



California State Parks

Video Transcript



Pacheco Passages at Pacheco State Park

Hi, welcome to Pacheco State Park. I'm Ranger Dave Milam, and today we're going to do a tour of the park—a little history tour, a little wildlife, a little wildflower hike. The title of the tour was called Pacheco Passages, and we will discuss a little bit about that. Why passages? Why that title? That's kind of the theme of today's hike, is the passages, what goes on during the passages.

So, in order to understand a little bit about the park, we will start with how the park came to be. This was a ranch that was donated to the park in 1992. The woman who owned it was named Paula Fatjo, and upon her death she donated the 6,890 acres to the California State Parks so that people could enjoy the park for future generations—enjoy the solitude, the open lands, and the wildflowers, and everything she loved about the park here.

But who was Paula, besides Paula Fatjo? Well, she was actually the great-great-granddaughter of Francisco Pacheco. Francisco Pacheco was born in Mexico in 1790, and in 1820 he came to Monterey, California. He was working with the army at the time, the Spanish Army. He was a carriage maker, and he became involved in various aspects of the army. He went on some Indian wars and uprisings, and he was thought of well in the Spanish Army. Then he became a civil servant, a little bit, in Monterey at the same time he was in the army. He became the treasurer of Monterey. In 1833 he finally got his first rancho granted to him by the Mexican Government. It was called Rancho Ausaymas y San Felipe, and it was just on the west of us on the other side of the Pacheco Pass. This pass was named after Francisco Pacheco.

In 1843 Francisco's son was granted another rancho called the Rancho San Luis Gonzaga, and that started actually from the top of the Pacheco Pass area here, which abutted the other rancho, and it went out into the valley. As usual, the boundaries on these ranchos were pretty vague. Some of the papers and the maps showed it clear over into his father's property, all the way to the San Joaquin River out in the middle of the valley, down south of here to Los Baños Creek, and north quite a ways up as well. So it varied quite a bit. In later years they discovered it really wasn't that far, and the U.S. courts made it quite a bit smaller when they verified the grant. Francisco got even more parcels and ranchos, and he kept building until eventually the family had about 50,000 acres of land throughout the Central California area here. In 1855 the son died, so the property reverted back to Francisco Pacheco. But before the son had died, one of the stipulations on the land grant was that he build a house within a year or so of his getting the property. So he built this big adobe, and rather than actually being a house it was more like a fortress. The walls were adobe, about two feet thick. They had shutters on the inside so they could block it up. It was to keep the marauding Indians from coming over the pass and over into the kind of "civilized" Monterey world where most of the

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Spaniards were at the time and gathering horses up—they would steal the horses. So that was kind of what they built this adobe for. Well, throughout the years the adobe was used on the ranch, and then it was a residence for a while. Then it stopped being a residence and they built another big inn kind of beside there because it was a stage stop through here as well, the rancho was. It kind of fell into disrepair. In the 1930s, late '20s, early '30s, it became an inn for a while.

Eventually, in 1948, Paula decided to move over here. She was born in San Francisco, but she decided to move back to the ranch and spend her life on a ranch and own the ranch and run the ranch. So she converted the adobe to part of her home. She had attached another little breezeway to it and a couple of other buildings, and so she used that as part of her home. But in 1962 the San Luis Reservoir was going to be built, and it was going to cover up her home. So the state condemned the land, and she wanted to move her home up here. She contracted out to get somebody to move it, and they attempted to move it up here. They got it to within just about a mile of this location when the roof caved in and collapsed the adobe. So all that's left now is behind the office here where she had it set, where she planned to live in that adobe. So we can go around and see that now, if you want to go see what's remaining of the adobe, and we can talk a little bit more about that.

VISITOR: Ranger Milam, I was wondering about the "Y" that's in the buildings. There's one in the fireplace and there are a couple others around the house?

GUIDE: Okay, did you notice the one that's up here on the roof as well? There's another "Y" up there along with a "SGL" and a couple other things. Well, her branding iron was also a "Y" and why do you think they have "Y" for a brand? And all these "Y"s? Well, I guess you asked the question so you don't know. What it was, was before the Europeans arrived and made the roads, Native American trails crossed the hills here. This was a good travel area all along, a good way to get across. Well, right at the water hole where the rancho was built, there were two other trails coming in, and one trail and one trail and another trail forms the "Y"—what her brand is. It's the same "Y" as that, and so that's what she picked up—the three trails coming together at the water hole where her adobe and ranch was located. So that's why she has them throughout the place. The "SGL" stands for the San Luis Gonzaga, the rancho. Then there's an "F8" around the corner on the other side, and that was kind of a play on her name, the Fatjo name. If you think Spanish, it's "F" and "ocho," which is like Fatjo. Let's go.

Okay, as we come out here in the back, you can see this is the remains of the adobe. You can see where the old breezeway was attached, and in some of the old plans, actually, she was going to put it here and attach another breezeway and have another building here. Of course that all kind of fell apart when the adobe fell apart. Right after this was built in 1843, like I say, they lived in it. It didn't look anything like Paula had it. It just had a hard dirt floor. There was actually supposedly a chimney somewhere inside.

In fact, I'll read you a quote here. This is from Thomas Mayfield Jefferson, who was a boy of five years old in 1850, just seven years after this was built. And this, remember, was down where the dam is at San Luis now. His family came through this area and they stopped there for the night. He said, "There under a grove of large cottonwoods and sycamores we found the buildings of El Rancho de San Luis. Of the ranch buildings I remember only a long low adobe with loop-holed walls." Well, loop-holed walls refers to the holes they had in the walls;

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they were like gun portholes. So when bandits came by or the horse thieves came by, there was one way they could shoot out with a little protection. He goes on to say, "The inside of the building was of interest to me, as I had not been in one just like it before. There was an earthen floor, which had been smoothed and beaten hard. In one corner was a raised adobe platform about the size of a modern blacksmith's forge." Of course that's "modern" in 1850, and from what we know, that platform, which was where the cooking was done he says, supposedly it was off in that corner of the building. "And in the opposite corner was a crude bed made of a cow hide stretched over a rough wooden frame. There were two chairs in the room and a few garments hanging on the wall." Sounds kind of sparse.

I don't think I quite told you how this actually got up here. They actually had to hand dig the foundation out—it was an old rock foundation under the adobe—hand dig it out, pour all that concrete that you can see as a foundation, let that set, and then put steel beams through, pick it up on a truck, and that's how it was transported up here. So she had the plot all ready for it before it collapsed.

Somebody had asked about electricity because you can see wires hanging out. Well, in 1948, when she rebuilt it, of course they had electricity. The ranch was kind of a long ways out of town, but still there was electricity, and it was by a good waterhole. In fact, that was exactly how the rancho got its name. The first recorded European to come over the pass was Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga and a priest who came over together. They camped down at the old waterhole, which is right where the adobe used to be. There was a great waterhole there. It was where the San Luis Creek came in and met the Cottonwood Creek, and it formed some deep waterholes, so it always had good water. There was feed for the horses, and so they camped there.

Notice the hills behind us. She loved the horses—we still have one Arabian horse. This was actually a State horse that was a workhorse, but it was actually descended from one of Paula's horse lines—it kind of fits in with the park. She loved horses, Arabian horses in particular. That's what she did most of. I heard a quote that she said she raised cattle in order to pay for her horse hobby, the Arabian horses. She loved the Arabian horses and had lots of Arabian horses. So we still have the one in the park, and it kind of fits in with the theme of the ranch. We still graze cattle in the hills, so that's part of it. Part of that is for, you know, it was a ranch and it kind of fits with the ranch theme, but it is also is part of our resource protection—we only graze part of the park. We're going to see through time if this actually works to get the native plants recovering better. So it's an ongoing process that we do.

Further down the road that we came up on, there's a little line shack building. That was actually used by Henry Miller who was another famous rancher in California who owned like a 150,000 acres of California. When he leased the ranch for a while, some of his group actually had that line shack. I've heard that that line shack was moved up here from somewhere but I don't know that for a fact, where it was moved from or when, but that was a Henry Miller line shack.

The roadway just across the fence from the one we drove up on, was the original roadway up Pacheco Pass. That's where the Wells Fargo stagecoaches ran over the pass, the Old Butterfield Stagecoach Mail line used that roadway. And one of the stage stops on the other side of the hill was the adobe rancho. So if you don't have any more questions about the

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adobe, I thought we could go on down back to the parking lot and maybe take our little wildflower hike and we can discuss a few other things. Okay? Let's go on.

VISITOR: I have a question—what's a line shack?

GUIDE: It's just a building that was on the line. On the line of the stage line.

See the road coming around—it wasn't very wide. The people who wrote about it said that it was a "real road," and they gladly paid the two bucks it cost to go over it.

California sagebrush—it was used about the Native Americans a lot. They used certain species of it in their religious ceremonies, to dry and then burn to get some smoke and nice smell, kind of like an incense. They also used it to rub on their bodies to mask their scents so when they went hunting they would smell like this, which the deer is used to, not like a person. So it's a useful thing. Yes, California sagebrush.

This is either the blue elderberry or it would be Mexican elderberry, it depends on the common name you want to decide. You can make an elderberry wine out of the berries. When it bloomed, you could actually cook those flowers and eat the flowers. They made flutes out of the stems and they made game pieces out of them. So it was well used by them for a variety of reasons. It's the elderberry.

Well, here's another little one, it's just a different species. This one is called valley tassels, and it's a little white-ish one. You will often walk past grass and not even notice them.

For years I kept waiting for this little flower to open up—I wanted to see these real pretty yellow flowers like the goldfields and others. But I eventually found out this is the flower—that is as far open as it goes. And then it goes to seed, forms the seeds, and then eventually it will open up into this real pretty dandelion-like seed ball that most people think is the flower, but actually that's the seeds. This one is called blow wives. I know you women probably don't like that, but blow wives is the name. I don't know how it got the name, but it's another kind of unusual little flower that's real common in the hills here because they kind of blend in.

Here's another little plant that's kind of a neat one. I like it—kind of just goes away in the grass a lot of times, but if you get a good close-up view of it. The genetic name is *Micropus*, for the genus. I don't remember the species. If you look at it real closely, it looks like a little cottonball, so it used to be called a cottonweed. Well now I've learned another name they call it is Q-tip, because it looks like a little Q-tip swab. But, here, why don't you come over and look at it? See it looks like a little cotton ball or a Q-tip. I've always thought it was kind of a neat name.

Our next stop will be this shrub right up here. Just wanted to talk about that for a moment. Now have any of you ever had gooseberry pie? This is a gooseberry bush. We might find one that has actually berries on it a little later, but they're very spiny, round little berries, and this is where they make the gooseberries.

You can smell this shrub, this little thing here. This is a little mint, and oh it smells good. It's got extremely tiny flowers. Why don't you look at it, sir? See how small those flowers are, and

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it just smells like, I don't know, oregano or something. You got that, sir? Okay, you guys want to sniff?

You can pass them on along, it smells great. I can't remember the name. I don't know that it has a common name, but it sure smells good.

Notice the small oak trees here. Over in the grazed area of the park, we don't see a lot of the small trees. Anybody think how old these trees might be? A couple of years old? Actually these are probably twenty or thirty years old. They spend the first ten to twenty years of their life putting down roots. Because it is so dry, through millennia of genetics they know you better get your root system down. So this is really a pretty good grove of trees. You notice we've left the area that we graze—this is the area that is not grazed. Kind of our comparison of the two sides. So we're seeing how it works.

VISITOR: How old is the grove here?

GUIDE: Two to three hundred years, I guess—something in that range. So they're pretty old. They can be up to five hundred years, as long as there's not fires—sometimes trees this size will not survive fires. Usually the big trees might lose their leaves, but they come back the next year. In this kind of grass it will not be a real hot fire usually and will not kill the tree.

Okay everybody, you saw this plant as we came up the road here. Remember the owls clover we saw earlier, the purple owls clover and the white one? This is another owls clover, it's in the same group of plants. This one is called either Johnny tuck or butter and eggs. I could see the butter and eggs look from it. Each one of these is a single flower, and they're kind of puffy, like they're hollow, puffed up little balloons. They're really neat if you get up and look at them close. See how they're kind of puffed up like a little balloon? They're real pretty little flowers, and they form really big mats. They're getting really late in the season right now. As the season passes through, these are getting later in the year, at other times you'll find big areas of them—masses of this kind of pale yellow color versus this bright goldfields color. So at times you can see them from a distance just tell kind of what they are from the color changes.

This little flower, what does it look like? Like a pansy. Well, it is like a pansy—*Viola pedunculata*, which is a violet. Now while this is not a violet violet, it's a yellow violet. So a pansy is a violet, and this is a violet. Another common name is Johnny jump-up. It's one of the first flowers we get in the spring. Sometimes in late February or early March these will start blooming. It's kind of unusual to have them blooming still this time of year, but we've had rains throughout the spring, and it's kind of extended the flower life. So this year's kind of nice in that way—we have a lot of plants that are usually gone by this time of year that are still around. So it's kind of nice for you guys on the hike to be able to do this.

Now this is another one of my absolute favorites is this dark purple flower. It's a delphinium. If any of you grow delphiniums in your gardens, well this is a wild delphinium. They come in a variety of colors. I don't know the species name, but I just love this dark purple one like we have here. They're called larkspurs because of this little spur that comes out here in the back of the flower. Very pretty. Any of you know what buttercups look like? We passed a few in

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the field. Well, buttercups and larkspurs are very closely related, even though the flowers look nothing alike.

This one is just about done for the season, but this is called miner's lettuce, back in the days of the forty-niners. This grows real lush in the spring earlier when it's wetter, and you can actually use it as a lettuce. It's kind of like an iceberg lettuce, the leaves. Then it has these kind of really neat flowers that come right out of the middle of the leaf. I've eaten this before myself, but, like I say, I don't recommend it to anybody because you really just don't know what your allergic to. And when I got to the bottom of the bowl, there was a couple of green caterpillars.

VISITOR: Can you eat the flower also?

GUIDE: I think you can eat all of it. We just ate the leaves because it was earlier, and it didn't have flowers. It's kind of a neat little plant. Sometimes the flowers are white, sometimes they're pink.

You can imagine as a pioneer coming over this way, or maybe Thomas Mayfield—remember as a little kid?—and you'd never been to the valley, and you finally get to the top. And, look, you can see the valley and sometimes you can see clear over to the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It's very hard nowadays because of the bad air quality. But there's often times in the winter when you can see all the way across to the Sierras and all the snow-capped peaks. He also wrote about the joy of the family of actually seeing the rancho down there, and they said they could see the San Joaquin River from here. Well, it's kind of hard to imagine today because of all the farms and the trees and all the rest. But, remember, back in those days there was no dam, no irrigation. This was basically a desert all the way across, and so the river was the one green streak across there, so you probably could see the river out on the far, far side. And if it was a good clear day, and you knew where it was, I'm sure you could see it today, if you can see far enough certainly.

One of the other things that kind of passes through this area—remember “Pacheco Passages”—what do you think we got here? Wind. It's blowing us around, making me hold my hat on. You know, you can look around at the trees and say, “Wow look at these trees there all bent over.” It's through years of the wind blowing through. So that's another thing that passes through here. It passes the seeds from some of these plants on through. And people come across. The wind comes across. What is the wind? Energy. And Paula actually used this energy. So as we go around these hills here, we'll be able to see a lot of the windmills. Again, as you drive up the road, you'll see a few of the windmills. The largest one, that we just put in last year, it's 240 feet to the hub of the propeller, each blade of the propeller is 80 feet long. I mean it's huge. They're gigantic things. Just a couple more steps and you can see right through the hills there, you can see a couple of the windmills, including the two biggest.

Okay, I wanted to point out from this location on the opposite side of the lake there, the dam. You see this kind of like a pier that sticks out, a cement structure? When the lakes is low, you'll see it even better. The adobe that we saw earlier was right where that pier is, or right close to it, within a couple hundred feet of that pier. That was where her house was, that was the old waterhole right there. Remember we talked about the wind there. In 1862 William

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Brewer, who was the head of a survey group from the U.S. government, he actually passed through this area, and he wrote a book later called "Up and Down California." You can get that book if you want. It's really a neat book on the history because this survey crew went up and down the state. Well, June 19, 1862, he camped here. He said, "We camped in a very windy place. A strong current of air pours over Pacheco Pass the entire summer from west to cool the valley." And then two years later on May 30, 1864, he described the area again. This time there had been a drought, so it was very dry, a little earlier in the year, but it was very dry. The cattle had died that were here, a lot of them by the thousands. And I'm going to quote you what he wrote: "The wind blows heavily over the pass and we descend to the San Luis Ranch." Right out there where you can see. "The wind is so high we could build no fire, so we cook in the dirty kitchen." (That's in the adobe.) "Dust fills the air. Our food is gritty between our teeth, and as we drink our cups of tea, we find a deposit of fine sand in the bottom. Dirt, dirt, dirt, eyes full, face dirty, whole person feeling dirty and gritty." I live in Los Banos, just downwind from here, and I know exactly what he's talking about every summer, although when it gets to 100 degrees, I want the wind to come back because it cools it off. Okay, let's go on up the trail.

This is another one of our native plants—it's a thistle. This is called California thistle. I really love the red color. One thing you don't want to be touching too much—you can tell why it's called a thistle because it's got all this little prickles on it. Very gorgeous red color.

So now that we've finished our hike and learned a little bit about the history of the park, to conclude today's hike I would just like to review a few of the items we discussed today—about Paula and her ancestors and how they came to own the land, so it passed through generations as it came through here. Another passage that comes through. The highway and people traveling back and forth with ideas and different cultures passing through—there's part of our passages. As quick as the weather comes through, as we found out today with the wind blowing in, the weather can change fast. Seasons can change fast, or like this year kind of slow down—it's been a long springtime, it seems like, this year, and so that passes by. Also we have another 27 miles of trail, so come back in the future or even after you have lunch today, if you can, if you want to, and visit some of the other park. There's a lot more gorgeous territory to go visit, and you can thank Paula and her vision of the future for donating this land to the State Parks. Thank you very much.

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