

Excerpted From Milliken et al.'s Zostanoan Indians of the SF Bay Area Study

The Verona band was visited in 1906 by BIA Special Agent C. E. Kelsey, who was documenting groups of landless Indians in response to a late nineteenth-century law directing the formation of new small reservations. Kelsey found [at Pleasanton] and at Niles (Kelsey 1971). No action was ever taken, however, to secure land for them. ... Descendants of the Alisal/Verona Band still live in the San Francisco Bay Area today; they form the core membership of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe (Field et al. 1992:19).

New California Reservations Exclude West-Central California

In 1905-1906 the BIA sent C. E. Kelsey, a lawyer from San Jose, on a tour through California to check on the condition of landless Indians and make recommendations for additional purchases of small land tracts for them. Kelsey noted small groups of landless California Indians at the following sites in the San Francisco ... Bay Areas (Kelsey 1971): San Francisco Bay counties and communities: 28 people at Verona (near Pleasanton), 14 people at Niles (Alameda), 20 at Byron and 5 at Danville (Contra Costa), 35 at Redwood City and 30 at San Mateo (San Mateo County).

In May of 1927, the Washington, D.C. office of the BIA directed Sacramento Superintendent, Colonel Lafayette A. Dorrington to list all tribes and bands in his agency area that had not yet obtained a land base. The Verona band was among 135 groups that Dorrington listed as having no land, yet not needing land.

By late 1926 compensation and welfare bills to aid Indians had support from a number of powerful mainstream organizations such as the Commonwealth Club, California League of Women Voters and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (San Francisco Chronicle December 12, 1926:F3). Newspapers, such as the San Francisco Chronicle also repeatedly editorialized for an end to "robbery," "plunder" and "public cheat" of the natives, and instead for a "just, honest and decent treatment" of the Indians and their claims (San Francisco Chronicle January 18, 1922:28; October 20, 1922:20; December 16, 1939:14; April 13, 1923:22). They had, through active campaigning and alliance building, succeeded in putting the intertwined questions of Indian land claims and reparations on the national agenda.

Federal authorities wanted an overall settlement for the past taking of Indian land at minimal cost to the U.S. government. They negotiated with California authorities to develop a process that would allow a court case for reparations, but would not allow California Indians to be the direct plaintiffs. The California State Legislature began the process by passing a law in 1927 which allowed the California Attorney General to argue the case for the Indians. This kept private attorneys, who might ask for too much for the Indians, out of the case. This arrangement also put the case under the control of an official who was elected by the general electorate of California, mostly white voters.