

# Olompali

## State Historic Park



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The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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#### Olompali State Historic Park

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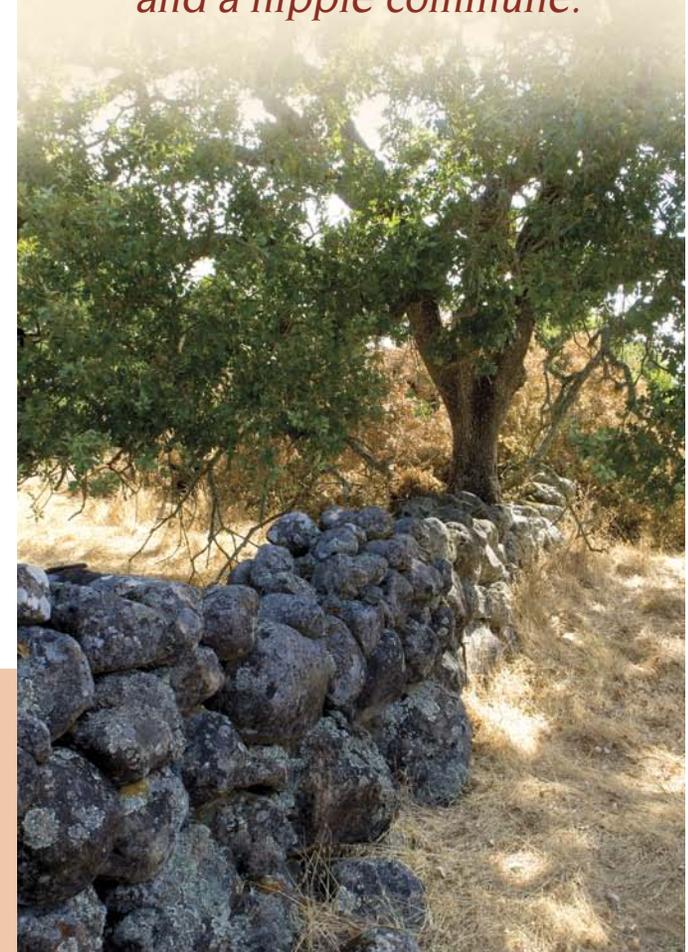
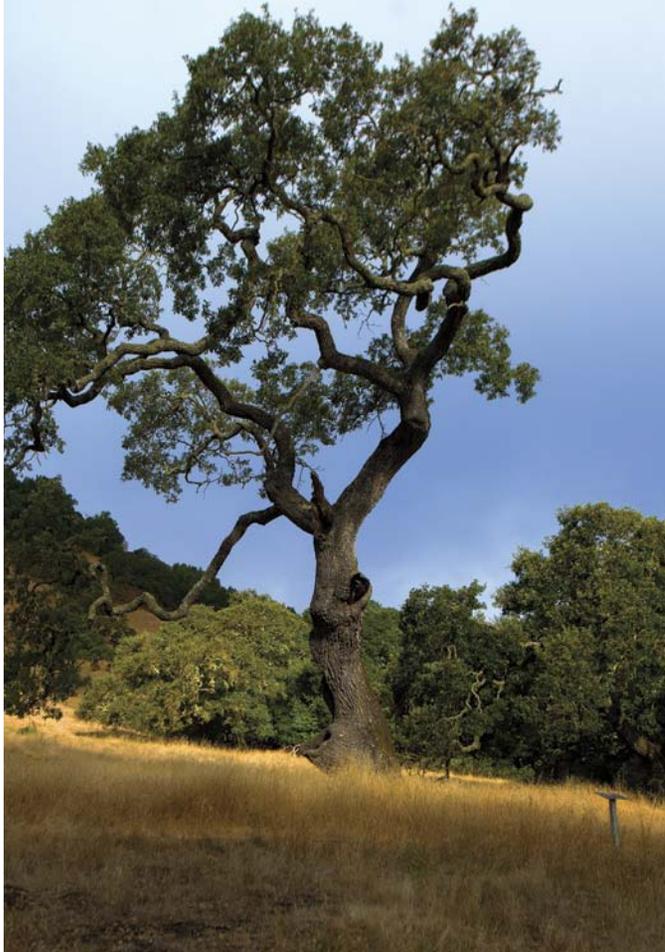
Novato, CA 94945

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[www.parks.ca.gov/olompali](http://www.parks.ca.gov/olompali)

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*Olompali's serene hills and waters have been home to Coast Miwok, landed gentry, Catholic priests, a psychedelic rock band and a hippie commune.*



**N**estled on the east-facing slopes of **Burdell Mountain on the Marin Peninsula**, Olompali State Historic Park offers exquisite views from the Petaluma River basin out to the San Francisco Bay. This 700-acre park features former ranch buildings with adobe ruins. Visitors enjoy hiking on trails, picnicking, horseback riding and touring the historic grounds.

## **PARK HISTORY**

### **Native People**

“Olompali” comes from Coast Miwok words meaning “southern” and “village” or “people.” Researchers believe that Olompali was one of the largest villages in what is now Marin County.

The Coast Miwok people’s culture was disrupted by the farming and cattle grazing practices of the missions. Many of their traditional food sources were lost. Some Miwok starved, and others died in great numbers after exposure to unfamiliar European diseases.

During California’s mission period, Marin Miwok Indians were baptized at bay area missions. Camilo Ynitia was baptized at Mission San Rafael in 1819; his parents, from a village on San Antonio Creek, had been baptized the preceding year.

By 1834, Ynitia had become the village head man at Olompali.

Ynitia built his adobe home there in 1837, recycling bricks from an earlier adobe construction.

In October 1843, General Mariano Vallejo petitioned Governor Micheltorena of the Mexican province of Alta California to grant two leagues (nearly 8,900 acres) of land at Olompali to his friend and ally, Camilo Ynitia.

Ynitia was the only Native American to be given a land grant in northern Alta California.

During the 26-day Bear Flag Revolt in June 1846, a brief and violent skirmish known as the “Battle of Olompali” took place near Ynitia’s adobe when a troop of California Republic supporters (Bearflaggers) clashed with several dozen of General Jose Castro’s men from the Monterey area. The Bearflaggers defeated General Castro’s troops after killing one man and wounding two.

When title to Ynitia’s grant was questioned by the U.S. Land Commission in 1852, General Vallejo supported the claim. However, Ynitia then sold most of his granted land at Olompali to Marin County assessor James Black for \$5,000; this shrewd move prevented his land grant from being taken under American rule.

### **Euro-American Era**

When James Black’s daughter Mary married dentist Galen Burdell in 1863, Black deeded the Olompali ranch to her.

The Burdells transformed Olompali into a working ranch,



*Burdell barns*

building a clapboard farmhouse over the original adobe. Chinese laborers built other structures such as rock retaining walls and culverts. When Mary died in 1900, her children James and Mabel inherited the estate. James bought out Mabel, and his family owned the estate until 1943.

Between 1943 and 1977, the property was sold many times. The University of San Francisco used the ranch as a retreat for its Jesuit priests. One famous tenant, the Grateful Dead rock band, lived here in 1966. The back cover of their 1969 album *Aoxomoxoa* features the rancho’s oak-covered hillsides. Janis Joplin, Grace Slick and other 1960s rock musicians also gathered at Rancho Olompali.

Don McCoy, a local businessman-turned-“hippie,” leased Olompali in 1967 and used it as shelter for a communal group known as the “Chosen Family.” After a severe electrical fire in 1969, Olompali’s commune era declined and ended.

The State of California and Marin County purchased the property in 1977 to preserve it as a state historic park.



*Illustration of Coast Miwok shelters by William W. Lary*

## NATURAL HISTORY

Olompali State Historic Park lies within the Coast Range in a complex geologic setting. Burdell Mountain consists of molten andesite rocks that erupted through oceanic and serpentine rock. The mountain and the hills at its shoulders form a bowl-shaped watershed that drains to the marshes and sloughs of the Petaluma River, flowing to San Pablo Bay.

## Wildlife

Olompali habitats include open grasslands, California mixed chaparral, oak woodland and savannah. Various birds and mammals make their nests in these habitats.

Serpentine rock outcrops house both fox and coyote dens. Oak trees attract western screech owls, nesting western bluebirds, white-breasted nuthatches and acorn woodpeckers. Grasses may hide horned

larks and Western meadowlarks. Wild turkeys peck for food in the walnut orchard. Manzanita trees shelter Anna's hummingbirds, wren-tits, and orange-crowned warblers.

Mule deer and raccoons forage in the park. Predators include skunks, coyotes, gray foxes, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, bobcats and, once in a while, mountain lions.

Eight types of nocturnal bats make their homes at Olompali: pallid bats, Townsend's big-eared bats, Mexican free-tail bats, California myotis, big brown bats, hoary bats, western red bats and Yuma myotis.

## PARK FEATURES

**Burdell Mansion**—James Burdell incorporated two older buildings (his parents' 1866 clapboard house and the Camilo Ynitia adobe) into a stucco mansion in 1911. The 1969 fire exposed the remains of the original adobe walls, which are now enclosed in wood for protection.

**Burdell Frame House**—A separate building, built by Galen and Mary Burdell in the 1870s, houses the park office and visitor center.

**Formal Garden**—The exotic plants and stone fountain in the rare and intact Victorian garden were brought from Mary Augustina Burdell's 1874 steamship voyage to Japan.

**Burdell Barns and Outbuildings**—The original barn has the white cupola; the other section was added around 1882. Other buildings include a blacksmith shop, cottage, large dairy barn and superintendent's house.

**Kitchen Rock**—This large boulder east of the barns contains mortars of varying size.



*Reconstructed Miwok kotchas or dwellings*

Coast Miwok used the mortars to pound acorn meats and plant seeds into fine flour.

**Miwok Kotchas**—Reconstruction of Coast Miwok shelters began in 1994 with the help of Coast Miwok descendants. The kotchas and native plant garden form an educational site.

## ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

The visitor center, its restrooms, and the routes of travel from the parking lot to the visitor center and to the Miwok kotchas are all accessible. For current accessibility details, call (916) 445-8949 or visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- China Camp State Park  
101 Peacock Gap Trail (off N. San Pedro Rd.), San Rafael 94901  
(415) 456-0766
- Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park  
3325 Adobe Road, Petaluma 94954  
(707) 938-1519
- Samuel P. Taylor State Park  
8889 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.,  
Lagunitas 94938 (415) 488-9897



*Remains of Camilo Ynitia's adobe*

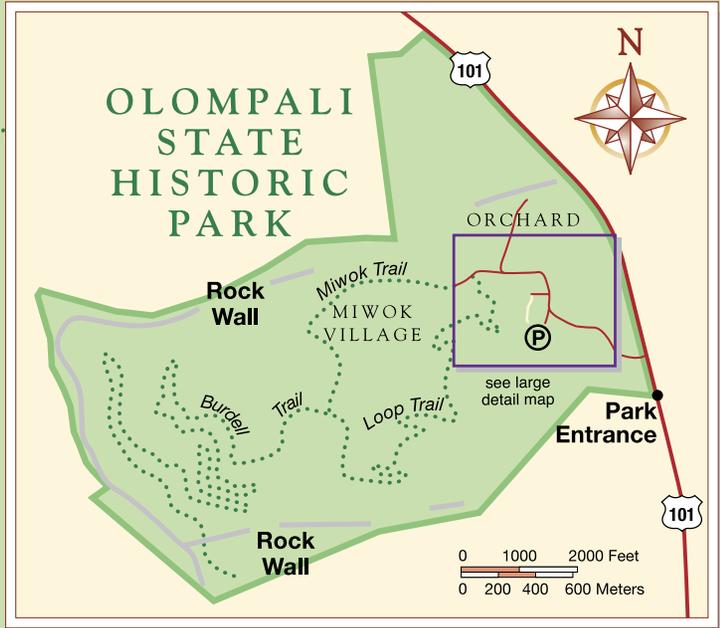
This park receives support in part from The Olompali People, a committee of the nonprofit Marin State Park Association, P. O. Box 1400, Novato, CA 94948 (415) 898-4362 [www.olompali.org](http://www.olompali.org)

# Olompali State Historic Park



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Map by Eureka Cartography, Berkeley, CA

*The park is 3 miles north of Novato and 35 miles north of San Francisco on U.S. 101. The park entrance is accessible only to southbound traffic from U.S. 101. Northbound vehicles should continue north past the park until they can make a safe U-turn and drive south to the park entrance.*



### Legend

- Gravel Parking Area
- Paved Parking Area
- Paved Road
- Pedestrian Path (decomposed granite)
- Unpaved/Gravel Road
- Trail
- Garden Area
- Accessible Feature
- Park Building
- Parking
- Restroom
- Visitor Center