

# Novato, California

## People and Place

### *Location*

The City of Novato, situated approximately 29 miles north of San Francisco and 78 miles southwest of Sacramento, is located in Contra Costa County. Novato has 27.7 square miles of land and 0.6 square miles of surface water. The City of Novato lies at 38°06'27"N, 122°34'07"W.

### *Demographic Profile*

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Novato was 47,630. Between 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census data reports that the population of Novato increased 0.1%. In 2000 the percentage of males and females was 48.4% and 51.6% respectively. The racial composition of the population was predominantly White (82.8%), followed by Asian (5.2%), Black or African American (2%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (0.5%), and Pacific Islander (0.2%). Overall a small percentage, 5.4%, identified themselves as belonging to some other race and 3.9% classified themselves as belonging to two or more races. A total of 13.1% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

The median age of the population in 2000 was 39.6, lower than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. In 2000 approximately 53.2% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 59. A total of 17.2% percent of the Novato population were foreign-born, with 23% born in Mexico. Approximately 81.1% of the population of Novato was living in family households in 2000. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that 89.1% of the population of Novato over 18 years of age had received a high school degree or higher, 34.6% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 11.3% received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

### *History*

The first inhabitants of the Novato area were the Miwok Indians who lived in a village at the base of Mount Burdell at Olompali. The area is now a State Historic Park with a re-created Miwok village. The Coastal Miwok, called Olamentke by early writers, are part of the Penutian language family.<sup>1</sup> The Miwok occupied the territory bounded on the north by Cosumnes River, on the east by the ridge of the Sierra Nevada, on the south by Fresno Creek, and on the west by the San Joaquin River.<sup>2</sup> The Miwok are known to be the largest "nation" in California and it is said that a "man of any of their tribes or settlements may travel from the Cosumnes to the Fresno and make himself understood without difficulty, so uniform is their language."<sup>3</sup>

The Coast Miwok inhabited about 885 square miles of Marin and southern Sonoma counties. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were approximately 3000 Miwok in about 40 villages; each village consisted of 75-100 persons.<sup>4</sup> In 1910 the Miwok population was estimated at 699.<sup>5</sup> The Miwok traveled in boats made from tule reeds from which they traveled around the Bay and to Angel Island, the largest island in San Francisco Bay.<sup>6</sup> The diet of the Miwok consisted primarily of nuts, pinole – a meal made of plant seeds, roots, fruit, jack-rabbit, deer, sea lions, seals, sea otters, fish, and shellfish. Several kinds of fish and shellfish were available year-round. Annual salmon spawning runs were made through Raccoon Strait, just offshore from Angel Island.<sup>7</sup> Fish were taken by gorge-hook (made from bone) and spear, dip nets (bags of

netting attached to wooden frames on a handle), and by narcotization; woven surf nets were used along the open beaches.<sup>8,9</sup>

The Miwok's first contact with Europeans occurred in 1579 when Sir Francis Drake, the first Englishman to sail around the world, was greeted upon his arrival by Indians in a village near Tomales, approximately 50 miles northwest of Sausalito. Later, in 1775, Father Vincente, who arrived to claim San Francisco Bay with Captain Ayuala described the Coast Miwok as "humorous, with courteous manners."<sup>10</sup> During the Spanish Mission Era the Coast Miwok learned how to build with adobe and cultivate new food crops, which they in turn traded to the Spanish missions.<sup>11</sup> For decades the Coast Miwok resisted the Spanish and Mexicans but fell before European firepower. In 1953 Congress passed public law 280 which turned over law enforcement on California reservations to state and county agencies. By 1958, the federal government "terminated" the recognition of several tribes including the Coast Miwok.<sup>12</sup> In December 2000 legislation was signed granting The Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria, formerly known as the Federated Coast Miwok, full rights and privileges afforded federally recognized tribes. Today there are over 500 registered tribal members.<sup>13</sup>

Mexican governors made land grants in the Novato area beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1839 Rancho de Novato was granted to Fernando Feliz and the following year Ygnacio Pacheco received Rancho San Jose. In 1843 Camilo Ynitia, son of the last Coast Miwok Chief, was granted Rancho Olompali. Rancho Novato was sold several times and was eventually purchased in 1856 by Francis DeLong and Joseph Sweeter. DeLong and Sweeter planted thousands of apple trees and Rancho Novato became one of the largest orchards in the world. In the 1870s Portuguese and Swiss-Italian farmers and dairymen began to settle in the Novato area. In the 1880s the small agricultural town of Novato became connected to the North Bay area as the Northwest Pacific Railroad reached Novato. By 1910 vineyards, dairies, orchards, and chicken ranches formed the base of the Novato economy. DeLong's 6000 acres, purchased and subdivided by the Home and Farm Company in 1888, was the beginning of the City of Novato.

Hamilton Air Force Base came to Novato in 1928 and was in operation until 1975. The Base served as Marin County's main employer during most of its operational years. In the 1940s both a water and sewer district were formed in the City. Novato was incorporated in 1960 and one year later the Police Department became a city agency. In 1963 City Hall was established in what was then the Presbyterian Church.

Today there is an active retail area in downtown Novato with several shops and restaurants. Because of the City's low population density it has a rural atmosphere and offers visitors and residents numerous parks and open spaces. The City contains over 3000 acres of preserves and open spaces and 27 city parks. The Novato History Museum, founded in 1976 in the home of Novato's first Postmaster, Henry F. Jones, offers residents and visitors a glimpse at the area's history. The Novato Historical Guild, a volunteer non-profit organization also founded in 1976, publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The Novato Historian*. Major community events include the Novato Festival of Art, Wine, and Music that takes place in June, concerts and movies in Pioneer Park throughout the summer, an annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, and the City's Labor Day Picnic at Stafford Lake.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the top three occupations in Novato for people 16 years of age and over were "management, professional and related occupations" (43.4%), "sales

and office occupations” (28.1%), and “service occupations” (14.3%). In 2002 the top five employers in Contra Costa County were Bio-Rad Laboratories, Bookside Hospital, Chevron, Color Spot Nurseries, and Contra Costa Community College.<sup>14</sup> Novato’s largest employer, with over 2400 employees, is the Fireman’s Fund Insurance Company.<sup>15</sup> Novato is also the corporate headquarters for the footwear company Birkenstock Footprint Sandals, and Smith and Hawken, a gardening retailer. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 12.3% of the city’s eligible labor force was employed within local, state, or federal governments, all working outside of natural resource industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining). The 2000 U.S. Census data reports that only 0.2% of Novato’s population was employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census 66.3% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 3.6% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Of the population of Novato over 16 years of age 31.3% was not in the labor force, slightly less than the national average of 36.1%. For whom poverty status was determined, 5.6% of the City’s population was living below the poverty line in 1999. The median household income in 1999 was \$63,453 and the per capita income was \$32,402. In 2000 there were 18,994 housing units located in Novato; a total of 67.6% and 32.4% were owner and renter occupied respectively. A small percent (2.5%) of the housing units were vacant, of which 10.9% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### *Governance*

The City of Novato was incorporated in 1960. Novato operates under a Council-Manager form of government, with the Mayor serving a 1-year term and five City Council members serving 4-year terms. Novato levies a 8.25% sale and use tax on regular purchases and a 10% transient lodging (hotel) tax.<sup>16,17</sup> Under Proposition 13 the maximum property tax rate for Contra Costa County is 1% of the property’s net taxable value.<sup>18</sup>

California state law assesses commercial vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value.<sup>19</sup> Vessels registered in California with either the Department of Motor Vehicles or the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) are assessed property taxes by the county tax collector where it is moored.<sup>20</sup> Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage.<sup>21</sup> California levies a fuel tax of \$0.18 per gallon, a portion of which goes toward marine safety and education programs and boating facility administration and development.<sup>22</sup>

The State of California levies landing taxes that must be paid by fishermen and fish processors involved in the retail sale of fish products. These taxes vary by species and range between \$.0013 and \$.0125 per pound of fish.<sup>23</sup> The California Department of Agriculture also administers two commodity commissions, the California Salmon Council and the California Sea Urchin Commission, which charge fees for marketing and lobbying on behalf of fishermen involved in these specific fisheries.<sup>24</sup>

The National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) Southwest Fisheries Science Center has laboratories located 103 miles south in Santa Cruz and there is a NMFS Regional Office located approximately 426 miles south in Long Beach. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has a marine field office located about 51 miles south in Belmont. San Francisco (29 miles) is home to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings are held approximately 50 miles south in Foster City. Novato falls under the

jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Office San Francisco Bay, one of the largest and busiest marine safety units in the Coast Guard.

### *Facilities*

Novato is accessible by ground and air. The major roads connecting Novato to neighboring communities are State Highway 37 and Interstate 80 northeast to Sacramento and State Highway 101 south to San Francisco. The City is accessible by bus via Golden Gate Transit. The San Francisco International Airport is located 29 miles south of the City.

The Novato School District consists of multiple elementary, middle, high schools, and alternative schools. Two universities are located within the city, Columbian Pacific University and Christian Life International Bible College. North Marin Water District provides fresh water and wastewater services to the City of Novato. Electricity and natural gas are supplied to community residents by Pacific Gas and Electric. Public safety is administered by the City of Novato Police Department. The Novato Community Hospital provides medical services to community residents. Additional local facilities include a public library, a senior center, museums, and city parks. There are no port facilities located in Novato. The closest port is located approximately 30 miles south in San Francisco.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

Landings data for Novato were recorded as part of the Other Sonoma and Marin County Outer Coast Ports port group which includes the nearby communities of San Rafael, Inverness, Bolinas, Jenner, Windsor, Marshall, Petaluma, Sebastopol, Stewarts Point, Dillon Beach, Drakes Bay, Healdsburg, Kentfield, Muir Beach, Guerneville, Sonoma, Nicasio, Greenbrae, Forest Knolls, Occidental, Cloverdale, San Quentin, Rohnert Park, Corte Madera, Mill Valley, Tiburon, Stinson Beach, Hamlet, Marconi, Millerton, and Santa Rosa. Reported landings for this port group in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic (135 t/\$116,723/15), crab (6 t/\$42,768/7), groundfish (1 t/\$1704/9), highly migratory species (confidential/confidential/1), salmon (5 t/\$31,805/4), shrimp (3 t/\$23,875/6), and other species (4 t/\$23,656/16). There are no fish processors located in Novato. See the Sebastopol, Dillon Beach, Corte Madera, Santa Rosa, and San Francisco Community Profiles for additional marine information on these communities.

Novato residents owned five vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, three of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by Novato residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/3), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/0/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).<sup>25</sup>

In 2000 recorded data indicates that the number of Novato residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/4), crab (0/0/5), groundfish (0/0/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/18), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/3), and other species (0/0/9).<sup>26</sup>

According to available data, 53 state permits were registered to Novato residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/8), crab (0/0/5), groundfish (0/0/1),

highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/33), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/3), and other species (0/0/3).<sup>27</sup>

### *Sportfishing*

In Novato sportfishermen are involved in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. There are three sportfishing license agents located in Novato. There were two Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels licensed in Novato 2002 and one in 2003.

### *Subsistence*

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Novato is not discussed in detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data. The California Department of Fish and Game uses the term “recreational” to refer to fishermen that do not earn revenue from their catch but rather fish for pleasure and/or to provide food for personal consumption. Therefore information on subsistence fishing in California is captured, to some degree, within the above sportfishing data.

## **Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000 Novato residents were scarcely involved in North Pacific fisheries. In 2000, residents owned zero vessels that were involved in the fisheries and available data indicates zero landings were made by community members in the same year.

Additionally, in 2000 there was one Novato resident serving as a crewmember in North Pacific fisheries. Data indicates that there was no state or federal permits registered to community residents in the same year.

### *Sportfishing*

A total of 129 Alaska sportfishing licenses were purchased by Novato community members in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> Curtis, Edward. 1924. The Miwok, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.yosemite.ca.us/history/curtis/> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Access Genealogy. 2004. California Indian Tribes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/californiatribes.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Access Genealogy. 2004. California Indian Tribes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/californiatribes.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Rohnert Park Historical Society. 2000. Miwok Villages, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.rphist.org/html/miwok.html> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Curtis, Edward. 1924. The Miwok, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.yosemite.ca.us/history/curtis/> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Angel Island Association. 2003. Miwok Information, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.angelisland.org/miwok.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Angel Island Association. 2003. Miwok Information, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.angelisland.org/miwok.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Curtis, Edward. 1924. The Miwok, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.yosemite.ca.us/history/curtis/> (access date - January 2005).

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- <sup>9</sup> Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin. No date. History of the Coast Miwok at Point Reyes, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science\\_Folder/Coast\\_Miwok.html](http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science_Folder/Coast_Miwok.html) (access date - January 2005).
- <sup>10</sup> Wlaker, Richard. 2001. A Hidden Geography, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://geography.berkeley.edu/PeopleHistory/faculty/R\\_Walker/AHiddenGeography.html](http://geography.berkeley.edu/PeopleHistory/faculty/R_Walker/AHiddenGeography.html) (access date - January 2005).
- <sup>11</sup> Novato Chamber of Commerce. No date. Novato's History, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.localcommunities.org/servlet/lc\\_ProcServ/dbpage=page&GID=00125000000976770154594203&PG=00126000000976848350676363](http://www.localcommunities.org/servlet/lc_ProcServ/dbpage=page&GID=00125000000976770154594203&PG=00126000000976848350676363) (access date - January 2005).
- <sup>12</sup> Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin. No date. History of the Coast Miwok at Point Reyes, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science\\_Folder/Coast\\_Miwok.html](http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science_Folder/Coast_Miwok.html) (access date - January 2005).
- <sup>13</sup> Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin. No date. History of the Coast Miwok at Point Reyes, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science\\_Folder/Coast\\_Miwok.html](http://www.pointreyesvisions.com/NewFiles/Science_Folder/Coast_Miwok.html) (access date - January 2005).
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- <sup>15</sup> City of Novato. No date. About Novato, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.ci.novato.ca.us/about\\_nov.cfm](http://www.ci.novato.ca.us/about_nov.cfm) (access date - January 2005).
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- <sup>17</sup> California State Board of Equalization. 2001. California Counties Transient Lodging Tax Revenue, Rate and Date for the Fiscal Year 2000-01, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locprep/adhoc/county/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> (access date - July 2004).
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- <sup>20</sup> California Department of Motor Vehicles. 2003. How to register a vessel, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/boatsinfo/boatreg.htm#how> (access date - July 2004).
- <sup>21</sup> State of California Board of Equalization. 2004. Ballast Water Management Fee, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/sptaxprog/bllstweb12.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- <sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation. 2001. Provisions Governing the Distribution of State Motor Fuel Tax Receipts: California, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/hwytaxes/2001/california.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- <sup>23</sup> State of California. No date. Fish and Game Code Section 8040-8070, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycod?section=fgc&group=08001-8070> (access date - July 2004).
- <sup>24</sup> State of California Department of Agriculture. 2004. List of Marketing Programs, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cdafa.ca.gov/mkt/mkt/mktbrds.html> (access date - July 2004).
- <sup>25</sup> 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- <sup>26</sup> 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
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