



# Tales of Glen Ellen

Glen Ellen Historical Society • PO Box 35, Glen Ellen CA 95442 • Summer Issue 2010

## FROM OUR BOARD

It's been a very busy year so far. Our archives have been reorganized for research purposes at Jack London Village, plans are in place for our free quarterly public presentations, and a very active presence on the internet has been established.

Our fresh new Facebook page (at [www.facebook.com/GlenEllenHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/GlenEllenHistoricalSociety)) is where many of our "friends" meet to exchange old photographs and memories. If you haven't gone online to see it, you're in for a treat. Be sure to scroll down to the 1914 recording of that popular love song duet "In the Valley of the Moon"; it's really delightful.

The no-host grassroots interactivity and redundancy characteristic of social network websites like this are perfectly suited to sharing and preserving the history that belongs to all of us. Snapshots are better uploaded here than stored in shoeboxes in closets and attics.

An ongoing discussion about the nature and character of our entire valley is growing here, and it is hoped that various special interests will spin off and flourish on their own as they catch attention and interest — even among others around the world who have lived here in the past.

Members of our board have been taking part in the ongoing discussions about the restoration of the Administration Building at the Sonoma Developmental Center as a community center. We are also an active member now of the Heritage Network, where we meet with other historical organizations around the county. We believe all these activities ensure that the rich heritage of the Valley of the Moon will be shared, appreciated and protected, and that our legacy will continue to inspire those who have the

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*Bridging the Years —*

## Remembering Our History

The vision statement of Glen Ellen Historical Society, as it was written in 1996, reads: "The mission of this Society is to encourage the participation of the people in the community to research, disseminate, preserve and celebrate the history of Glen Ellen."

However, our history is not simply about what has happened here in the past; it is in fact about the soul of this place. As custodians of the past we undertake learning about the people who have lived here before us; as stewards of the future we remember their vision, in order that a better world can be provided for those who have yet to arrive.

Our history is all about what is going on right now, though we might easily overlook it in our daily routine. It is the manual of operations for citizens of this area— but we must understand how to read it, and follow it's directions. It's stories document the discoveries and the mistakes of famous people and unknown people, the triumphs and the failures that have shaped what we know of ourselves, and the vision as well as the damage that has been brought here, and remains here still, today.

It was George Santayana who once famously said: "who does not know history is condemned to repeat it." But knowing history ought not be the indulgence of simple nostalgia for the "good old days", nor should it be a revision to support one agenda or another.

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## The People Who Lived Here First

When they arrived here, the Europeans and the Americans did not bring the Good Life with them— it had been here all along, long before their arrival.

As Malcolm Margolin wrote movingly in *The Ohlone Way*, the landscape was fertile, diverse, and teeming with life: "the intermingling of grasslands, savannahs, salt- and freshwater marshes, and forests created wildlife habitats of almost unimaginable richness and variety."

The mountains and steep coastal hills that were thrust up from the ocean floor over the millennia became further shaped by the springs and streams of the watershed, in a flow that converged into the rivers of the fertile valleys on their way back to the sea.

This place we call the Valley of the Moon was— and is— a dynamic landscape of earthquake and erosion, a land that pulses in constant motion, in much the same way as the oceans from which it had risen. And the people who lived here in those days understood and appreciated their integral part in this natural dance.

Current conjecture has it that, when the Pomo people had begun expanding westward from Clear Lake toward the ocean some three or four thousand years ago, a Proto-Yukian

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## Greg Sarris to Speak Here June 20th

Acclaimed author, filmmaker, university professor, and Chairman of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Greg Sarris will speak at the next gathering of the Glen Ellen Historical Society on Sunday afternoon, June 20th, from 2 to 5 pm in Mayflower Hall next door to the Glen Ellen Community Church on O'Donnell Lane.

Mr. Sarris received his Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University, where he was awarded the Walter Gore Award for excellence in teaching. His writing and work in film have received rave reviews, and his activities in support of Native Americans have earned him deep respect throughout the community.

This will be a great opportunity to discuss how the original residents of Sonoma County lived, and how they live today. Admission is free, and light refreshments will be served.

## FROM OUR BOARD

great fortune to enjoy living here in the future.

The Glen Ellen Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and so donations are tax deductible. We encourage anyone who is interested to join us by sending \$25 (\$15 for seniors and students) to PO Box 35, Glen Ellen CA 95442.

You will receive our quarterly newsletter, and be able to take a more active part in gathering and sharing our heritage. Members of the board are established at the start of each year from among our general membership.

Current board members are Anne Teller, Dorothy Johnson, Pat Mazzini, Marge Everidge, Archie Horton, Steve Lee, Arthur Dawson, and Jim Shere, director.

## Remembering Our History

As the historian Howard Zinn reminded us, history is written largely by the victorious, while the truth can become all too easily misplaced in the shuffle. This is how history has been dismembered, not remembered.

On June 20th we will have the first in a series of public presentations on the sweep of history, from the dawn of time down through today. The topic will be the indigenous life that was lived here before the arrival of the Europeans, and the life that is still lived here today by the people we call the Miwok, Pomo, Wappo and Patwin.

It was an incredibly fertile and diverse land that they inhabited and cared for, establishing and living by the idea of responsible sustainability up until 200 years ago. It is time to remind ourselves of this way of life, and to find ways to live that way again today.

In the Fall we will discuss the great Spanish land grants, and how the northward movement of the Franciscan missionaries met the southern movement of Russian fur trappers right here in Sonoma County. In the Winter we will look at the political revolutions that freed the New World from European control, and explore the colorful Californio lifestyle that resulted.

After that we will discuss the arrival of the Americans, the enormous impact of the Gold Rush on the landscape, and the eventual admission of California as a part of the United States.

Then of course there came the more recent revolutions that once again transformed our world: the industrial revolution ushered in by the railroads, and the agricultural revolution that produced the food and wine industry for which our valley is so well known.

So much has taken place here in the Valley of the Moon; our work is to understand the consequence and significance of what has happened, in order to know what we must do next.

## The People Who Lived Here First

people became separated into the Yuki and Wappo groups. About that same time the Miwok were coming north from their Costanoan origins south of the San Francisco Bay.

Then more recently, perhaps two thousand years ago, the Patwin people began expanding westward into the region, along the northern edge of the bay from their eastern Wintun origins. And amazingly, all these migrations seem to have taken place without warfare, in great contrast to the invasions and exterminations taking place everywhere else on the planet throughout this time.

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*Our Famous Writers —*

### Hunter S. Thompson

Back in 1967, long before he became known for establishing that great American literary genre known as gonzo journalism, Hunter S. Thompson wrote to Herb Caen, *Chronicle* columnist, saying "I'm leaving the country in about ten days... for a variety of reasons: foremost among them being Lyndon's bloodlust and a \$5,500,000 lawsuit filed against me and *Cavalier* magazine by the greedy lunatic Chester Womack, who runs the Rustic Inn in Glen Ellen... Never trust a bartender."

The lawsuit was over an article originally written some three years earlier for *The Reporter*, in which he described a typical evening in the last of our saloons "which they may refuse to buy, even though they've okayed it," he wrote to his friend Eugene McGarr, adding "I have discovered the secret of writing fiction, calling it impressionistic journalism."

A month later he wrote "I have honed my skills to the point of unbelievable sharpness. The thing I just sent *The Reporter* is razored from beginning to end— 18 pages of perfect calumny." And perfect calumny it was, it turned out.

Thompson had moved here from Colorado in 1964, to live and write in Jack London's Valley of the Moon, but his stay was troubled from the start. "I arrived, pulling my trailer, and was denied entrance to the house I was planning to live in. The fellow had changed his mind. Changed his mind. So I now live in a sort of Okie shack, paying a savage rent, and spend most of my day in a deep ugly funk, plotting vengeance. Vengeance."

Later that year, in somewhat deeper despair, he wrote to another friend that "my shack has been full of people for two months, even including my mother and little brother. Steady visitors for two goddamn months. Two just left, a folksinger from Boston and a doomed young bride from Florida... My landlady plays the organ. My guns are in pawn. My sanity hangs by a thread."

"Nights in the Rustic" is an extraordinarily historical bit of writing, and worth reading to get a sense of old Glen Ellen and young Hunter S. It is atmospheric, and captures a vaguely factual aroma of the place while documenting the beginnings of his writing style. It can be found online at [totallygonzo.org/gonzowriting/rare-articles](http://totallygonzo.org/gonzowriting/rare-articles). Look for it!

The people who lived here did not see themselves as nations of tribes, and they did not call themselves Pomo, Miwok or Wappo. These were terms applied by 20th Century ethnologists, who defined the people according to their languages. The Wappo, for instance, were originally named by the Spanish term *guapo*, which variably meant handsome, gallant, or warrior; the Wappo referred to themselves as "the outspoken ones".

In describing their world, Kent Lightfoot and Otis Parrish in *California Indians and Their Environment* speak of a "tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity, which defies simplistic summaries or the pigeonholing of groups." Somewhere between 80 to 100 languages were spoken here when the Europeans arrived, about 20 per cent of the languages spoken throughout the entire continent. In many villages there were people who spoke six or seven of these languages.

It was a crowded landscape, the most densely populated region north of Mexico, composed of many modestly-sized autonomous villages of people at some respectful distance from one another.

For thousands of years they lived in a harmonious rapport with a generously bountiful nature, which allowed the leisure to develop a significantly contemplative life featuring highly evolved forms of music, craft, and play.

All this of course changed abruptly, within decades, after the arrival of the Europeans— the explorers, the trappers, the missionaries, and the military men, who recognized the wealth of resources that seemed to be waiting just for their use.

The collision of these two cultures, indigenous and invasive, changed the landscape forever— not unlike the great changes brought about by the tectonic plates that ground away deep beneath them.

And yet the vision of a contemplative, sustainable lifestyle is not lost on those who have come to visit and stay in Sonoma County. The leitmotif of a healthy lifestyle lived according to natural values has appeared at various times and to various success throughout the centuries since.

And while it is true that many have attempted living this way out of a naive nostalgia for simpler days, a consciously responsible collaboration with the land remains to this day the very best way to appreciate and enjoy the Good Life that can be found here to this day.