



Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Plymouth – Foothills

Program for September 13, 2011

NOTE: Our meeting will this week will be in the “East/West Clubhouse” just inside the gate of the 49er Village

Sharon Jenkins Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park



About the Park

Chaw'se is the Miwok word for grinding rock. Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park (IGR) is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills 12 miles east of Jackson. The park nestles in a little valley 2,400 feet above sea level with open meadows and large valley oaks that once provided the native Americans of this area with an ample supply of acorns. The park was created in 1968 and preserves a great outcropping of marbleized limestone with some 1,185 mortar holes -- the largest collection of bedrock mortars in North America.

Facilities - Activities

The Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum

As a regional Indian museum, the collection at Chaw'se includes

Northern, Central and Southern Miwok, Maidu, Konkow, Monache, Nisenan, Tubatulabal, Washo, and Foothill Yokuts. Examples of basketry, feather regalia, jewelry, arrowpoints, and other tools are on display.



Big Time
Several ceremonies

Native those ceremonies Big Time, brings together Indian families on the weekend following the fourth Friday in September for the annual acorn gathering. Dancing, hand games, singing and storytelling are traditional at this event. Spectators are welcome.



Events
times a year are held in the hun'ge (roundhouse) by local Americans. One of

Camping in the U'macha'tam'ma' sites (bark houses to the north) is a unique experience. Here you can "get away from it all" and get back in touch with the natural world while simultaneously learning something about Miwok life.

Seven bark houses, each one suitable for up to six people, have been constructed in a secluded area of the park. They can be reserved for a group of up to 44 people.

Trails

There are two developed trails within the park. The *North Trail*, a one-mile round-trip, The half-mile long *South Trail* is a self guided nature trail and starts near the roundhouse.

Wildlife

Birdlife varies depending on the season, but many species are seen year round, including turkey vultures, scrub and Steller's jays, California quail, acorn and hairy woodpeckers, northern flickers, hermit thrushes, wild turkeys (non-native), and California thrashers. In summer, the bright colors of the western tanager, northern oriole, calliope and Anna's hummingbirds can be seen in the woods around the meadow. A bird list is available at the museum.

Animal life in and around the park includes deer, fox, gray and California ground squirrels, black-tailed jackrabbits, bobcats, bats, and occasionally a mountain lion or black bear. The legendary coyote (the trickster of Miwok legend) can be heard singing on quiet summer nights.

The Rock and The People

Chaw'se is the Miwok word for grinding rock, a slab of stone on which the Miwok people ground acorns and other seeds into meal, slowly forming the cup shaped depressions in the stone that can still be seen today. Along with the mortar holes, the main grinding rock within the park also features a number of decorative carvings: circles, spoked wheels, animal and human tracks, wavy lines, etc. Some of these carvings are thought to as much as two or even three thousand years old and are now becoming difficult to see. This association of rock art and bedrock mortar pits is unique in California. Except for one other small site, Chaw'se has the only known occurrence of mortars intentionally decorated with petroglyphs



Village and Roundhouse

A typical Miwok village has been reconstructed that provides present-day descendents of the Miwok and opportunity to preserve their heritage and traditions and share them with present and future generations of Californians. Bark houses, a ceremonial roundhouse, acorn granaries, shade ramadas, an Indian game field, and demonstrations of old arts, crafts and games all combine to illustrate the past for present day visitors.

In the old days, the roundhouse, or hun'ge, was the setting for a variety of social gatherings and ceremonial

Environmental Living/Group Camping



events. Ceremonies were held, for example, to pray, to mourn the dead or to observe special occasions through music and dance. In a typical village, this semi-subterranean community center was the largest building in the village and tended to be twenty to fifty feet in diameter.



The Chaw'se hun'ge is sixty feet across and is one of the largest in California. Four large beams and center poles support the roof. A large hole in the center of the roof allows smoke from the fire pit to escape and also permits observation of the stars.

Miwok homes ranged from eight to fifteen feet in diameter and were built of cedar poles interwoven with grapevines or willow and covered with cedar bark. A hole was left at the top for smoke from cooking or heating fires. Bark houses u'macha' can be seen near the grinding rock and also at the reconstructed village west of the roundhouse.

A game field, poscoi a we'a, has also been reconstructed near the roundhouse. The game played by the Miwok was very similar to soccer. On a field about 110 yards long, players tried to kick or carry a ball to the opposing team's goal. Both men and women played, though the rules were different for each. Men could only kick the ball, while women could handle the ball in any manner. If a woman held the ball however, a man could pick her up and run for the goal.

Events at IGR

The second Saturday of every month you can enjoy watching Native American Jack Flores perform traditional craft making skills such as basket weaving and flint knapping. Please call the museum for more information.

Calendar of Events

Sept. 15 Plymouth Community Market
This week the event will feature wines by Borjon, food by Beth Sogaard Catering, music by Ben Henry, information booths, and produce and products by local folks.

This and That

The Rotary theme for September is
NEW GENERATIONS

Our Four Way Test

- Is it the TRUTH?**
- Is it FAIR to all concerned?**
- Will it build GOODWILL and better FRIENDSHIPS?**

Is it BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

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