

# When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature  
Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known  
Author and Journalist.

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SANTA CLARA INDIANS

In the early part of the nineteenth century there were about ten thousand Indians in the valley. In the coldest part of the winter they lived in (Cuevas) caves, and in the summer in tule straw and mud houses.

They liked very much acorns cured by long soaking in water. They were fond of fish and game. After the Spanish came they ate horse flesh. Their favorite cereal was wild oats made into mush. This they ate sitting around a great clay or mud dish, using spoons of wood or bone.

The Indians regarded dogs and coyotes as sacred animals, but all other living life was their prey. The Indians avoided trouble with the bear in the mountains. When they desired to travel in the mountains they drove the animals away by starting fires. Doubtless many great redwood forests were destroyed by the forest fires of Indians. All through the valley well-

boreis find redwood in the wells.

Sometimes the Indians made fire with flints, sometimes by rubbing together willow sticks and igniting the fire with the soft decayed heart of white oak.

The Indians were not given to self-adornment until the Spanish came and set them the example. They had some carved charms, very old, supposed to be relics of a superior race like the Aztecs, which once inhabited the valley.

In basketry the Indians showed their greatest sense of beauty. Some of their baskets were three and four feet high, interwoven with birds' feathers or with pearls found in certain shells near the seashore.

Their musical instruments were few. One was made of elder stick, the inside of which was cut out. Holes were made in the bark. It was played with the fingers like a flute.

Indians needed neither horses nor

automobiles for travel. In three days an Indian could go to the top of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Without fatigue he kept pace with a swift horse. After running ten miles he could laugh and talk. The Indians of the Interior bartered with the coast Indians for shells. They wore a great many abalone. Sometimes in the valley one finds flints of obsidian. People wonder where they came from. They came from the great Indian flint factory in Lake County or near St. Helena. A journey from Santa Clara to Lake County, for an Indian, was only a nice little trot.

The Indians liked to dance and swim. They had a ball game similar to football. Twelve men were on each side, and each side had a captain. The game was to see which twelve could run twenty or thirty miles and return to the starting place with all twelve men. The winners on their return were given a nice dish of mush.

Another Indian game was played with stones and a board or elk bone, which is flat on one side and round on the other. Each of the Indians took a pile of stones. Each tossed one up. If it came down on the round side the player lost a stone. The game went on till one or the other obtained all the stones.

When the Spaniards came sometimes the Indians suspected that the strangers were ghosts of their dead ancestors. The Indians, especially when they had trouble with the Spaniards, felt that they desired to see no more of the ghosts. It was decided that the ghosts returned because the Indians were buried seated in their graves. After this the Indians cremated their dead.

The Indians believed in the devil, but not in Heaven. Some of the tribes were thought to possess power to charm. They could make people ill or crippled. They could even cause death.

At the Mission San Jose a priest was ill. An Indian with supernatural power was suspected of causing the priest's illness. The Indian was followed. It was found that he had carved an image of the priest and was sticking pegs into it. The image was burned, the Indian flogged and the priest recovered.

The Indian mounds, beginning with the Pounce mound, near Mountain View and extending along the water as far as the Alviso, are not mounds in the sense of being burial places. Many thousands of Indians are buried there, but the land is merely where Indians built their rancherias, or towns.