



Building the great Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail

By Jean Bartlett

Tribune Writer

A crowd arrived at the Pacifica Community Center on September 25 to learn about history in the making as San Mateo County (SMC) establishes a 90-mile long historic trail route that commemorates the Portolá expedition of 1769 and honors the region's Ohlone people, here 10,000 years before the expedition arrived. Sam Herzberg, Senior Planner, SMC Parks, led the public information meeting.

"During October and November of 1769, over a period of 27 days, Captain Gaspar de Portolá and the 60 plus members of his expedition, traveled through San Mateo County," Herzberg began.

Ordered by King Charles III of Spain, the purpose of the expedition was to find the harbor of Monterey, by sea and by land, to establish a Spanish presence in Alta (Upper) California. The harbor had been previously sighted by Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaino in 1602. On July 14, 1769, the Portolá land expedition, which included horses and pack mules, set out from San Diego.

In September, they looked out over Monterey Bay but didn't realize it. It did not match Vizcaino's description, "A fine safe harbor from all winds." And so the party continued north, following the established trails of the Ohlone people.

"They made their way to Rancho Del Orso, just south of Año Nuevo by the southern San Mateo County line," Herzberg said. "They were tired. Many of the men had scurvy. They were greeted by members of the local Ohlone village (the Quiroste) and were fed, sheltered and restored to health."

On November 4, 1769, the Portolá expedition, helped along by the people from the Ohlone village Pruristac (located at today's Sanchez Adobe site), climbed up Pacifica's Sweeney Ridge and beheld the San Francisco Bay.

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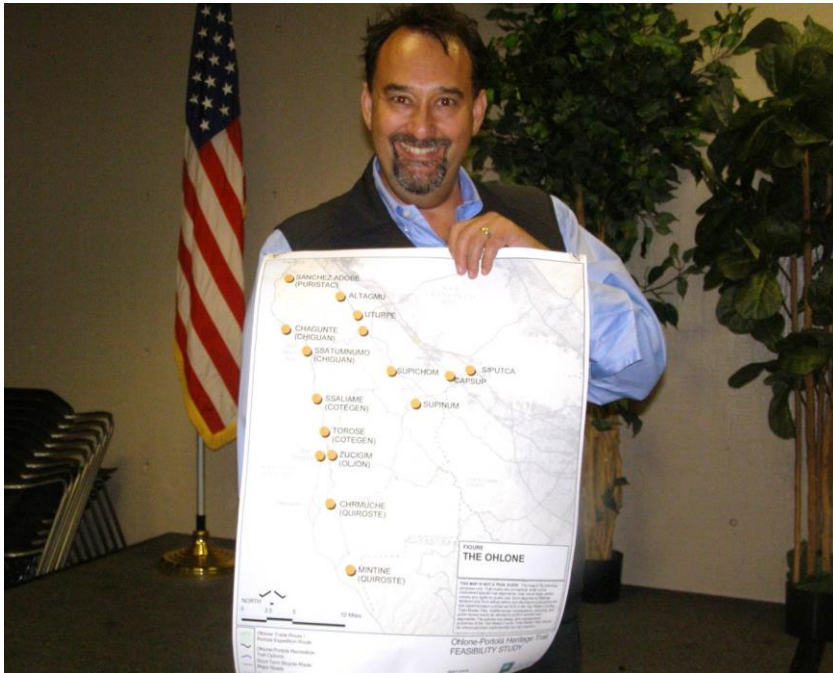
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Herzberg named a few of the Heritage Trail partners: Ohlone tribal representatives; SMC Parks Foundation; California Coastal Conservancy; National Park Service; Golden Gate National Recreation Area; Peninsula Open

Space Trust; numerous cities and towns, and historical associations and societies of SMC; sociology professor Jonathan Cordero, a descendent of the Pruristac; Mark Hylkema, California State Parks Archaeologist; and Mitch Postel, President of the SMC Historical Association.

Herzberg introduced speaker Patrick Miller. "Patrick and his wife Jane make up 2M Associates. They are landscape architects and trail planners, who have been selected to prepare the Feasibility Study for the development of the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail that has been commissioned by the San Mateo County Parks Department with Measure K funding allocated by San Mateo County Supervisors Don Horsley and Carole Groom." A historic trail was first suggested in 2014 by retired civil engineer Paul Reimer.



(Jean Bartlett photo) Sam Herzberg holds a map that shows the correct names and locations of Ohlone villages identified at the time of the Portolá expedition. It does not include all of the villages in San Mateo County.

"This route is about the first meeting of two cultures," Miller said. "We know, because of the three diaries of the Portolá expedition, that the expedition followed the Ohlone trade routes. This is our Heritage Trail. It is a balance of the Ohlone Indians and the Portolá expedition."

Using slides, Miller broke out the Heritage Trail goals: identify a braided recreation trail for bicyclists, hikers and equestrians; create consistent branding and wayfinding; balance engaging content that reflects both the Ohlone in SMC and the Portolá expedition; identify partnerships; commemorate the 250th anniversary in 2019; and identify an automobile trail. Miller believes the Heritage Trail will bring trail walkers, bicyclist and equestrians from all over the world. He described numerous economic opportunities in every town to accommodate the Trail's travelers, including: inns, restaurants, campgrounds and hotels. He also noted how Spain's historic Camino de Santiago trail is an important economic source to the towns that line its route.

Anne LeClair, President and CEO, SMC/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, concurred. "We are extremely excited about the Heritage Trail and look forward to spreading the word to prospective visitors."

Cindy Abbott, Executive Director, Sanchez Art Center, said that to help celebrate the event, the Sanchez Art Center will open 2019 with an exhibition showcasing contemporary work of the Ohlone people. Kathleen Manning, Pacifica Historical Society (PHS), is thrilled with Pacifica's key role. "It will enhance our local history story. It will also bring visitors who will come for the historical experience and stay for our beauty and charm. It's a total win-win."

Pacificans on the County's Planning Committee are: PHS members Rick Della Santina and Pat Kremer, trail specialist Jim Sullivan, Pacifica City Councilmember Sue Digre and PB&R Director Mike Perez.

Perez is leading a Pacifica stakeholders group to lay out Pacifica's tasks, direction and achievable goals – including building momentum in 2018 towards the 2019 event.

"This is California history right in our own backyard," Perez said. "It also connects us to the outdoors and healthy living/lifestyles with outdoor activities."

Jim Sullivan has been bicycling on Bay Area roads and trails since 1962. "I have made it my life's mission to walk, ride, explore every trail within the coastal range between Monterey and Sebastopol. I'm on the Committee because I want to see sensible, safe connections between coastal open spaces for visitors and critters alike to range on."



(Amy Sullivan photo)

Pacifican Jim Sullivan and his dog Tanga travel a path once walked by the Ohlone people and the Portolá expedition.

Sullivan described just a few of things to be seen along the Heritage Trail: fields of Brussel sprouts; the crashing surf at Eel Rock, the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve at low tide; and sweeping views of Mount Tamalpais, Mount Diablo, Kings Mountain and the Farallon Islands.

"One can only imagine what a sight it was for Portolá and his men as they looked out from Sweeney Ridge and first saw the San Francisco Bay, yet untouched by European settlers."

For more information, visit: <https://parks.smcgov.org/ohlone-portola-heritage-trail-project>.

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Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. Contact her through her website, www.bartlettbiographies.com.