author from Sunnyvale, and a forward by Dianne McKenna, former mayor of Sunnyvale and Santa Clara County supervisor.

Writes McKenna: "People like Marjorie Pierce are our connection to our history and our past. They also provide us a view of the future. Marjorie gives us a treasure to enjoy."

McKenna notes the Murphy pioneers "endured swollen rivers, buffalo stampedes, disease, impassable mountains and freezing snow to reach a land of perennial sunshine and fertile soil."

Malone, in his introduction, notes that Pierce's book is "so fabulous that no writer would dare to invent it. And in this story, thanks to the craft of Marjorie Pierce, we modern Silicon Valleyites, can discern the first traces and patterns of ourselves."

Author Pierce has lived in San Jose since 1948, and for 30 years was a columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*. She has written two earlier books—one on St. Joseph's Cathedral in San Jose and the other on the ranches and towns in the Mission San Juan Bautista area.

CHC members at the \$50 level have received a copy of the book as a premium for the 1999-2000 year.

New Members

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Edwin and Janice Motoshige

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