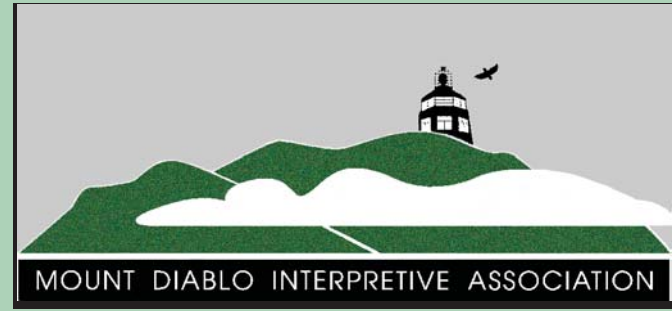


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MOUNT DIABLO REVIEW



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50 Uncommon Place Names of Mount Diablo State Park

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There are approximately 250 named creeks, canyons, trails, springs and locations within the over 20,000 acres that make-up the beautiful Mount Diablo State Park, designated a "National Natural Landmark" by the National Park Service in 1982. Most of these so-called "place names" depict common fauna, flora, topography, or the uniqueness of a specific area.

This article focuses on about 20-percent of the place names, more specifically 50, that are somewhat uncommon



National Natural Landmark plaque outside the Summit Visitor Center Building

or exotic. Among the names are a few unusual words, but most are of people who had a historic presence on the mountain. Some of these place names originated before the establishment of the Park, and were named by settlers in the mid-to-late 1800s and early 1900s. Although many historic names have been retained, many decades have passed. Thus, the origination of these place names have become lost, obscured, or at least, esoteric in nature.

This article intends to revitalize the origins and significance of the 50 of these place names. In so doing, one becomes an amateur etymologist by studying the origin and historic development of words. It is important to mention that the Park no longer uses the names of people for trails, canyons, etc., unless the person has achieved statewide or national prominence, and has had a positive impact in Mount Diablo State Park. One obvious example is John Muir (Muir Picnic Area).

The following 50 place names can be found on the recently printed Fifth Edition of the Trail Map of Mount Diablo State Park, published by the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association. The letters and numbers in parenthesis following the place name refer to the map's grid coordinates for the location within the Park. Most of the trails and roads are signed, but a few are pending signage.

It is important to recognize that this article would have been incomplete and inadequate if it were not for the assistance received from numerous people and organizations. Three people were especially helpful: Seth Adams of Save Mount Diablo; Anne Homan, author of *The Morning Side of Mount Diablo*; and Ken Lavin of Mount Diablo Interpretive Association. The curators and staffs of the following historical societies were also

very helpful: Clayton, Concord, Contra Costa County, San Ramon Valley, and Walnut Creek.

ALAMO CREEK (H9)

The word "Alamo" is Spanish for "poplar." It was given to the town, and eventually to the creek, because poplar trees once grew abundantly in the valley and along the streams. The poplar tree in this area is more correctly called the Fremont Cottonwood, *Populus fremontii*. This tree was named after John C. Fremont, who discovered the species with Kit Carson near Pyramid Lake, Nevada, in 1844.

ANGEL KERLEY ROAD (D5)

The fireroad is named for Angelina E. Toscani Kerley (1908-1987), who owned and operated the Diablo Ranch on North Gate Road on the western slope of Mount Diablo. Angel took control of the 300-head, 2,000+-acre, working cattle ranch in 1958 as part of a divorce settlement from her husband. Angel was born in Santa Rosa, California and graduated from college with a major in English. She married Robert D. Kerley in 1934 and the couple lived in Berkeley. Her husband operated Allied Automatic, a vending machine company in Oakland. Angel was an accomplished horse rider, successfully competing in 100-mile rides in 24-hour periods. In 1980, Angel sold 1,869-acres of Diablo Ranch to the State of California for \$3.3 million. Additionally, 231 acres were donated to the State. Angel had two children: Robert Kerley, Jr., and Joan Kerley Brumleve. Joan died in 2000. Tom Brumleve, Joan's husband, currently operates a 61-acre, in-holding, demonstration ranch on Mount Diablo. In 1993, the

California State Parks Commission reduced the amount of cattle grazing to 1,000-acres and no more than 100 cows within the Park.

ARROYO DEL CERRO (B3)

Spanish for "hillside creek."

ARROYO PICNIC AREA (E7)

"Arroyo" is a Spanish word meaning "stream", "brook", or "creek."

BLAISDELL TRAIL (H2)

The trail is named for Harry Lee Blaisdell (1890-1964), superintendent of the Central Coast Division of the State Parks, and first "warden" of Mount Diablo State Park in the 1920s. Harry was a native of Massachusetts.

BRIONES-MOUNT DIABLO TRAIL (A5)

This trail extends from Briones Regional Park through the Diablo Foothills to Mount Diablo. It is named for the prosperous farmer Ramon Briones (1814-1875). Briones Valley was also named after him. In 1844, Ramon married Louise Moraga Briones (1816-1906). They initially resided in San Pablo and Pinole, and then moved to Oakland in 1869. They had seven children. Ramon was killed in a railroad accident.

BRUCE LEE ROAD (D2)

Bruce Royal Lee (1916-1985) was once President of the Concord/Mount Diablo Trailride Association, founded in 1941 by avid horse lovers who enjoyed riding in the hills of Contra Costa County. The first year they had 18 riders. They incorporated in 1945, and in 1960 purchased 200-acres

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