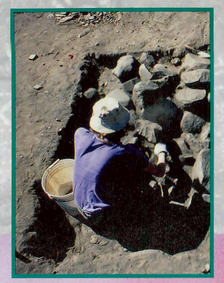
TRACES of the PAST



"A country with no regard for its past will have little worth remembering in the future"
— Abraham Lincoln

California

OUR PAST BELONGS TO THE FUTURE
AND YOU CAN HELP PRESERVE IT!

Did you ever wonder:
- Who lived in California long ago?
- Where they lived?
- How they lived?

Archaeologists and historians search daily for these answers, and they know who can help them: YOU – and others who agree that a good way to understand ourselves, our ecosystem, and our future is to learn from our past.

We inherited a wealth of knowledge from past peoples who lived in California – knowledge about them and their ways of life. This knowledge is gleaned from oral tradition, history, and an extraordinary diversity of physical evidence – from rock paintings to aspen art, from arrowheads to bottles, and from Native American villages to mining camps. These cultural resources are the windows through which we can look into the past and learn about those who came before us.

However, much of this fragile legacy is being destroyed every day. Some people casually pick up artifacts and take them home. Some collectors illegally dig for profit. Both cause extensive damage to our archaeological and historic sites. In a few thoughtless moments, the actions of a small number of people destroy this unique heritage – severing the opportunity to experience, understand, learn from, and appreciate our past. Your help is needed in saving these fragile and irreplaceable resources. It is easy to help – you only need to leave everything as you find it, and to treat our cultural heritage with respect.

USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 705-2874

National Park Service, Western Region
600 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 744-3961

Bureau of Land Management, California State Office
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-2841
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 978-4734

PRESERVING THE PAST

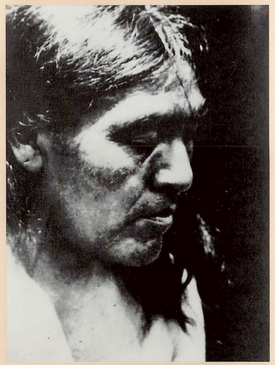
Preserving our nation's heritage is one reason for cooperation among federal land management agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service. These agencies, assisted by many specialists (Native American tribal and traditional leaders, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, engineers, maintenance personnel, etc.), work together to protect, preserve, research, interpret, and manage cultural resources on public lands – because these heritage resources are key to understanding California's ecosystems.

CALIFORNIANS, PAST AND PRESENT

A DAILY DIARY

Like we do today, early Native Americans lived in communities and represented different cultures. Many of the activities we perform today are not so very different from those practiced by past peoples. Their daily activities were frequently similar to ours because they also worked to provide food, clothing, shelter, and amenities which could make life easier and more enjoyable. They:
- harvested trout, salmon, steelhead, clams, and many sea foods
- gathered nuts (especially acorns), seeds, berries, and plant roots
- hunted for large and small game
- diverted water to fields for growing corn, beans, squash, and other domesticates
- managed and gathered plants for medicinal uses, making baskets and tools, weaving, and making shelters
- chipped fine-grained stone tools for cutting, butchering, and hunting
- managed wildlife by limiting the numbers taken for food, and improved habitats by burning grass, brush or forest lands
- traded raw materials (such as sea shells and salt) and finished products (such as shell beads or finely made projectile points)
- practiced religious faith, which included reverence for living and nonliving things

The physical remnants of these activities still exist at sites throughout California. They provide clues about past stewardship and cultural adaptations. As many as 100 distinct Indian cultures lived in California. This diverse and rich cultural heritage continues among current tribes throughout the state.



ISHI

More than 100 tribal governments exist in California today, descended from over 150 rancherias and reservations established in the early 1900s; but some early California Indian cultures disappeared. As a living legacy of a culture devastated by Euro-American settlement, Ishi, the last surviving member of the Yahi tribe of northern California, lived briefly among Euro-American society in the early 1900s. When Ishi died, the untold intangible records of his culture died too. Only the cultural resources in the Mill Creek area where he lived remain to help unravel the story of his life and the generations before him.

A STONE FOR ALL SEASONS

CONTINUITY FROM THE PAST

Since stone is enduring and easily obtained, it has been used for many purposes from the distant past through the present. It has served as tools, building materials, and sculptural material for artists. Today we use some of the same stone tools that were developed by prehistoric cultures. Pharmacists and gourmet cooks still use the mortar and pestle. Do you know how past people used these tools? In bowl-shaped mortars and on flat rock metates, they ground acorns, seeds and pulpy foods into meal and flour. This was preparation for daily meals – and for survival. Native Americans spent much of autumn preparing and preserving food for the long winter ahead.

Obsidian was a valuable raw material for constructing knives, spear points and arrow points. Even today, obsidian is made into fine microblade scalpels, sharper than surgical steel, that doctors use in delicate surgery.

Past peoples have used stone to build house foundations, hearths, and hunting blinds just as people today use stone to construct houses, fireplaces, and walls. Bedrock mortars, hand grinding stones, flakes, and other artifacts characterize sites where Native Americans lived, gathered raw materials, quarried stone, and made tools. These objects and sites are often the only clues we have for deciphering the mystery of their lives.

RESOURCES

BUILDING CALIFORNIA FROM THE GROUND UP

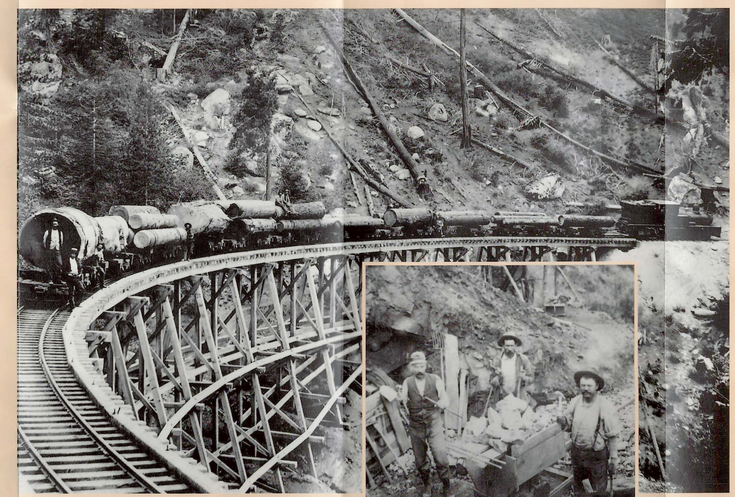
Most people know the story of gold in California's history. But did you know that gold was discovered because of John Sutter's quest for lumber? In turn, the gold rush created a larger demand for lumber, and many sawmills were built throughout the Sierra Nevada mountains. The lumber from our forests and the minerals from our soil helped build California and the nation.

To accommodate demands for wood and water needed for homes and businesses throughout a growing California, workers constructed flumes and ditches. These overland wooden troughs and earthen ditches carried giant logs to sawmills for processing, and water to miners for operating their equipment and to farmers for irrigating their fields.

But gold, and other valuable minerals, spurred California toward statehood. Old mines, mining camps, ditches, and flumes abound in California's mountains. They offer testimony to the entrepreneurs who financed development, to the operators who ran the mines and smelters, and to the thousands of laborers who toiled long and hard in the earth. Many pioneers relied on other natural resources to survive and flourish in California: rich soil, abundant wildlife, a moderate climate, and a beautiful landscape. Today, we continue to depend on these natural resources to meet our modern needs.

HOMESTEADS AND RANCHES

During your travels, can you find evidence of the home life of California pioneers? Look for a variety of examples: cabins, barns, camp wagons, farm tools, fences, bricks, trash dumps, and many others. The evidence is all around you. These remnants can tell us of the everyday life and activities of common families – the kind of information that is not written in history books. Some seemingly insignificant remains actually hold the key to a much larger, richer story than meets the eye. Our earliest European settlers, the Spanish, left an enduring legacy in California's distinctive Spanish architectural style and it's use of adobe and tile; and their early artifacts, such as Majolica ceramics, provide critical time markers in their pioneering settlements. Spanish artifacts are sometimes mixed with those of California Indians who often worked in those early settlements. Historic aspen art marks the camps and grazing pastures frequented by Basque sheepherders. The artistic aspen tree carvings are diaries of remembrances, thoughts, and desires, expressed while passing the long and lonesome hours of herding. Consider also the hours of backbreaking work that Chinese laborers put into clearing acres of fields and building miles of stone fences that characterize the farms and ranches of the northern California foothills. The dreams of pioneers, ranch hands, and laborers are captured through these and many other windows on the past.



TRANSPORTATION

California's Euro-American pioneers had to depend on slow and difficult forms of transportation. Settlers moving westward used overland routes on established emigrant trails, many of which were originally Native American trails. Others came by ship on long sea voyages. Transportation of people and goods to the Pacific coast took months – and was dangerous, as attested to by numerous shipwrecks, many emigrant graves, and the Donner tragedy.

But railroads changed the scene. The transcontinental railroad cut weeks off transportation time and transformed California into an economic player in national and world markets. Eventually, more than 100 railroad systems transported goods and people throughout California.

Modern roads are often constructed on or near old transportation routes, but remnants of many historic trails and railroads still exist. Interstate 80 and California 88 follow the corridors of the Truckee and Carson routes of the California emigrant trail. U.S. Highway 50 follows the route of the Pony Express trail and the Lincoln Highway. The present Amtrak route to Reno follows the old transcontinental railroad route.

You may hike parts of some emigrant trails and old railroad grades that have been converted into interpretive trails, such as the Donner and Truckee routes of the California emigrant trail in the Tahoe National Forest, and the Bizz Johnson rail-to-trail route in the Lassen National Forest and BLM Susanville District.

You may happen upon old railroads or railroad logging camps that housed laborers who built the railroads or cut timber. These laborers were of diverse ethnic backgrounds: California Indian, Chinese, German, Hispanic, Irish, Italian, and Swedish. We can see evidence of their cultural differences in the artifacts that remain – such as Asian ceramics and foreign implements and food containers. Written records were uncommon, so these objects tell important stories about the lives of people who worked there.

THE RECENT PAST

WORTH SAVING FOR THE FUTURE

Our heritage includes many buildings and sites constructed during California's recent past. They too are expressions of our ideals, culture, and history.

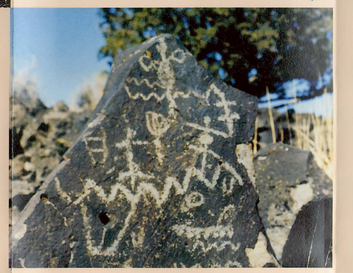
Examples include:
- Depression-era conservation and building projects:
  We enjoy many of our current trails and campgrounds thanks to the masterful construction work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and volunteers who assisted federal, state and local agencies during the lean years of the Depression. The CCC and WPA built distinctive buildings of log, stone, lumber and adobe in our national forests and parks. Look for these buildings at park headquarters, ranger stations, visitor centers, and fire lookouts.
- World War II facilities:
  You can tour classic, historic, headquarters buildings or bunkers at San Francisco's Presidio, visit Patton's camp and training grounds in the California Desert Conservation Area operated by the BLM, or reflect on the injustice of Japanese-American internment at the bleak remains of Manzanar, along US 395 north of Lone Pine.

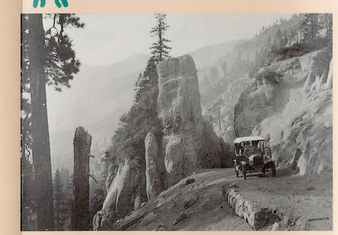
ROCK ART

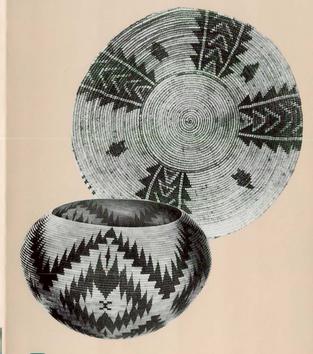
A CLOSER LOOK

There are a few special places in the desert where you may see the land almost come alive with outlines of human or animal figures. These outlines are ancient images called intaglios. Native Americans created these figures by clearing the surface of the ground and outlining the designs in lighter-colored soils.

During your travels, you may come across other types of rock art. Past peoples placed carved designs called petroglyphs and painted designs called pictographs onto the faces of rocks, cliffs, and cave walls. These rock art panels express ideas and stories that we do not often understand; but their beauty can be enjoyed and appreciated by all. Rock art is very fragile and often has spiritual value to Native Americans. It should be treated with respect and care so that it will continue to intrigue future generations.







BASKETRY

A CALIFORNIA ART FORM

Among all Native American basketry, that of the California Indians is renowned for its diversity, craftsmanship, and magnificence. For California Indians, basket making is both a part of daily life and a serious and disciplined art.

Native American women carefully tend and select the best plants for weaving strength and pliability. Other plants, chosen for their colors, are used to create designs. Some exceptionally crafted baskets even have feathers or shells woven into their designs. The designs can portray spiritual concepts and tribal history in stylized motifs, or can reflect the personal artistic expressions of the basket makers. Basket shapes vary with their uses: to carry, process, or store goods, cook food, as cradle boards, hats, or decorative items.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND HISTORIANS

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST TO HELP THE FUTURE

Federal agencies, through the expertise of their archaeologists, historians, and other specialists, contribute to our ability to respond to the future. Research can reveal when and how environmental changes occurred in California's past ecosystems. By knowing how past societies responded and adjusted to changes, we can better prepare for similar changes in today's ecosystem.

As an example, archaeological evidence of past Native American fire burning cycles – branded into tree growth rings – provides federal agencies with data to prepare scheduled burn plans that generate and perpetuate habitats. The same information helps them curb wildfires in forests by planning prescribed burning to reduce the buildup of dry, potentially flammable underbrush. As in the past, this type of prescribed fire management enhances wildlife habitat, and it promotes the growth of plants that are still harvested for use in traditional Native American basket weaving and ceremonial activities.

Ecosystem studies can benefit from archaeological, ethnographic, and historic research. Agencies use such evidence to help understand and prepare for environmental challenges such as droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, soil depletion, water table and water supply changes, and resource shortages that currently confront Californians.

THEFT AND VANDALISM

PROTECTING AND PRESERVING THE PAST IS THE LAW

How many archaeological and historic sites still exist untouched by looters in California? Not many. A large portion of the state's sites has been damaged to some degree by deliberate looting, vandalism, or casual collecting.

Some people don't realize they are doing damage or breaking the law when they pick up something old and take it home as a souvenir. But, in order to tell us the correct and complete story, all artifacts must remain in their original locations. If they are disturbed or removed, pieces of the story they tell may be altered or lost.

In 1906, Congress passed the Antiquities Act (16 USC 431-433), which prohibited actions that "appropriate, excavate, injure or destroy any object of antiquity." In recent years, other more stringent protective measures have been added:
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 USC 470, 36 CFR 296, 43 CFR 7)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470, 36 CFR 800)
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 USC 3001-3013)
- Theft and Destruction of Government Property (18 USC 641 and 1361)
- Illegal Collecting and Camping (16 USC 1, 36 CFR 2)

Federal agencies, in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies, vigorously enforce these measures. Violators have been prosecuted with federal felony, misdemeanor, and civil penalties. Conviction can carry criminal penalties of up to two years in prison and/or $250,000 in fines, as well as civil penalties such as vehicle confiscation or site restoration costs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

PROTECT OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Report looting and vandalism. Notify a nearby Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, or National Park Service office.
- Treat resources with respect; do not deface or damage rock art, historic structures, archaeological sites, or sacred places.
- Leave artifacts undisturbed in their places. Encourage other people to do the same. If you discover an artifact, leave it in place, note its location, then notify the nearest ranger or other federal official.
- Volunteer your time and talents to help preserve our past. You can volunteer with the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and other local, state, and federal agencies. Historical societies, interpretive associations, museums, and colleges also assist in preserving our heritage.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CULTURAL RESOURCES?

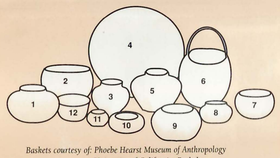
Rangers, interpreters, and other federal employees and volunteers throughout California present free programs and invite you to:
- Hands-on demonstrations – Create your own ceramic pot or woven basket; pan for gold; ride a stagecoach or wagon; help restore a log cabin.
- Living history programs – See the past come alive as a ranger/interpreter presents the theater of the gold rush era, Native American dances, or other memorable scenes from California's past.
- Interpretive walks and campfire programs – Enjoy a guided walk to historic sites; discover the ways Native Americans used plants; watch an interpreter "show and tell" about the unique lifeways of bygone eras.
- Visitors centers, historical museums, tribal museums, and exhibits – Visit a park, forest, or tribal visitor center or local museums to learn more about California's gold rush, railroads, or native cultures. Most exhibits feature materials on Native Americans, history and archaeology.
- Passport in Time – Join the Forest Service's volunteer program for heritage research and historic preservation; contact: PIT Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 18364, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 293-0922.

Places to visit –
- Kule Loklo recreated Coast Miwok village, Point Reyes National Seashore
- Indian Village and Museum, Yosemite National Park
- Blythe Intaglios, Bureau of Land Management, Yuma District
- Cora Springs Petroglyph Site, BLM, California Desert District
- Captain Jack's Stonghold, Lava Beds National Monument
- Donner camps, Tahoe National Forest and Donner Memorial State Park
- Bodie mining town, Bodie State Historic Park
- Mammoth Mines, Inyo National Forest
- Tallac Historic Estates, Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
- Scotty's Castle, Death Valley National Monument

TRACES of the PAST

THE ART OF BASKETRY

Designs on historic and modern Native American baskets are created with many materials, including grasses, shells, and feathers. Finely woven baskets have been found in archaeological sites hundreds of years old. Today, they are made by contemporary California Indian basketmakers. Federal land managers work with archaeologists, historians, and Native Americans to protect and preserve this cultural heritage. They cooperate to locate sites, study artifacts, and define lifestyles of people in California, past and present. The results are shared with visitors through interpretation and museum displays.



Baskets courtesy of: Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

1 Kawaiisu bottleneck basket with human figures. Kelso Valley, Kern County
2 East Mono coiled basket with tree design. Mono County
3 Bottleneck basket with step design. Kern County
4 Chemehuevi basket
5 Kitanemuk (attributed) basket with rattlesnake design. Tejon, Kern County
6 Miwok basket with handle
7 East Mono coiled basket with modern floral design. Bishop, California
8 Bottleneck coiled basket with step design in 12 spiral bars, with red worsted wool trim
9 Pomo basket with feathers, beads, abalone shell bangles and quail crests Mendocino County
10 Pomo coiled bowl-shaped basket
11 Pomo basket with woodpecker feathers Ukiah, Mendocino County
12 Panamint-type coiled basket with squirrel design

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