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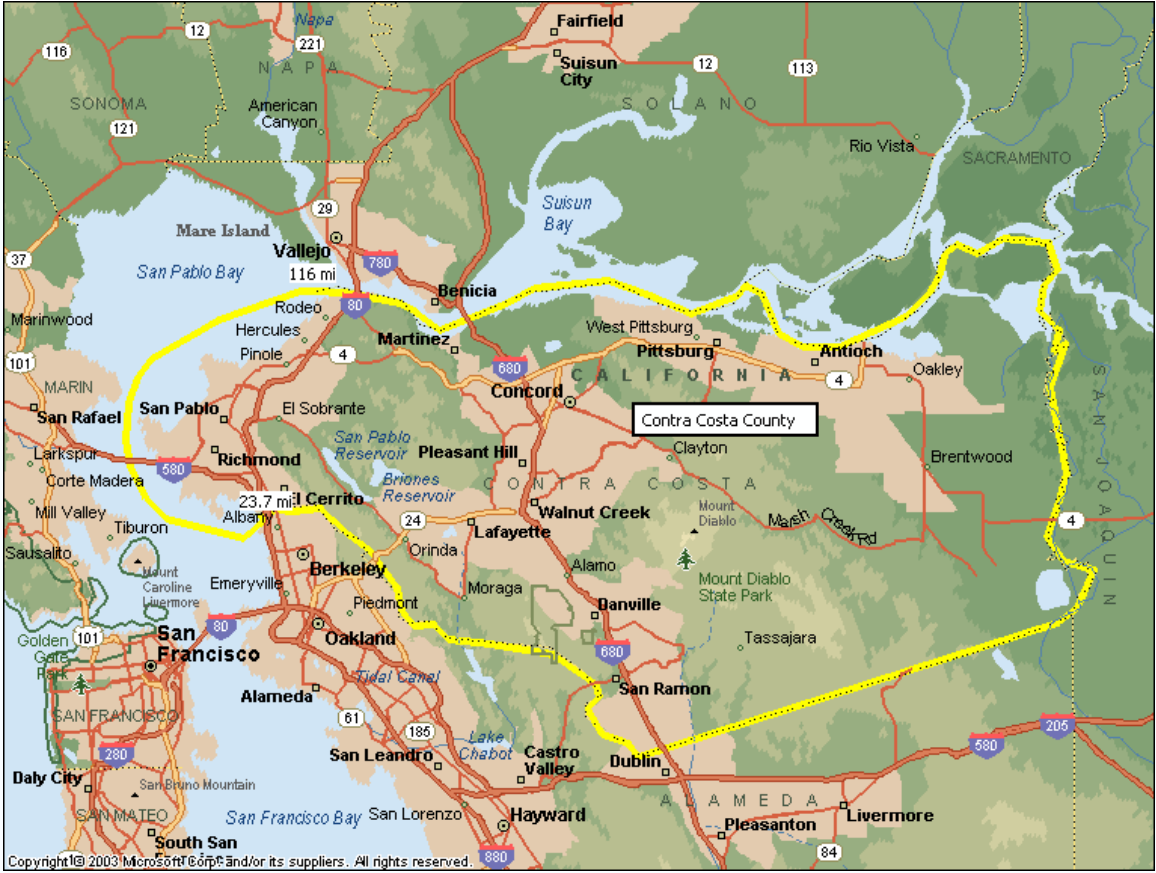
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East Bay Relocation Guide

Contra Costa County Description and Information



Contra Costa County, California

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Contra Costa County is a suburban [county](#) in the [San Francisco Bay Area](#) of the [U.S. state](#) of [California](#). As of the [2000 census](#), it had a population of 948,816. The [county seat](#) is [Martinez](#).

History

Pre-human

In prehistoric times, particularly the [Miocene epoch](#), portions of the landforms now in the area (then marshy and grassy [savanna](#)) were populated a wide range of now extinct [mammals](#), known in modern times by the [fossil](#) remains excavated in the southern part of the county. These included [pigs](#) the size of modern [rhinoceros](#) and rhinoceri the size of modern pigs. In the northern part of the county significant coal deposits were formed in even earlier [geologic eras](#). Other areas of the county have ridges exposing ancient but intact (not fossilized) seashells, embedded in sandstone layers alternating with [limestone](#). Layers of volcanic ash ejected from geologically recent but now extinct [volcanos](#), compacted and now tilted by compressive forces may be seen at the side of some road excavations. This county is an agglomeration of several distinct *geologic terrains*, as is most of the greater [San Francisco Bay Area](#), which one of the most geologically complex regions in the world. The great local mountain [Mount Diablo](#) has been formed and continues to be elevated by compressive forces resulting from the forces of [plate tectonics](#) and at its upper reaches exposes ancient seabed shale rock scraped from their distant sedimentation location and elevated by these great forces.

Native American period

There is an extensive but little recorded human pre-Colombian history in this area, with the present county containing portions of regions populated by a number of native American tribes. The earliest definitively established occupation by modern man (*[Homo sapiens](#)*) appears to have occurred six to ten thousand years ago. However, there may have been human presence far earlier, at least as far as non-settling populations are concerned. The known settled populations were hunter-gatherer societies that had no knowledge of [metals](#) and that produced utilitarian crafts for everyday use (especially

woven reed baskets) of the highest quality and with graphic embellishments of great aesthetic appeal. Extensive trading from tribe to tribe transferred exotic materials such as [obsidian](#) (useful for the making of arrowheads) throughout the region from far distant Californian tribes. Unlike the [nomadic](#) native American of the [Great Plains](#) it appears that these tribes did not incorporate warfare into their culture but were instead generally cooperative. Within these cultures the concept of individual or collective land *ownership* was nonexistent. Early European settlers in the region, however, did not record much about the culture of the natives. Most of what is known culturally comes from preserved contemporaneous and excavated artifacts and from inter-generational knowledge passed down through northerly outlying tribes of the larger region.

Spanish colonial

Early interaction of these native Americans with Europeans came with the Spanish colonization via the establishment of [missions](#) in this area, with the missions in San Jose, Sonoma, and San Francisco and particularly the establishment of the [Presidio of San Francisco](#) (a military establishment) in 1776. Although there were no missions established within this county, Spanish influence here was direct and extensive, through the establishment of land grants from the King of Spain to favored settlers. Their ranchos were not small farms, but extremely large — a modern county would accommodate only a few of them. With the land came the right to rule over its inhabitants, both native and immigrant laboring individuals and families.

Mexican provincial

In [1821 Mexico](#) gained independence from Spain. Insofar as *ranchero* life was concerned in the remote province centered upon San Francisco, little was changed.

The Mexican Revolution led to the confiscation of missions, the beginning of land grants under the Mexican Federal Law of 1824, including 18 in what became Contra Costa County. The smallest unit was one square league, or about seven square miles, or 4,400 acres, maximum to one individual was eleven leagues, or 48,400 acres, including no more than 4,428 acres of irrigable land. Rough surveying was based on a map, or *diseno*, measured by streams, shorelines, and/or horseman who marked it with rope and stakes. Lands outside Rancho grants were designated 'el sobrante,' as in surplus or excess, and considered common lands. The law required the construction of a house within a year. Fences were not required and were forbidden where they might interfere with roads or trails. Locally a large family required roughly 2000 head of cattle and two square leagues of land (fourteen square miles) to live comfortably. Foreign entrepreneurs came to the area in order to provide goods that Mexico couldn't, and trading ships were taxed.

That same year, 1824, Rancho Cañada de los Vaqueros was granted to Francisco Alviso, Antonio Higuera, and Manuel Miranda (26,660 acres confirmed in 1889 to heirs of Robert Livermore).

In 1833 came the Mexican Decree of Secularization, in which church lands were confiscated.

From 1833-46 three Ranchos San Ramon Mexican land grants were established to Bartolome Pacheco (southern San Ramon Valley) and Mariano Castro (northern San Ramon Valley) (1833, two square leagues), Jose Maria Amador (1834, 1835, four leagues).

In 1834 Rancho Monte del Diablo (present day Concord) was confirmed with 17,921 acres to Don Salvio Pacheco (born [1793-07-15](#), died 1876). The Pacheco family settled at the Rancho in 1846 (between the Pacheco shipping port townsite and Clayton area, and including much of Lime Ridge). The boundary lines were designated with stone markers. Clayton was later located on sobrante lands just east of Ranch Monte del Diablo.

On [1834-07-31](#) Rancho Arroyo de Las Nueces y Bolbones aka Rancho Miguel (present day Walnut Creek), was granted to Dona Juana Sanchez de Pacheco, in recognition of the service of Corporal Miguel Pacheco 37 years earlier (confirmed 1853, patented to heirs 1866; the grant was for two leagues, but drawn free hand on the diseno/map, and reading "two leagues, more or less" as indicated in the diseno, but actually including and confirmed for nearly four leagues or nearly 18,000 acres, but only 10,000 acres were ever shown as having once belonged to Don Juana.

On [1835-10-13](#) Rancho Los Meganos was granted, situated in what is now the Brentwood area. 'Meganos' means 'sand dunes.' A "paraje que llaman los Méganos" 'place called the sand dunes' (with a variant spelling) is mentioned in Durán's diary on [May 24, 1817](#). Two Los Medanos Ranchos were granted, later differentiated as Los Meganos (1835, three leagues or at least 13,285 acres, to Jose Noriega then acquired by Dr. John Marsh) and Los Medanos (to Jose Antonio Mesa and Jose Miguel Garcia, Pittsburg area, dated [November 26, 1839](#)).

Bear Flag Republic and the Statehood of California

This was to change rapidly in 1846 with the [Bear Flag Revolt](#), where a few settlers from the United States declared a [republic](#), immediately petitioning for statehood. Following the [Mexican-American War](#) of 1847 and the ratification of the [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#), California was annexed to the U.S. in 1848, with California being admitted to the Union in 1850. The land titles in Contra Costa County may be traced to multiple subdivisions of a few original Spanish land grants from the King of Spain. Reminders of these grants may be seen the grantee's family names in a few city and town names such as [Martinez](#), [Pacheco](#) and [Moraga](#), with their subsequent divisions into large farms and

orchards remembered in the names of streets, residential subdivisions, and business parks. A few mansions from the more prosperous farms have been preserved as museums and cultural centers and one of the more rustic examples has been preserved as a working demonstration ranch, [Borges Ranch](#).

Contra Costa's creation and division

Contra Costa County was one of the original counties of California, created in [1850](#) at the time of statehood. The county was originally to be called Mt. Diablo County, but the name was changed prior to incorporation as a county. The county's [Spanish language](#) name means *opposite coast*, because of its location opposite [San Francisco](#), in an easterly direction, on [San Francisco Bay](#). Southern portions of the county's territory, including the all of the bayside portions opposite San Francisco, and Northern portions of [Santa Clara County](#) were given up to form [Alameda County](#) in [1853](#).

Orchards, farms, and ranches

The great rancheros of the Spanish period were divided and sold for agricultural uses, with intensively irrigated farming made possible in some areas by the development of canals that brought water from the eastern riverside portions of the county to the central portion. Other areas could use the more limited water available from local creeks and from wells. Orchards dominated where such water was available, while other, seasonally dry areas were used for cattle ranching. In central parts of the county walnuts were an especially attractive orchard crop, using the thin-shelled English Walnut branches grafted to the hardy and disease-resistant American Walnut root stock. In the [Moraga](#) region, pears dominated, and many old (but untended) roadside trees are still picked seasonally by passers by. In eastern county, stone fruit, especially cherries, is still grown commercially, with many seasonal opportunities for people to pick their own fruit for a modest fee.

Railroads

The western termini of both [Union Pacific](#) transcontinental railroad routes are in [Oakland](#), in [Alameda County](#). From Oakland, there are two primary routes east:

The former [Southern Pacific](#) (originally Central Pacific) line north through [Richmond](#), closely hugging the [San Pablo Bay](#) coastline to [Martinez](#), where it crosses [Suisun Bay](#) on a drawbridge before proceeding to [Sacramento](#) and the crossing of the [Sierra Nevada](#) via [Donner Pass](#).

The former [Western Pacific](#) line which runs south through Niles Canyon, [Livermore](#) and over [Altamont Pass](#) en route to [Sacramento](#) and the [Feather River](#) canyon/[Beckwourth Pass](#) crossing of the Sierra Nevada.

[BNSF Railway](#) has the terminus of its transcontinental route in [Richmond](#). Originally built by the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad in 1896, the line was purchased by the [Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway](#) shortly thereafter. The line leaves Richmond through industrial and residential parts of West County before striking due east through Franklin Canyon and [Martinez](#) on its way to [Stockton](#), [Bakersfield](#) and [Barstow](#).

These railroads spurred the development of industry in the county throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly driving development of the [Standard Oil](#) (now [Chevron](#)) refinery and port complex in Richmond.

There were a large number of short lines in the county between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. The rights of way of a number of these railroads also served as utility rights of way, particularly for water service, and so were preserved, and in the late 20th century enhanced as walking, jogging, and bicycle riding trails in the central portion of the county.

Irrigation canals

The [Contra Costa Canal](#), a concrete-lined and fenced irrigation canal still makes a loop through central county and provided industrial and agricultural grade water to farms and industry. While no longer used for extensive irrigation, it is still possible for adjoining landowners (now large suburban lot owners) to obtain pumping permits. Most of this water is destined for the heavy industry near Martinez. As with the railroad rights of way there is now an extensive public trail system along these canals.

Commuter railroads

The development of commuter railroads proceeded together with the subdivision of farms into parcels. In some cases, such as the development of [Saranap](#), the same developer controlled both the railroad ([Sacramento Northern](#)) and the development. These early suburbanization developments were an extension of the earlier development of [trolley car suburbs](#) in what are now considered the highly urban environments of the near East Bay.

Heavy industry



View of the Shell/Valero Martinez oil refinery

Owing to its extensive waterfront on [San Francisco](#), [San Pablo](#), and [Suisun](#) bays the northwestern and northern segments have long been sites for heavy industry, including the a number of still active [oil refineries](#) (particularly Standard Oil in Richmond and Tosco - formerly Shell Oil - in Martinez), chemical plants ([Dow Chemical](#)) and a once substantial integrated steel plant ([Posco Steel](#), formerly [United States Steel](#) that is now reduced to secondary production of strip sheet and wire. The [San Joaquin River](#) forms a continuation of the northern boundary turns southward to form the eastern boundary of the county. Some substantial Sacramento Delta "islands" (actually leveed former marshes) are included in this corner of the county.

Reorientation of the County

Prior to 1903 most travel to central Contra Costa County was by boat or rail to [Martinez](#) on the northern waterfront and from there to the industrial areas east along the waterfront as well as farming regions to the south.

In 1903 the first tunnel through the Oakland hills (now Old Tunnel Road) was built, exiting in the crossroads of [Orinda](#) and on to [Lafayette](#), [Walnut Creek](#), and [Danville](#). The road was just wide enough for one car in each direction, and had no shoulders.

Formed in 1909, the Oakland Antioch Railway was renamed the Oakland Antioch & Eastern Railway in 1911. It extended through a 3,400 foot tunnel in the Oakland Hills, from Oakland to Walnut Creek, Concord and on to Bay Point.

In 1937 the two-bore [Caldecott Tunnel](#) was completed, making interior Contra Costa much more accessible. After [World War II](#) the tunnels allowed waves of development to proceed, oriented toward Oakland rather than the northern shoreline, and the shoreline cities began to decline.

1941-45

During [World War II](#), [Richmond](#) hosted one of the two Bay Area sites of [Kaiser Shipyards](#) and wartime pilots were trained at what is now [Concord/Buchanan Field Airport](#). Additionally, a large Naval Weapons Depot and munitions ship loading facilities at [Port Chicago](#) remain active to this day. The loading docks were the site of [a devastating explosion](#) in 1944. Port Chicago was bought out and demolished by the Federal Government to form a safety zone near the Naval Weapons Station loading docks. At one time the Atlas Powder Company (subsequently closed) at the town of [Hercules](#) produced gunpowder and dynamite. The site of the former Atlas Powder Company is located at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline[1], part of the East Bay Regional Parks District[2].

Early postwar period

With the postwar [baby boom](#) and the desire for suburban living, large tract housing developers would purchase large central county farmsteads and develop them with roads, utilities and housing. Once mostly rural walnut orchards and cattle ranches, the area was first developed as low cost, large lot suburbs, with a typical low cost home being placed on a "quarter acre" lot — actually a little less at 10,000 square feet (930 m²). Some of the expansion of these suburban areas was attributable to [white flight](#), although in this politically liberal region, the phenomenon was mostly due to economics, a desire for a more rural environment, and higher school quality.

Technical innovators

In the 1970's and 80's many small and innovative technical firms were started in this county, most of which are no longer present, having either failed, been absorbed into larger corporations, or having outgrown their original location are now elsewhere in the Bay Area.

Corporate headquarters

During the 1980's and early 1990's, many corporations that were formerly housed in the more central metropolitan area followed their employees by moving to large suburban and edge city office areas and office parks.

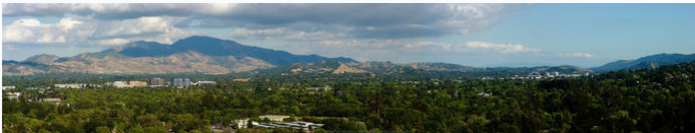
A number of large corporations now have headquarters in large developments along what is called the *680 corridor*, that segment of Interstate Highway 680 that extends from

Concord in the north to [San Ramon](#) in the south, continuing into inland [Alameda County](#) from [Dublin](#) to [Pleasanton](#).

West County

The housing stock in the region was extensively developed after the great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. Much of the housing stock in these areas is becoming quite expensive. As an alternative to moving to either the expensive central county, or the too-distant East County, this area is becoming [gentrified](#), with a mix of races and income levels — a character actively sought by some housing purchasers. The downside of this is a corresponding lack of affordable housing for those in lower paying service jobs — a problem endemic throughout the region. As the public schools are not of the quality seen in the central county, many of the middle class residents of the area send their children to expensive private schools, further limiting the availability of resources to the public schools.

Central County



Central county scene — [Mount Diablo](#) and portions of Concord, Pleasant Hill, and Walnut Creek

The valley traversed by Interstate 680, by State Highway 24, and by portions of Interstate highway 580 (the [Livermore Valley](#)) are collectively called the *Tri-Valley Area*. West of this area are the cities near or on San Francisco and San Pablo bays, while east of this area is the Sacramento-San Joaquin river delta and California's Great Central Valley. The towns east of the hills on or near Highway 24 and their surrounding areas ([Lafayette](#), [Moraga](#) and [Orinda](#)) are collectively known as *Lamorinda*. The major central county cities along Interstate 680 are Martinez, Concord, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Danville, San Ramon, and unincorporated Alamo. Owing to the high quality of its public schools (due largely to both demographics and added support from prosperous parents), this area has become a magnet for well-off families with children. This has driven (through normal supply-demand [economics](#)) the price of housing to astounding levels. An original, unmodified one bath, three bedroom large-lot house built in the late [1940s](#) is now priced out of the range of those with the typical median income for the region. As the taxes on long occupied houses are quite low, owing to the tax-limiting [Proposition 13](#), there is little incentive for "empty nesters" to move away, further limiting the supply for new entrants to the market. Proposition 13 has also discouraged the "upgrade move", instead

encouraging extensive remodeling of existing owner-occupied buildings. This has led to beneficial stability in some neighborhoods, further increasing the desirability of many locations. While there are small patches where houses are completely torn down and replaced with larger, more modern houses, this is less economically attractive (owing to the high cost of purchase) than is the practice of extensive remodeling, refurbishment, and expansion via the addition of a large master suite and removal of interior partitions to create larger rooms. There are a number of speculative remodelers who will refurbish an unoccupied structure over a period of a year, using high quality materials and finishes, yet making enough profit to provide a comfortable living. Although the pace housing sales has slowed recently ([2004](#)), prices continue to increase and the market remains attractive to the remodeling industry.

In this way the central county region has become a mix of older suburbs, newer developments, small lot "infill" developments, and extensive shopping areas.

East County

Lower cost modern tract developments continue along [Suisun Bay](#) and into rural "East County" - new "bedroom" communities" to serve the now "edge cities". This results in some incredibly long and slow commutes for some county residents, as roadbuilding is (as usual) unable to keep pace with the development patterns. Some political control has been established to restrict the development somewhat, with "urban limit lines" now established, but yet to prove their long term effectiveness.

Urban decay at the fringes

Other cities in the once heavily industrialized northwestern and western waterfront areas such as [Richmond](#) and [Bay Point](#) (formerly West Pittsburg) have fallen on harder times, with Richmond having difficulty balancing its school budget. This may be arguably attributed to a side effect of Proposition 13: it applies also to large industrial and merchandising companies, which have seen their share of property taxes (the bulk of which is used to support local schools) decline severely. As housing prices have not kept pace with the more central and outlying regions, the school districts are having difficulty obtaining proper funding. A lack of the availability of the kind of community support available in the more prosperous regions also contributes to the problem, with higher income residents of some of these declining areas sending their children to private schooling, creating a self reinforcing decline in the public schools.

Redevelopment

There are currently political fights over the potential redevelopment of the county seat ([Martinez](#)), with long term residents and many elsewhere in the county concerned that it will lose its remaining small-town charm and utility in an effort to become more like the county's major recreational shopping center of [Walnut Creek](#).

Geography

According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the county has a total area of 2,078 [km²](#) (802 [mi²](#)). 1,865 [km²](#) (720 [mi²](#)) of it is land and 213 [km²](#) (82 [mi²](#)) of it (10.25%) is water.

It is bounded on the south and west by [Alameda County](#), on the northwest [San Francisco Bay](#), on the North by [San Pablo Bay](#) and [Suisun Bays](#), and on the east by the [San Joaquin River](#).

Adjacent Counties

[Alameda County, California](#) - south

[Marin County, California](#) - west (via the [Richmond-San Rafael Bridge](#))

[Solano County, California](#) - north

[Sacramento County, California](#) - northeast

[San Joaquin County, California](#) - east

Landmarks

The most notable natural landmark in the county is 3,849' [Mount Diablo](#), at the northerly end of the Diablo Range. Mount Diablo and its neighboring North Peak are the centerpiece of [Mt. Diablo State Park](#) (MDSP), created legislatively in 1921 and rededicated in 1931 after land acquisitions had been completed. In 1971, when MDSP included 6,788 acres, the non-profit organization [Save Mount Diablo](#), www.savemountdiablo.org was formed and open space preservation accelerated. MDSP was the first of twenty-nine Diablo area parks and preserves created around the peaks, today totaling more than 89,000 acres. These Diablo public lands stretch southeast and include the [Naval Weapons Station Concord](#), [Shell Ridge Open Space](#) and [Lime Ridge](#)

[Open Spaces](#) near Walnut Creek, to the State Park, and east to the [Los Vaqueros](#) reservoir watershed and four surrounding East Bay Regional Park District preserves, including [Morgan Territory](#) Regional Preserve, [Brushy Peak Regional Preserve](#), [Vasco Caves Regional Preserve](#), and [Round Valley Regional Preserves](#). The new [Cowell Ranch State Park](#), and [Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve](#), are among the open spaces stretching back to the north.

Mt. Diablo was the birthplace of the world according to Northern and Central California Indian tradition. *"At the dawn of time, Mount Diablo and Reed's Peak were surrounded by water. From these two islands the creator Coyote and his assistant Eagle-man made Indian people and the world."* (Ortiz)

The Naming of Mount Diablo: General [Mariano G. Vallejo](#), in an 1850 report to the California State legislature, gives the much romanticized story of the derivation of the name of Mt. Diablo from its Spanish to Anglo form, related to the mountain and an evil spirit. Vallejo's report could be interpreted to align with Gudde's account: Various sources suggest that Spanish soldiers in 1805 (1806 is a discredited date) were pursuing native Americans as part of missionization, the natives took cover in a thicket (Monte) near Pacheco, and the Spaniards camped with the intention of rounding them up in the morning. During the night the natives escaped across the Carquinez Strait, an act only possible (according to the Spaniards) with the help of the Devil (Diablo). The thicket became known as 'Monte del Diablo', the name was later attached to Rancho Monte del Diablo, and Anglo settlers later misunderstood the use of the word 'monte' (which can mean 'mountain', or 'thicket'), and fastened the name on the most obvious local landmark. (in part, Erwin G. Gudde, Kyle, and Ortiz)

The name Monte del Diablo 'devil's woods' appears on the Plano topográfico de la Misión de San José about 1824, where there was an Indian rancheria perhaps near a thicket at the approximate site of the present town of Concord. {Pacheco} On Aug. 24, 1828, the name was applied to the Monte del Diablo land grant for which Salvio Pacheco had petitioned in 1827.

[Mark Allen Cunningham](#)'s version of the story in his 2004 book, [The Green Age of Asher Witherow](#), is considerably more lyrical: *"On a boggy day in 1806 a detachment of Spanish soldiers apprehended a band of Bay Miwok Indians in a marsh at the foot of a solitary California mountain. Commanded to redeliver the natives to the stern grace of the mission they'd fled, the Spaniards detained them in a nearby thicket as night fell. A dun darkness came on, browning out the stars. The night grew quiet but for the din of crickets. Then at some deep and slippery hour the Miwoks vanished, turned to vapor and floated away in the mist, dematerialized as demons were known to do. The next morning the soldiers woke in a dawn steam thick enough to blank the big mountain from sight. They found themselves bereft of their errant mission-folk and turned round on their heels till their heads swam. Bedeviled as they were, they forswore the place Monte Del Diablo, Thicket of the Devil, and for years the name lingered like a fog over that marsh. Then when the English-speaking settlers arrived, the Spanish Monte was taken for Mountain*

and was thought to refer to the twin-shouldered mass looming nearby. So the mountain became Mount Diablo, made to bear an unholy namesake."

Mt. Diablo includes more than 600 plant species, including twelve that are endemic to the area; animal species including peregrine falcons and golden eagles, coyotes, bobcat, and mountain lions; Native American, ranching era and [Civilian Conservation Corps](#) cultural artifacts; hundreds of miles of trails; California's initial survey point; deposits of coal and lime which allowed Gold Rush era California to expand construction and manufacturing; and spectacular views including one of the largest viewsheds in the world (but not the largest or second largest, as is often claimed.)

Mt. Diablo is a double pyramid and resembles but is not a volcano. Here is a summary of its geology by local resident Cleet Carlton: *Mt. Diablo is a geologic anomaly located approximately 30 miles east of San Francisco. The upper portion of the Mountain is made up of volcanic and sedimentary deposits of what once was one or more Island Arcs of the Pacific Plate dating back to the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods, between 190 and 90 Million Years ago. During this time, the Pacific Plate was subducting beneath the North American Continent and these deposits were scraped off the top and accreted onto the North American Plate. This resulted in the highly distorted and fractured Basalt and Serpentine of the Mt. Diablo Ophiolite and Metasediments of the Franciscan Complex around the summit. East of the subduction zone, a basin was filling with sediment from the ancestral Sierra further to the east. Up to 60,000 feet (18,000 meters) of Sandstone, Mudstone, and Limestone of the Great Valley Sequence were deposited from 150 to 66 Million Years ago. These deposits are now found faulted against the Ophiolite and Franciscan deposits. Over the past 20 Million Years, continental deposits have been periodically laid down and subsequently jostled around by the newly-formed San Andreas Fault system, forming the Coast Ranges. Within the last 4 Million Years, local faulting has resulted in compression, folding, buckling, and erosion, bringing the various formations into their current juxtaposition. This faulting action is ongoing and will continue to change shape of Mt. Diablo, along with the rest of the Coast Ranges.*

Demographics

As of the [census²](#) of 2000, there were 948,816 people, 344,129 households, and 242,266 families residing in the county. The [population density](#) was 509/km² (1,318/mi²). There were 354,577 housing units at an average density of 190/km² (492/mi²). The racial makeup of the county was 65.50% [White](#), 9.36% [Black](#) or [African American](#), 0.61% [Native American](#), 10.96% [Asian](#), 0.37% [Pacific Islander](#), 8.06% from [other races](#), and 5.13% from two or more races. 17.68% of the population were [Hispanic](#) or [Latino](#) of any race.

There were 344,129 households out of which 35.40% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 54.50% were [married couples](#) living together, 11.50% had a female householder with no husband present, and 29.60% were non-families. 22.90% of all

households were made up of individuals and 8.00% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.72 and the average family size was 3.23.

In the county the population was spread out with 26.50% under the age of 18, 7.70% from 18 to 24, 30.60% from 25 to 44, 23.90% from 45 to 64, and 11.30% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 36 years. For every 100 females there were 95.40 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 92.20 males.

The median income for a household in the county was \$63,675, and the median income for a family was \$73,039. Males had a median income of \$52,670 versus \$38,630 for females. The [per capita income](#) for the county was \$30,615. About 5.40% of families and 7.60% of the population were below the [poverty line](#), including 9.80% of those under age 18 and 6.00% of those age 65 or over.

Politics

Contra Costa county has become a Democratic stronghold, with even wealthy cities like Orinda and Walnut Creek voting Democratic in recent elections.

Presidential elections results

Year	GOP	Dems
2004	36.5% 150,608	62.3% 257,254
2000	37.1% 141,373	58.8% 224,338
1996	35.2% 123,954	55.7% 196,512
1992	29.5% 112,965	50.9% 194,960
1988	47.9% 158,652	51.1% 169,411

Cities and towns

West County

- [Bayview-Montalvin](#)
- [Crockett](#)
- [East Richmond Heights](#)
- [El Cerrito](#)
- [El Sobrante](#)
- [Hercules](#)
- [Kensington](#)
- [Pinole](#)
- [Port Costa](#)
- [Richmond](#)
- [Rodeo](#)
- [Rollingwood](#)
- [San Pablo](#)
- [Tara Hills](#)

Central County



 Martinez Court House, California

- [Alamo](#)
- [Blackhawk-Camino Tassajara](#)
- [Canyon](#)
- [Clayton](#)

- [Clyde](#)
- [Concord](#)
- [Danville](#)
- [Diablo](#)
- [Lafayette](#)
- [Martinez](#)
- [Moraga](#)
- [Mountain View](#)
- [Orinda](#)
- [Pacheco](#)
- [Pleasant Hill](#)
- [San Ramon](#)
- [Vine Hill](#)
- [Waldon](#)
- [Walnut Creek](#)

East County

- [Antioch](#)
- [Bay Point](#)
- [Bethel Island](#)
- [Brentwood](#)
- [Byron](#)
- [Discovery Bay](#)
- [Knightsen](#)
- [Oakley](#)
- [Pittsburg](#)

Other named regions and developments

[Saranap](#) - an unincorporated residential area between Walnut Creek and Lafayette, centered around the site of a (now-gone) interurban train station, comprising much of [ZIP Code](#) 94595.

[Rossmoor](#) - a senior development incorporated into Walnut Creek (not the Southern California [Rossmoor](#)).

Museums and Historic sites

[Blackhawk Automotive Museum \[3\]](#) (This site also contains a [paleontological](#) museum of the [University of California, Berkeley](#))

[John Marsh House \[4\]](#)

[Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site](#)

[John Muir National Historic Site](#)

[Lindsay Wildlife Museum](#)

[Don Salvio Pacheco Adobe \[5\]](#)

[San Ramon Valley Museum \[6\]](#)

[Borges Ranch \[7\]](#)

Parks and related places

[Briones Regional Park \[8\]*](#)

[Diablo Foothills \[9\]](#)

[Howe Homestead Park \[10\]](#)

[Mount Diablo State Park](#)

[Las Trampas Regional Wilderness \[11\]*](#)

[Shell Ridge Open Space \[12\]](#)

[Lime Ridge Open Space \[13\]](#)

[San Pablo Recreation Area \(San Pablo Dam Reservoir\) \[14\]](#)

[Sugarloaf Open Space \[15\]](#)

[Acalanes Open Space \[16\]](#)

*Adjoining or nearby these parks are lands of the [[[East Bay Municipal Utility District]]. These require special annual permits for hiking, bicycle riding and horse riding, available

for a small fee. At least one member of a party traversing these areas must have such a permit.

Trails

[Iron Horse Regional Trail](#)

[California State Riding and Hiking Trail \[17\]](#)

[Contra Costa Canal Regional Trail \[18\]](#)

[Delta de Anza Regional Trail\[19\]](#)

[Briones-Mount Diablo Regional Trail \[20\]](#)

[Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail \[21\]](#)

[Marsh Creek Trail \[22\]](#)

California Casino Proposals

Since [2003](#), four [Indian gaming casinos](#) have been proposed in [Richmond, California](#) and the surrounding area of West [Contra Costa County](#).

Proposals

[Hilltop Mall](#) to be built on a 10 acre (40,000 m²) site.

[Lytton Rancheria](#) at [Casino San Pablo](#) from the [Scotts Valley](#) band of the [Pomo](#) tribe and have 2,500 slots, (Originally 5,000). Stuck in the [California Legislature](#), to Gov. [Schwarzenegger](#)'s upset.

[Point Molate Casino Resort](#) to have a luxury shopping mall, 1,100 room hotel/resort.

[North Richmond](#) to be located on a 23 acre site and have a buffet.