

GUIDE TO THE INDIAN GRINDING ROCK STATE HISTORIC PARK
PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

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Finding Guide written and encoded by
Sam Skow

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Park History

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park contains roughly 135 acres of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Located in Amador County, the park is nestled in the Sierra Foothills eight miles east of the city of Jackson and less than two miles south of the census-designated place of Volcano. The park is accessible by car via Pine Grove Volcano Road.

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park, named for its prominent outcropping of marbleized limestone containing roughly 1,185 mortar holes, has been occupied by humans for over 10,000 years. Prior to its designation as a park, the area served as home to the Northern Sierra Miwok and provided ample sustenance in the forms of plants, fish, and local game, including deer, antelope, and rabbits. Referring to the area as *Chaw'se*, the Miwok word for "grinding rock," the Miwok people established numerous village sites throughout the area, thriving for millennia until the mid-nineteenth century.

With James Marshall's 1848 gold discovery in nearby Coloma, the Miwok's world was severely disrupted. That same year, the first Euro-American prospectors—a group of Mexican-American War veterans—arrived in the area and established Soldiers Gulch about 1.5 kilometers north of the present-day park. The next year, the William Wylie and Jacob Cook parties arrived and staked their claims nearby. Within five years, the nearby settlement of Volcano grew to 1,100 individuals. By the 1870s, the area encompassing the modern-day park was entirely surrounded by quartz-mining operations.

In addition to gold prospectors, Euro-American farmers and ranchers likewise entered the area and began exploiting its resources. In 1852, prospector John Doble made note of grass- and barley-mowing occurring in the vicinity of the iconic grinding rock. By 1868, the Else family owned the property, where they grew barley and other grains, raised cattle, and planted orchards. They named the nearby stream "Else Creek" in their honor. In 1874, the same year that she formally filed a patent on the land, Sophia Else sold the property to John Sullivan, an Irish immigrant who maintained the land with his brother, Jeremiah. In 1889, Sullivan deeded the property to Jeremiah's children, who quickly sold the property to Serafino Scapuccino. In addition to raising cattle, tending orchards, and developing truck gardens, Scapuccino constructed a protective fence around the grinding rock and was even said to have welcomed local Miwok onto the property. When Scapuccino died in 1910, the land transferred to his children, who continued to work its historic agricultural operations as well as preserve its cultural resources.

In the 1950s, James Scapuccino, Serafino's son, grew concerned by the threats development posed to his land's natural and cultural features. Coordinating with Muriel Thebaut, member of the Volcano Chamber of Commerce, the two lobbied for the land to be developed into a state park. In 1957, with the passage of Assembly Bill 96, funding was appropriated for the property, and, in 1962, the State of California

purchased the original 48 acres from Scapuccino. The following year, the Division of Beaches and Parks classified the park a state historic monument, later reclassifying it a state historic park in 1970. Three years later, Greenthumb Inc., coordinating with local Miwok contractors, reconstructed the traditional roundhouse that remains there today. That same year, the property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

California State Parks, coordinating with the Chaw'se Association, maintains various natural, cultural, and historical resources at Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park (**Figures 1 and 2**). In addition to the marbled limestone grinding rock (the largest of its kind in North America) and the reconstructed roundhouse, the park also contains a reconstructed Miwok village, the historic Scapuccino house, and the Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum featuring a variety of Sierra Nevada Indian objects and exhibits. The park also hosts numerous Native-American festivals and events, called "Big Times," several times a year. The park also includes two developed hiking trails, picnicking areas, and campgrounds. The park is open seven days a week, from sunrise to sunset.



Figure 1. Grinding rock with platform, June 2, 2011. Catalog # 090-P73138.



Figure 2. Ceremonial roundhouse, June 2, 2011. Catalog # 090-P73120.

Scope and Content

The Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park Photographic Collection spans the years 1950-2011, with the bulk of the collection covering the years 1960-1990, 2003, and 2009-2011. There is a total of 503 cataloged images, including 193 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 249 35mm slides, and 61 born-digital images. Photographs primarily originated from California State Parks staff.

The collection mainly depicts the various natural and built features within the park. Features include: the famous grinding rock, with mortar holes, petroglyphs, and platform; the reconstructed ceremonial roundhouse, featuring both interior and exterior views; the reconstructed bark houses and teepees that comprise the park's Miwok village; the Visitor's Center and Chaw'se Regional Indian Museum, featuring both exterior and interior views, including exhibits and the gift shop; the surrounding meadow with cows and vegetation; and various campsites.

The collection also depicts various activities. In addition to visitors enjoying the park's features and interacting with DPR interpreters, volunteers with regalia performing traditional dances are also depicted. Other events include "Indian Days," held in 1977 and 1978, and the Department of Parks and Recreation Office of Interpretive Services' 1990 site visit.

Related Collections

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park Collection, California State Parks Archives.

John Doble Papers, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

Catalog Subject Search Terms

Aerial view

Bark hut

Ceremonial roundhouse

DPR employee

Dr. George Hotel

Exhibit

Grinding Rock

Grindstone

"Indian Days"

Interior

Landscape view

Miwok Village

Mortar

Museum

Native American(s)

Petroglyph(s)

Portrait

Sutter Creek

Sweathouse

Teepee(s)

Visitor Center

Volunteer(s)

West Camp