

## **Native Americans**

Native Americans have inhabited California for over 10,000 years. Anthropologists believe Pinnacles was intermittently occupied by groups of Native Americans. Evidence in the form of arrowheads and bedrock mortars have been discovered within the Park. However, only a small percentage of the Park has been archeologically surveyed and the settlement pattern and impact of pre-European contact people in Pinnacles is yet to be determined.

In post-contact times, Native Americans of western central California have been called Costanoans by Spanish colonials, (derived from Spanish for "people of the coast"), and Ohlone. These names are general terms used to describe over 50 distinct tribelets that inhabited the area below the San Francisco bay and south to Monterey bay before European settlement. Two local tribes, the Chalon and Mutsun, lived in the Pinnacles area. Based on mission records we know that the Chalon numbered approximately 900 people and the Mutsun numbered 3,000 individuals at the time of European settlement.

There are ample plant and animal resources within Pinnacles that would have provided food, medicine, and materials throughout the year. In the spring people may have been in Pinnacles rebuilding their brush huts and gathering leafy parts of plants, grass and wildflower seeds and plant bulbs for food. They may have used Pinnacles as a gathering site for prized basket weaving materials such as the strong roots from the Santa Barbara sedge (*Carex barbarae*) or flower stalks from deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*). In the fall people gathered acorns from the oak trees and pine nuts from the gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*).

Acorns were a major food source for the Chalon, Mutsun and many other California Indian tribes. Acorns were gathered in baskets and dried in the sun, then some were ground into meal and the rest stored in granaries. Wildflower seeds, like those that come from chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*) were gathered in great quantities and some seeds were replanted to ensure future harvests. Rabbits were hunted for food and the skins were cut into strips and woven into blankets and capes. Deer, elk, antelope, and possibly fish from the Salinas Valley were also major food sources. California Indians used techniques such as fire and selective harvesting to manage plant and animal resources for their use, and the practice of gathering and tending plants shaped the California landscape we know today.

Today, the descendants of the Chalon and Mutsun Tribes are reconnecting with their traditional territories, reviving cultural traditions, and working to re-gain federal recognition. Pinnacles National Park has a growing and mutually beneficial partnership with the Chalon and Mutsun tribes. Pinnacles staff and tribal members are working to cooperatively manage culturally significant resources, to enrich the Park's understanding and interpretation of Native American history, and to value the deep relationship between native people and their traditional territory.

## **Spanish Missionaries**

The Spanish had a dramatic impact on the Native Americans who frequented Pinnacles. They traveled into California from Mexico and eventually established 21 religious missions between 1769 and 1823, stretching from San Diego to Sonoma.

The mission closest to Pinnacles was built in Soledad in 1791. The Chalon Indians lived in the area east of Soledad Mission -- close to what is now the western side of Pinnacles National Park.

Willingly or not, many of the Chalon and Mutsun people became neophytes (baptized mission workers); however, the mission way of life was devastating to Indian people. A combination of diseases brought by the Spaniards and harsh changes to their way of life killed many Chalon and Mutsun people, and damaged their cultures. In 1770 the Indian population in California, which was already dropping from the effects of European diseases, was estimated at 300,000. By the mid-1800s, it was cut in half.

### **Early Settlers**

In 1891 Schuyler Hain, a homesteader, arrived in the Pinnacles area from Michigan. During the next twenty years he became known as the "Father of Pinnacles" leading tours up through Bear Valley and into the caves. Hain spoke to groups and wrote articles urging preservation of the area and acted as unofficial caretaker for many years. His efforts proved fruitful with the establishment of Pinnacles as a 2500 acre national monument in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Horace Bacon established a ranch opposite the eastern entrance and was the school master at Bear Valley School (located on Hwy 25 one mile north of the Hwy 25 and Hwy 146 junction) for twenty years.

In 1920 a one-way dirt road was constructed up to the Bear Gulch area making access to the caves easier for the increasing numbers of local residents who enjoyed camping and picnicking in the Park.

### **Civilian Conservation Corps**

In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps established a camp in what is now the Old Pinnacles trailhead area. From 1933 to 1942, during cooler winter months, the CCC accomplished many projects. The dirt road up to Bear Gulch was widened, paved and completed in 1934. The CCC improved many of the trails that had been established by the early homesteaders, including the exciting steep and narrow trail that winds through the High Peaks. They constructed the dam that forms the Bear Gulch reservoir and improved the trail into the caves, adding concrete steps and guard rails. Beginning in 1936 the CCC boys guided visitors through the caves using lanterns.

### **Present Day**

Since 1908, Pinnacles National Monument increased in bits and pieces to its present size of about 26,000 acres. On January 10, 2013 President Barack Obama signed legislation passed by Congress that redesignated the monument as a National Park. Many visitors come to hike, picnic, bird watch,

rock climb, learn about geology and plants, see wild animals or perhaps to simply enjoy the wilderness which offers peace and quiet.