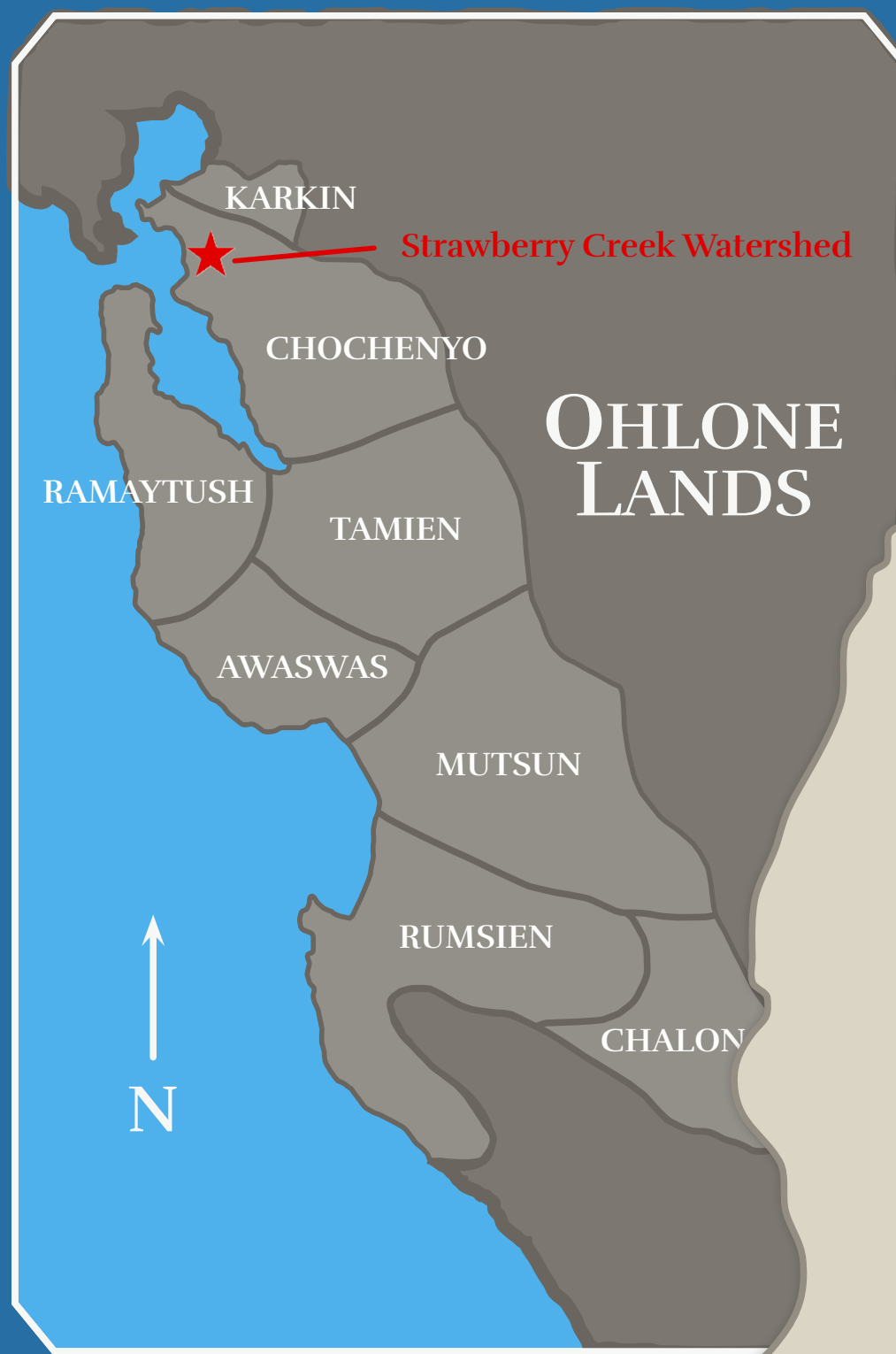


STRAWBERRY CREEK Watershed



KEY

- Culverted (underground)
- Daylit (aboveground)
- Major street
- Shellmound
- The site you are at now is where shellmounds once existed for hundreds of years.

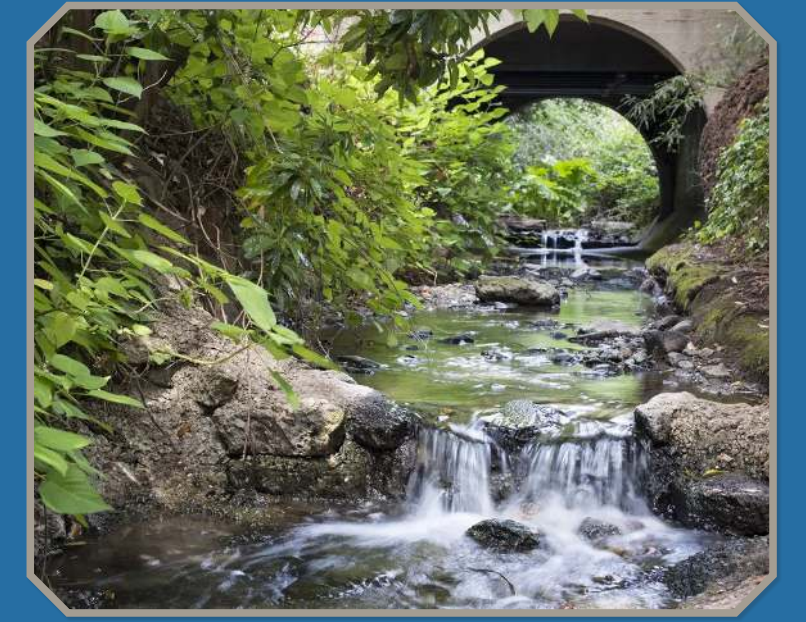


DID YOU KNOW you are standing near the banks of Strawberry Creek? Only a few hundred years ago, this area was meadows and woodland. A creek flowed just to the north of where you are standing. Flocks of geese, ducks, and seabirds filled the air. Bald eagles and grizzly bears thrived here, eating berries and feeding on salmon and trout that swam in Strawberry Creek.

GEOLOGY

Strawberry Creek originates from a series of springs at the head of Strawberry Canyon. It flows west through the city of Berkeley, and empties into the San Francisco Bay. The stream flows year-round, even during prolonged droughts, due to the abundance of water emerging from the springs. Its flow shapes and is shaped by the steep hills of Strawberry Canyon. Bedrock sediment from the hills is carried down to the flatter, slower portion of the creek, which creates an ideal spawning habitat for fish.

Strawberry Creek watershed also rests along the Hayward fault zone, making the area highly susceptible to landslides and soil erosion. The creek's route has shifted over the years, both through natural movements in the earth and human intervention. It enters the bay directly across from where the bay opens to the ocean. The creek's geology had special significance to the native peoples who lived here.



8500 BC

The ancestors of the Huichin Ohlone settle here, along the banks of the creek on the marshlands that covered the area below the hills.

1769

Spanish colonists arrive. Overgrazing of cattle changes the land and damages the creek and its waters. Native American populations decline drastically.

1849

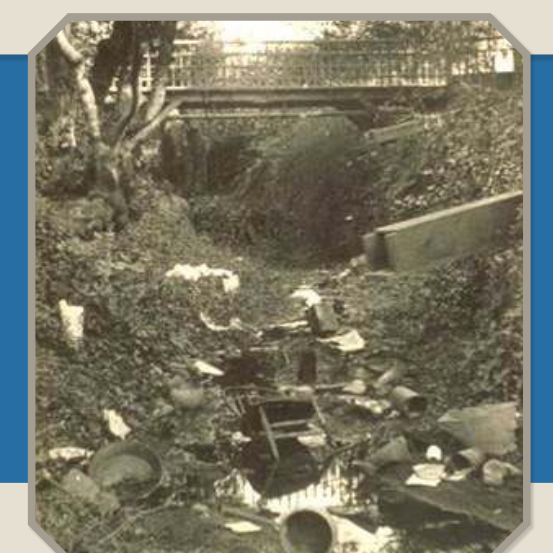
The Gold Rush brings an influx of settlers which leads to rapid development of the area. Small communities and cities are built.

1860

The UC Berkeley campus moves to its current site along the creek, which is used as a water source. Erosion and runoff further damage the creek.

1880s

The first large culvert is built. Building culverts continues until almost all parts of Strawberry Creek are buried underground except the section along the UC campus.



Early 1900s

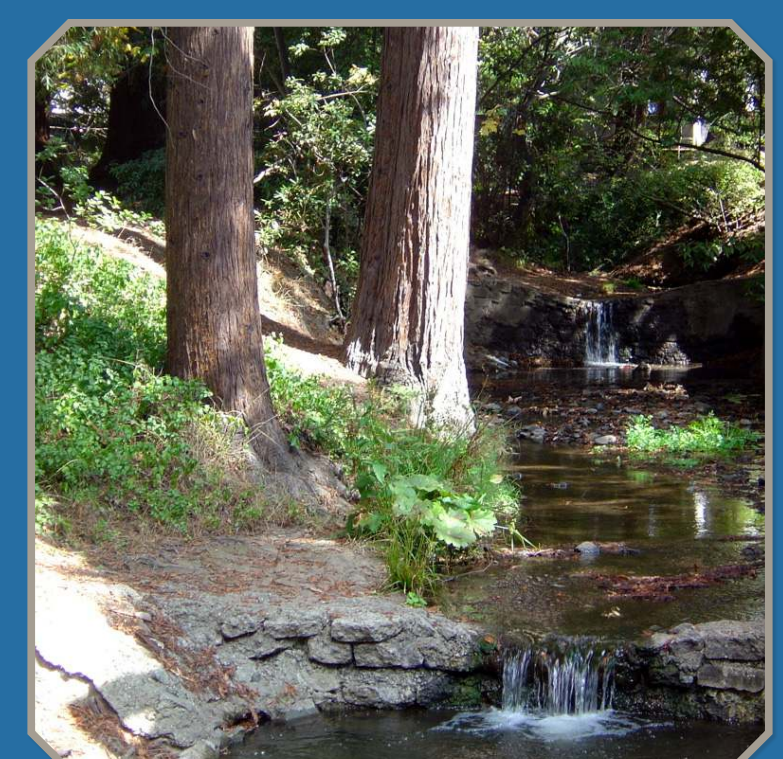
This area is called Finntown and is known for its lively political debate. Finnish immigrants build three Lutheran churches in Finntown, including this building, built in 1916, which now houses the Foundation of the Sacred Stream.

1970s-80s

Restoration efforts began after years of health advisories where Strawberry Creek had been filled with sewage, urban runoff, chemicals, and litter.

2000

Berkeley City Council approves formal landmark status for the shellmound that once stood nearby at the mouth of Strawberry Creek. Scientists estimate that the mound was used by the Ohlone from 3000 BC to 800 AD.



THE OHLONE

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the Huchiun Ohlone tribe lived peacefully along Strawberry Creek for thousands of years. Their villages were made up of dome-shaped thatched huts arranged around a central clearing. Scattered among them were smaller structures on stilts used for storing supplies of acorns. Off to one side of the villages there were often cleared areas used as ball field. Their villages near Strawberry Creek would have had sweat lodges where ceremonies for spiritual and physical purification could be held. The tribe had a spiritual connection with the body of water. They would pray and sing to the water, which would in turn provide for them.

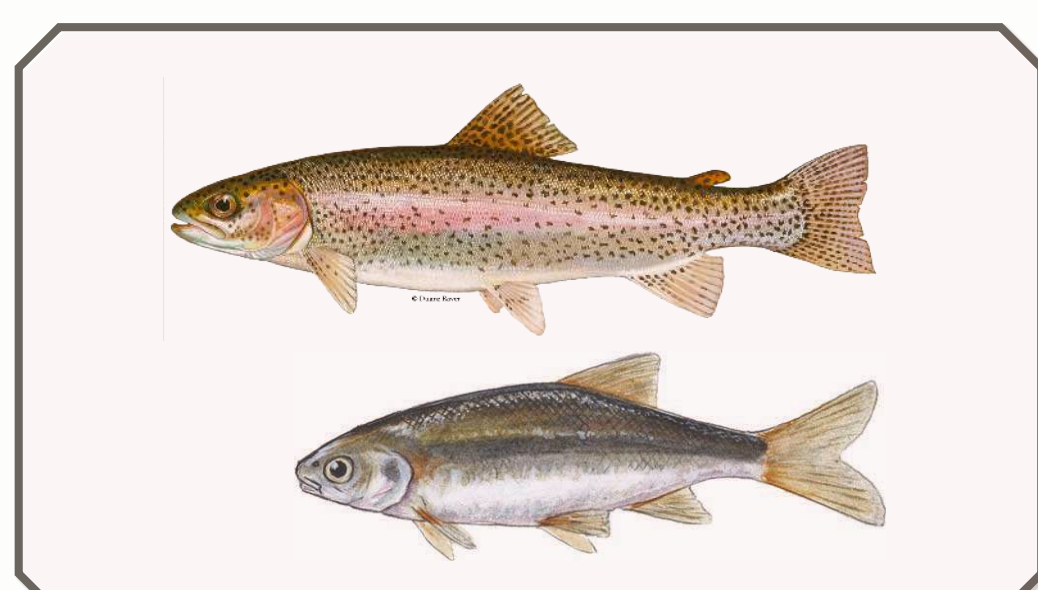
The Ohlone used the creek for bathing, and as a food and water source. They lived off of steelhead trout, salmon, and shellfish from the creek, as well as acorns, berries, and seeds that grew on its banks. They threw the empty shells into a pile, which eventually formed a shellmound. It signified a sacred place where the Ohlone would bury their ancestors. There are several shellmounds at the mouth of Strawberry Creek, where it flows into San Francisco Bay.



RESTORATION

In the 1900s, Strawberry Creek was culverted at Oxford Street and remained underground until it reached the Bay. To "daylight" a creek means to liberate a creek from a culvert or tunnel and allow the water to flow as it once did. Strawberry Creek is known as the first creek with a successful daylighting project.

Strawberry Creek Park was established in 1982 and continues to be used by children and community members to this day. It has inspired many similar projects throughout the country and the world. There are proposals to daylight more portions of Strawberry Creek. Other restoration efforts include reintroducing fish, and a 2014 project that rebuilt part of the creek to create step-pools and fortify the bank.



WILDLIFE

Strawberry Creek was once abundant with native steelhead trout, salmon, and shellfish. Trout finally disappeared from the creek around 1920, when the contamination and pollution grew too hazardous. In 1990, fish were reintroduced to the creek. Today, it is populated by Sacramento suckers, California roach minnows and hitch minnows. Three-spined stickleback fish flourish in the Berkeley Marina near the mouth of the creek.

The creek is surrounded by oak, redwood, and eucalyptus trees, and lined with both native and non-native flowering plants. There are blackberry bushes, other shrubs, and mushrooms that provide food and shelter for birds, squirrels, and insects.