

SWEENEY RIDGE

In the fall of 1769, Spanish Army Captain Gaspar de Portolá's party discovered the San Francisco Bay from Sweeney Ridge in present-day San Mateo County. The momentous occasion that would forever change the history of the West Coast of what became the United States was not immediately recognized as such through European eyes. *Alta* California would in fact remain a remote place for another 80 years. Nevertheless, the San Francisco Bay Area, a place that saw little or no change for thousands of years, would, from this point forward, be subject to constant transformation, despite its isolation. The people who inhabited the area near Sweeney Ridge were the Aramai of the Ohlone people.¹ They would be among those whose world changed the fastest.

THE OHLONES (CONTEXTUAL)

Long before Portolá, the first of the Spanish to write about the people we now call Ohlones, were members of the Sebastian Vizcaíno expedition of 1602. Three ships with 200 men aboard left Acapulco on May 5 and, after spending some time at Cabo San Lucas, arrived at San Diego on November 10. They reached Monterey on December 16 and spent nearly two weeks there among the Ohlones. Vizcaíno and members of his party were impressed with the place and had favorable things to write about the native people. In a letter to the King of Spain, Felipe III, Vizcaíno himself wrote: "The area is very populated by people whom I considered to be meek, gentle, quiet and quite amenable to conversion to Catholicism and to becoming subjects of your Majesty."²

Despite Vizcaíno's enthusiasm, more than 16 decades would elapse before the Spanish became serious about colonization in the lands that belonged to the Ohlones, the people who inhabited the San Francisco Peninsula, Santa Clara Valley, the East Bay, Santa Cruz Mountains, Monterey Bay and the Salinas Valley.³

Ohlones composed over 50 local tribes who lived in many more villages. Each village had its own land and customs. Spanish explorers recorded villages at intervals of three to five miles in most areas.⁴

The Ohlones were mobile and so their homes were built to be temporary. They constructed domed thatched houses of tule reed or grass, tied together with willow fiber on a framework of willow branches that stood about as tall as an adult and ranged between 6 to 20 feet in diameter. The dwellings were used for a season, and the people would move on. Sometimes the willow framework could be reused when the group

returned to a particular village site. The structures proved warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

Sweat houses were often present at the villages. The Ohlone usually created them by excavating land near the back of a creek. Sweat houses had low ceilings and doors so small that the men had to crawl into them. Sweat houses were exclusively for men who used them for purposes of cleanliness and spiritual affairs, especially before a hunt.

Ohlones communicated through a variety of dialects. The people north of today's Davenport in Santa Cruz County, all the way to and including San Francisco, spoke San Francisco Bay Costanoan. Thus this was the language of the people in the Sweeney Ridge area.⁵

THE ARAMAI

On October 31, 1769, Gaspar de Portolá and his party descended Montara Mountain and met some 25 people of the Aramai local tribe who most likely lived at the village of Pruristac up San Pedro Creek, to the east of where the Spanish eventually camped.⁶ Today the Pruristac site is in part occupied by San Mateo County's Sanchez Adobe Historic Park. Another Aramai village, Timigtac, may have existed at Mori Point. The trails used by the people of the villages represent the earliest transportation routes in the County.⁷ They walked along the ridges of Montara Mountain to reach their neighbors to the South. Their trails were most certainly used by Portolá and his party when they were in the area.

Indeed, the Aramai had plenty of neighbors. Directly south were the Chiguan who had two villages, the first, Ssatumnumo, at present day Princeton and the second, Chagunte, around Half Moon Bay. According to mission records, the Chiguan probably only numbered about 50 people.⁸ They, as did most Ohlones encountered by Portolá, fed and gave guidance to his expedition in 1769.⁹

Further south at Purissima Creek were the Cotagen of about 65 Indians who had two villages as well. When Portolá reached there some of his party entered abandoned houses which were found to be infested with fleas;¹⁰ hence the party named the place *Rancheria de las Pulgas* (flea village).

Also possessing two villages were the Oljons, who inhabited the area around San Gregorio Creek.¹¹ They had a population of nearly 160. As mentioned in the Introduction, the word "Ohlone" could have been derived from the name of this local tribe.

Farthest south in San Mateo County was the large village of the Quiroste, close to Año Nuevo. Here the Spanish saw the *Casa Grande* in which all 200 of its residents could fit inside. Across the coastal mountains laid another large village at San Francisquito Creek, the home of the Puichun, who numbered about 250. The Olpen also lived at San Francisquito Creek, but toward the mountainous head-waters of the stream.¹²

Across Sweeney Ridge from the Aramai were the Urebure who had a single village at San Bruno Creek.¹³ South of them, in the San Mateo Creek area, were the Ssalson who, in 1776, were observed by the Anza expedition as being at war with the people at Redwood City, the Lamchin.¹⁴ The Ssalson numbered 100 to 200 individuals and possessed at least three villages. The Urebure may have actually been a northern grouping of the Ssalson.¹⁵ The Lamchin were the largest local tribe of the Peninsula, numbering as many as 350 people. Their lands included today's Redwood City and the hill country to the west including the Phleger Estate.¹⁶

Finally, to the north were the Yelamu who inhabited present day San Francisco. They probably numbered no more than 160, and lived in four villages.¹⁷

Mission San Francisco de Asís' baptismal records included detailed information concerning the parents of baptized children.¹⁸ From those papers it can be determined that the Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula engaged in quite a bit of intermarrying among the local tribes, and, apparently, the smaller the local tribe, the more intermarriage occurred. For the Aramai, which is considered a smaller group, this meant that more than half of the children from Aramai parents were born and raised in another local tribe's territory. Most certainly intermarriage served to create a degree of community for the Aramai with their neighbors.

The mission records tell us that Yagueche, the head man at the Aramai village of Pruristac, had actually been born at Satumnumo in Chiguan territory, now Princeton. His younger brother by 10 years became the head man of that local tribe. Yagueche's daughter lived at Urebure (San Bruno) as wife to its head man. Another daughter married the Urebure's head man's son. One of Yagueche's sons married a Ssalson (San Mateo). The mission records indicate similar relations among many of the Aramai people.¹⁹ Something on the order of eight out of every ten of their marriages involved a person from another local tribe. The range of this social activity took the Aramai north to the Golden Gate, south to at least Half Moon Bay, east to San Bruno, and then south-east, including all the territory down to and possibly beyond San Mateo.

As a general comment about Ohlones, this socialization through intermarriage allowed for a spirit of understanding and commonality. The early observers remarked upon their peacefulness. Nevertheless there were difficulties that led to violent clashes as

recorded by the Spanish in the 1770s - - between the Ssalson and Lamchin, and then the Ssalson and Yelamu.

The Aramai, who Portolá met just before ascending Sweeney Ridge, probably numbered less than 55 people. Theirs was indeed a little group. Most of the Ohlone local tribes numbered between 200 and 300, some were as large as 400 or more.²⁰ On the San Francisco Peninsula the groups were smaller, but even among those, the Aramai were minute in number. They occupied just the two villages, Pruristac and Timigtac. While linked enough to make up a local tribe, the people of the two villages were of independent bands.

Because of their proximity it is most likely that Portolá met the people of Pruristac, rather than Timigtac. Mission records indicate that eventually 35 people from Pruristac were baptized. Considering that when the time came, all living Aramai people were brought into the church, it can be speculated that the entire village consisted of but three or four tule houses.²¹

As with most Ohlone people, the villagers of Pruristac ate wild seeds and acorn mush as their staple foods. They also consumed roots, berries and a variety of greens. The men fished and hunted. Because Pruristac was close to the ocean, and a shell mound is present at the village site, we know they added shellfish to their diet. Their tools and implements were likewise not different from Ohlones of other parts of the Bay Region.

Because the San Pedro Valley did not have all the resources necessary for a fully comfortable life, it was necessary for the Aramai to move about to find foods and raw materials, or trade for them. Because of their close family network with other local tribes, they had access to resources throughout the Peninsula. Probably of most importance to them were oak trees with their acorns, in the San Andreas Valley over Sweeney Ridge to the east. In fact Pruristac may not have been inhabited all year long. While Portolá met the people who lived there in early November, 1769, on his expedition's return trip in mid-November, no persons were present at the site. Similarly, in December of 1774, the Rivera party, on their way to the Golden Gate, noted the place to be deserted.²²

It has been long accepted that there are no living descendants of the people of Pruristac and Timigtac. In fact, it had been felt that the last of the Indians of the Peninsula had died in the 1920s. However, recently Jonathan Cordero, a sociology professor at California Lutheran University, has traced his ancestry back to Francisca Xavier of Timigtac. He found that Francisca was baptized at Mission San Francisco de Asís in 1779, married Jose Ramos, a blacksmith from Mexico, in 1783, and had a son, Pablo Antonio, in 1785, who is a descendant of Professor Cordero.²³

SPANISH INTEREST IN ALTA CALIFORNIA (CONTEXTUAL)

Within thirty years of Columbus' "discovery" of the new world, Hernán Cortés had conquered the great Aztec empire of Central Mexico. The tremendous wealth that this *conquistador* gained inspired him to think of the possibility of more treasures that might lie to the north. He was reminded of Medieval tales about an island of Amazons led by their Queen Calafia, from whom the "Golden State" of California would eventually get its name.²⁴ Legends filtered through to him of "Seven Cities" possessing fabulous fortune and *El Dorado*.²⁵ The year after the conquest, Cortés founded the city of Zacetula on the west coast of Mexico.²⁶ It took 10 years, but in 1532 he dispatched an expedition northward by sea. Both the ships were lost. In 1533, he tried again, sending Diego Becerra up the coast. He was killed in a mutiny led by the ship's pilot, Fortún Jiménez. Under Jiménez's command a land believed to be an island was discovered. This was, of course, *Baja California*. Jiménez was killed, possibly in a battle with local Indians. The survivors of the voyage returned giving Cortés a favorable account of the new land with its pearls and other wealth. Cortés attempted to establish a settlement there, but the environment proved too harsh and the natives too hostile.

In 1539, Cortés was replaced by Antonio de Mendoza whose mission was to consolidate Spanish gains in New Spain. Under Mendoza, Francisco de Ulloa was dispatched to further explore Mexico's north coast. His way was blocked when he discovered that *Baja California* is a peninsula. Also that year, Mendoza sent a Christian Moor named Estevanico and a Franciscan padre named Marcos north, overland toward the center of the American West. Estevanico had been with Álvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca in Florida, and had visited the Gulf of Mexico. He heard tales that indicated the Seven Cities of Cibola actually existed. While Estevanico was killed during the journey, Father Marcos returned and reported having actually seen the City!

And so, in 1540, Mendoza sent out two more expeditions. On land he had Vásquez de Coronado lead a well-equipped expedition with Father Marcos in tow, that ended up in western Kansas. When they reached the spot where Father Marcos had "seen" the silver City, they viewed a white washed adobe instead. Still they pressed on. The Indians they met repeated myths that encouraged the *conquistadores* to journey even farther into the wilderness; it is probable that the Indians hoped they would never return. However, they did return but with the report that no fabulously wealthy civilizations existed in the north.

The other party organized by Mendoza in 1540 went by sea. This time Hernando de Alarcón sailed to the mouth of the Colorado River with the thought of making a rendezvous with Coronado. While the meeting never took place, Alarcón sailed far enough up the River to be credited as the first European to see *Alta California*.

While none of this pleased Mendoza, in 1542 he gave it yet one more chance. This time he sent Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo (or his Portuguese name: João Rodrigues Cabrilho) with two ships, the *San Salvador* and *Victoria*. He left Mexico and sailed west and then north around *Baja* California. He stopped at San Diego Bay, San Pedro, Santa Monica, Ventura, Santa Barbara and made Point Concepcion by October 17. Adverse winds forced the ships back south. They harbored at San Miguel Island until November 11. Cabrillo and company had discovered what generations of sailors would experience - - that the winds and currents are mostly against you as you sail up the California Coast. They made it as far up as the Monterey area when they were struck by a storm and blown west, out into the Pacific. The vessels were separated and did not spot each other again for a few days until they neared Año Nuevo. They then sailed back to San Miguel. Cabrillo had broken his arm back in October, and attempted to recover there, but died on January 18, 1543. Under a new commander, Bartolomé Ferrelo, the expedition proceeded north and nearly reached the Oregon border. Once more the ships were blown out into the Pacific. They made San Miguel Island on March 5 and returned to port in Mexico on April 14.

For Mendoza, and the Spanish, the lessons of their efforts in the early 1540s were all negative regarding the future and California. No great civilizations or fabulous fortunes existed there. Instead the environment was difficult to deal with and the Indian people primitive.

However, Spain's progress as the world's greatest maritime power continued. By 1565, it was controlling a lucrative trade from the Philippines. In 1566, Esteban Rodriguez and Andrés de Urdaneta established a reliable sea route from Manila, east across the ocean. The voyage made use of the currents and winds of the north Pacific. Ships would reach the western shores of North America and sail down the California Coast to ports in New Spain.

These Manila treasure ships or galleons risked many perils. In 1568, one was lost off Guam. Another was wrecked 15 years later. Some of the ships were forced back to Manila because of violent Pacific storms.

Interest began to grow in establishing a port, as a resting place, on the California Coast.²⁷ Ships' captains were therefore given instruction to survey the coastline for a likely choice for a safe harbor. This interest was made even more pertinent in 1578, when English raider Francis Drake rounded Cape Horn in his *Golden Hind*, searching to pirate Spanish treasure while exploring the Pacific for England. In 1579, he put in somewhere off the northern California coast (probably at Drake's Bay) to repair his ship. Just a few years later, in 1584, Francisco Gali, with orders to explore the California coast in his Manila galleon, the *San Juan Bautista*, made landfall at Monterey and then cruised southward. Three years later, Pedro de Unamuno was in command of the

Manila galleon and landed in the vicinity of Monterey after crossing the Pacific from Japan.

The final attempt by a Manila galleon to explore the Coast in the sixteenth century took place in 1595. Sebastian Cermeño aboard the *San Agustín* was returning to New Spain from the Philippines and followed the northern route, reaching California around Trinity Bay. He then worked his way south. Cermeño anchored his ship at Point Reyes, but it was hit by a storm. The *San Agustín* lost its anchor and ran aground at Drake's Bay, becoming *Alta California's* first recorded shipwreck. The crew spent some time exploring the local area. They then left their cargo of wax and silks behind and boarded the ship's launch, called the *Santa Buenaventura*. They set sail for Mexico. Along the way members of the party took notes describing the Coast, including San Mateo County's shoreline and Monterey Bay.²⁸

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, no port had been established for Spain on the California coast. Meanwhile, since the destruction of its Armada in 1588, Spain's strength as a great maritime power had been steadily diminishing. Recognizing the need for finding a suitable location for a safe harbor while being mindful of Spanish military reversals, Sebastian Vizcaíno proposed to New Spain's viceroy Don Gaspar de Zúñiga y Acevedo, Count of Monte Rey, to explore the coast at his own expense in return for being awarded command of a future Manila galleon.²⁹ The Count agreed to the deal. Accompanying Vizcaíno was Francisco de Bolaños who had been the pilot on the ill-fated Cermeño voyage. This time the mission was different. This time he was on an expedition specifically tasked to explore and discover with the particular focus of finding a safe harbor for future treasure ships from the Philippines. Vizcaíno and company were to chart and sound bays, islands, reefs and bars. They were to take solar and stellar readings, note wind directions, map locations of anchorages, reference wood and fresh water sources and establish place names with their topographical descriptions.³⁰

The explorers commanded three ships and a long boat. They set sail on May 5, 1602, and reached San Lucas on June 8, where they were forced to abandon the long boat. The ships found themselves continuously in difficult sailing conditions as they battled up the coast of *Baja California*, sometimes separated and usually short of drinking water. They reached San Diego on November 10, after more than six exhausting months. They rested here until November 20, landed at Santa Catalina Island, sailed through the Santa Barbara Channel, rounded Point Concepcion, caught an unusual favorable wind, sailed past Carmel Bay and, on December 16, entered Monterey Bay, which they named for their viceroy. Vizcaíno described the place as "sheltered from all winds,"³¹ and made Monterey out to be a perfect harbor. Perhaps Vizcaíno tailored what turned out to be an exaggerated account for the benefit of the man who could give him com-

mand of the Manila galleon. Perhaps he feared that without a positive report his reward might be lost.

At Monterey, the party pitched tents and found good water. Most of the sailors were suffering from scurvy; 16 had already died. From Monterey the expedition divided up. One of the ships, the *San Tomás* set out on December 29, carrying the sick back to Acapulco. Sadly, 25 perished during the voyage or shortly afterwards. Only nine men survived. On January 3, the remaining vessels sailed north, continuing their mission. After four days they became separated off Drake's Bay. Vizcaíno, aboard the *San Diego*, continued north and sighted Cape Mendocino on January 12. They were then hit by a gale. With only six able men left to work the ship, Vizcaíno decided to return to Mexico. The *San Diego* reached Máztlan on February 7, and finally arrived at Acapulco on March 21. The third ship, the *Trés Reyes* also suffered from the gale off Cape Mendocino, but proceeded on, perhaps as far north as the Oregon border. Because of sickness and lack of instruction on what to do next, the *Trés Reyes* turned back, making Acapulco on February 23 with only five survivors.

At first it appeared as if Vizcaíno's efforts had succeeded in getting him what he wanted. The Viceroy was pleased with the results of the expedition and liked the idea that a fine new port was named for him. However, Spanish colonial assignments were subject to change. Soon after Vizcaíno's return, Monte Rey was given a promotion to viceroy of Peru. His place in New Spain was taken by the Marqués de Montesclaros, who did not trust Vizcaíno. He revoked his Manila galleon reward and had the expedition's map maker tried and then hanged for forgery,³² (although not necessarily because of his chart of Monterey).³³

Looking at the larger picture, the results of the Vizcaíno expedition had little immediate ramification. Not very much more was discovered from what Cabrillo had noted 60 years earlier. Spain made no moves to establish any presence along the California coast for another 167 years. The thinking was that with the winds and currents behind the Manila galleon once it reached the shores of North America, that there really was little need for a port. The normal route of return from the Philippines was to steer north to latitude 30° and find the favorable winds and then turn south as soon as seaweed was spotted, indicating land was near.

And so the California coast remained mostly a mystery. San Francisco Bay had still not been discovered. Not another expedition from Mexico to *Alta* California was to be sponsored by the Spanish until Gaspar de Portolá's adventure in 1769. The Manila galleons were absolved of this responsibility of exploring the coast, with one exception, when Gamelli Carreri described his south bound voyage in 1696.

Nevertheless, barring his descriptions of Monterey, Vizcaíno's charts were highly

regarded for their accuracy, and his maps continued in use until the 1790s. Thus the myth of a safe harbor at Monterey was still on the minds of Spanish officials in the 1760s, when they finally got around to planning the colonization of *Alta* California.

Interest in *Alta* California was revived by José de Gálvez, who was made Visitor-General of New Spain in 1765 (a position actually superior to the Viceroy). Gálvez was given royal instructions to achieve three goals: to reorganize the inefficient government in New Spain, to increase its revenues and to remove the Jesuit missionaries in *Baja* California, replacing them with Franciscans. For reason of personal ambition, Gálvez also desired to give his sphere of influence the look of expansion and not decay. Citing possible foreign interest in California, he proposed occupation of that forgotten place as a defensive measure.

He not only discussed the ever-present concern of English interests, but also mentioned rumors of Russian fur trapping activity in North America. Lack of resources and the remoteness of California were finally put aside. The Spanish now felt compelled to settle *Alta* California before a foreign interloper could. They desired that California become a buffer against possible aggression - - to protect Mexico and, indeed, all its New World holdings.

The strategy in settling *Alta* California was to establish overland communications and transportation. This seemed necessary because of the power of the English Navy. Lack of enough colonists to occupy the new frontier would be overcome by making the California Indians Spanish in their religion and in their language. That and a gradual intermixing of blood with the Spanish would create a new race of people loyal to the crown back in Spain.

In order to carry out his plans, Gálvez called upon a captain in the Spanish army, Gaspar de Portolá. Born in Balaguer, Spain in 1717,³⁴ the younger son within an aristocratic family, as a young man Portolá had no interest in joining the church or establishing a legal career, so he settled on becoming an officer in the army. He entered the service at the earliest possible age (17) at the lowest possible commissioned rank (ensign). He was involved with many military campaigns from the 1740s onward. However, promotions were slow; he was 8 years an ensign and 25 years a lieutenant before his promotion to captain, and that promotion came with an assignment that any officer in Europe would have thought a professional disaster - - for a job which he did not volunteer - - to permanent duty overseas to the "Army of America,"³⁵ part of Gálvez's military buildup to oppose possible foreign aggression.

The 50-year-old officer arrived in New Spain in 1767. Gálvez gave him his first major assignment - - to evict the Jesuits from the *Baja*. This was a delicate assignment, and there can be little doubt that Portolá's good family connections made him the choice

for the job. It is also likely that since he was fresh from Europe, he would not have the attachment to the priests who had been in the business of building missions in the area since 1697.

By the 1760s, the Jesuits had become target for legends about how they accumulated wealth and power where they served. While these accusations may have had truth to them in other places, in the *Baja*, they had little validity. In all of the Spanish empire, it would have been difficult to find a poorer, more inhospitable place.

Complicating matters, there was already an army captain in the *Baja*, with a long record of service, Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, who was now required to give up his governorship of the *Baja* to this newcomer, without knowing why. Sympathy for the Jesuits was manifest among the troops. A popular revolt among the people was feared, making the order of expulsion important to keep secret. Truly, Portolá's job required a tactful touch, and that he was able to carry this job out in a subtle way can be determined by the words of one of the Jesuits. Father Ducrue wrote:

This Officer of the King arrived full of false prejudice against the Company caused by ridiculous accusations. But then he saw the truth about California, and how false these slanders had been. He never ceased to deplore the disagreeableness of his orders, which notwithstanding he fulfilled in every detail, yet with every kindness, and sympathy for ourselves. And though never able to disregard these orders, he made plain the embarrassment they caused him. For these causes, we must feel. . . grateful to this Catholic gentleman and considerate judge, who lightened our sufferings with his compassion. . . The Governor not only treated us with all kindness ordered by the King, but supplied us most generously with everything needed for the Voyage. . . bewailing the fact that his position required him to carry out the order of expulsion.³⁶

Portolá assigned military personnel to govern *Baja* until the arrival of the Franciscans. For Gálvez, the completion of this assignment meant he could move on to the next task. Once more he called upon Portolá to lead the effort - - this one to explore and colonize *Alta California*. At this point too, Gálvez brought in the leader of the Franciscans just assigned to the *Baja*, Junípero Serra. Portolá would become the military governor of the two Californias, as Serra would become Father-President of the two. The strategy directed Portolá and Serra to begin the colonization effort at the two best harbors, San Diego in the south and Monterey in the north. A *presidio* (fort) and mission would be established at both places and then a system or trail of missions would be placed in between the two about a day's walk apart - - similar to the string of missions in the *Baja*. The principal contingent of the expedition would be on land. Again the possibility of English naval aggression necessitated good land connection, making the blazing of trails imperative for the future.

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While these plans were being finalized, Portolá had to become alarmed by the bout of temporary insanity Gálvez seemed to suffer. At one point during this time, he ordered 600 Guatemalan monkeys put in uniform to help quell a revolt among the Indians of Sonora.³⁷ Gálvez did recover and, in fact, went on in his career to greater things after leaving New Spain.³⁸

THE DISCOVERY OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY

What the Spanish called the "Sacred Expedition"³⁹ started out in the early months of 1769. Three ships were assigned the duty of supplying the main body of explorers who were on foot and mule. The vessels *San Antonio* and *San Carlos* were to rendezvous with the land contingent at San Diego. The *San José* was to meet them at Monterey. The land party moved up the *Baja* in two groups. Together they consisted of a number of Christianized Indians to act as interpreters and examples, a few dozen soldiers, a small number of blacksmiths, cooks and carpenters, one engineer and one doctor.

The *San Antonio* reached San Diego first after 54 days at sea. Despite their reputation for accuracy, charts, drawn up during the Vizcaíno expedition, had marked San Diego too far north. The *San Carlos* arrived three weeks later with a scurvy-ridden crew. In the meantime the land parties reached San Diego with only about half of the original 300 who had originally set out. Portolá and Serra were certainly challenged. Dozens were sick. The sole doctor had gone insane. The *San Antonio* was sent back to Mexico for supplies.

Portolá, recognizing his duties, decided to move north to Monterey as ordered with about 60 of the healthy soldiers, the party's engineer, Miguel Costansó, and Franciscan Padre Juan Crespi. Costansó and Crespi turned out to be terrific diarists of the

journey. Crespi, who had been Father Serra's student back in Spain even before Serra became a Franciscan, was particularly enthusiastic about the things they saw and the people they met. Father Serra, meanwhile, took care of the sick and founded the settlement at San Diego, establishing *Alta* California's first mission and presidio. The route Portolá blazed was later referred to as *El Camino Real* (the King's Highway), which is close to U.S. Highway 101 today. His aim was to meet the *San José* at Monterey. Sadly, the *San José* was never heard from again - - lost at sea and lost to history.

Portolá's party anxiously scoured the coast for the *San José* as they came closer to Monterey. When they actually saw Monterey Bay, the men felt that this place could not be the location that Vizcaíno had described as a safe harbor. And so, they marched onward.

By October 23, Portolá's party had reached Whitehouse Creek at the southwest tip of today's San Mateo County. Here they met the Quiroste people, and they noted their "*Casa Grande*". Indicative of what was most on their minds, Crespi wrote about "eight or ten Indian men" who had come over "from another village". The natives seemingly communicated to the Spanish that within three days' march there existed two harbors, "and the ship is there: Divine Providence grant it be so, and that we reach there as soon as can be!"⁴⁰ Thus the hope that Monterey Bay still lie ahead with the promise of provisions from the *San José* remained alive.

The Quirostes sent guides along with the Spanish as they proceeded north. They crossed Pescadero Creek and then rested at San Gregorio Creek on October 25 and 26. Engineer Costansó noted that rest was necessary because Captain Rivera was "indisposed with the general ailment of scurvy and with a flux of the bowels which attacked a good many people. . ."⁴¹ In fact the soldiers ended up calling the place "*los Cursos*" (Diarrhea Valley). However, Crespi was impressed with the potential of the land he was seeing. He felt the area north of Pescadero Creek to be "a grand place for a very large mission, with plenty of water and soil. . ." At San Gregorio Creek he wrote: "A good deal of land could be put under irrigation with this water; outside the valley all the hills are good dry-farming land." Crespi noted the people at San Gregorio (the Oljons) were "fair and well-bearded. . ." Their men wore no clothes. They "go totally naked, with however much nature gave them in plain view."⁴² Crespi was also impressed by the food offered by the Indians: "They brought us large shares of big dark-colored tamales they make from their grass-seeds, and the soldiers said they were very good and rich." These tamales or pies and other foods provided by the Indians, probably assisted the expedition with fighting its problems with scurvy. However they probably exacerbated the diarrhea situation.

The party proceeded north. At Pillar Point a somewhat frustrated Costansó wrote:

*We could not tell. . .whether we were far away from Monterey or close to it. We were frequently rained upon; our provisions were running out and the men's ration reduced to a mere five flour and bran cakes a day. . .; the decision was made to slay mules for the soldier's rations, but they (the soldiers) refused it until needed for a greater want.*⁴³

Here they rested a day, this time because Portolá was ill with *los Cursos*. Crespi, looking south at Half Moon Bay, was again positive about what he was seeing: "(this) would be a fine place for a town." At Martini's Creek he recorded that the party named it *Arroyo Hondo del Almejas* for the deep creek and its musselbed. He also noted seeing *farallones* (island rocks) "in front of us."

On October 31, the party began its climb of San Pedro or Montara Mountain. Portolá wrote: "We travelled two hours of very bad road up over a very high mountain." When they got to the top, the commander noted that "25 heathens came up." These were the Aramai of Pruristac. Here Portolá dispatched Sergeant José Ortega with eight soldiers to move in advance of the main body. Meanwhile Costansó studied the *farallones* to the west and determined that "Monterey Harbor lay behind us."⁴⁴ That night they made camp in the San Pedro Valley. Crespi wrote about this place:

*Shortly after we reached here there came over to the camp a good-sized village of very good well-behaved friendly heathens, (who) . . .brought us a great many . . . tamales. . .There must be many villages. . .for we have seen many smokes from here; mussels are also very plentiful here, and very large. . . Many deer have been seen upon the hills here. . . Bear tracks and droppings have been seen. . .our sick men since we left the creek of La Salud (Waddell Creek in Santa Cruz County) have been improving more every day. . .*⁴⁵

On November 2, Costansó recorded how a group of the soldiers asked permission to go deer hunting. Some of these:

went a good distance from the camp and so far back up into the hills that they came back after nightfall. These men said, that. . .they had seen an enormous arm of the sea or estuary which shot inland. . .that they had seen handsome plains all studded with trees, and the number of smokes they had made out. . .left them in no doubt the country must have been well peopled with heathen villages.

Thus these hunters became the first Europeans to see the San Francisco Bay, most probably somewhere atop coastal hills now known as Sweeney Ridge. The other intriguing thing about this account is the reference to the "number of smokes" (from village fires), indicating the Bayside was "well peopled".

On Friday, November 3, Costansó reported on a party of scouts who were sent up to the ridge line. They returned at night firing their guns. Crespi tells us that they had “come upon a great estuary.” Some seven villages were close-by, and they saw “many lakes with countless geese, ducks, cranes and other fowl. . .” However, the camp became more excited with the news that Indians, encountered by the scouts, said that a ship was anchored in this estuary. Some felt they had found the *San José* and Monterey after all. However Costansó and Crespi realized that the existence of the *farrallones* so close-by, indicated that this body of water was something else.

The next day, Saturday, November 4, the main party moved up the hill on an Indian path, perhaps close to today’s *Baquino Trail*.⁴⁶ At Sweeney Ridge, they beheld the San Francisco Bay. Portolá wrote: “We traveled three hours, all of it bad road. Stopped with no water.”⁴⁷ Obviously, the commander was not impressed.

Costansó was more descriptive:

*. . .our Commander determined to continue the journey in search of the harbor and vessel of which the scouts had been informed by the heathens, and in the afternoon we set out. . .going along. . .the shoreline. . .until we took to the mountains on a northeast course. From their height we (saw) the great estuary. . .*⁴⁸

Certainly, Crespi was the most loquacious:

*About one o’clock in the afternoon we. . .went over some pretty high hills, with nothing but soil and grass, but the grass all burnt off by the heathens. Beyond, through hollows between hills, we once more came to climb an extremely high hill, and shortly (saw) from the height a large arm of the sea, or extremely large estuary.*⁴⁹

He estimated that this body of water to be “four or five leagues in width in some places, and in others two, and at narrowest it may be a league wide or more.” A league for these explorers was a rather inexact measurement that could range in actual distance from 2.5 to 4.5 miles. Crespi continues with the view to the north: “About a league and a half or two leagues from where we were, some mountains we made out that seemed to make an opening, and it seemed to us the estuary must go in by there, and as if there were a sort of harbor there within the mountains; we could not see clearly, as the mountains, which were high stood in the way.” In other words, Crespi was describing San Bruno Mountain and Mount Tamalpais behind it. Because of these mountains the party could not locate the outlet of the Bay to the Pacific.

Portolá then made a fateful decision. Still in search of the *San José*, instead of proceeding north and finding the “Golden Gate”, he ordered his party east down Sweeney

Ridge toward San Bruno and then south through the San Andreas Valley in the direction of Millbrae. Costansó wrote that with the estuary “on our left hand,” they “. . . travelled through a hollow. . . in which we stopped at sunset, in the cluster of live-oaks, which fringed the skirts of the high hills on the western side.” Crespi described the place they camped, probably around U.S. Interstate 280, just west of Millbrae: “. . . we set up camp at the foot of these mountains, close to a lake where there were countless ducks, cranes, geese and others.”

The next day, Sunday, November 5, the column of discovery continued. Costansó wrote:

We skirted along the estuary, upon its western side not within sight of it since we were separated from it by hills of the hollow. . . The country was well-favored: the mountains we were leaving to the right. . . showed themselves topped with handsome savins, with scrub oak and other lesser trees.

They were travelling down the San Andreas Valley, still following today’s Interstate 280. Crespi commented on the abundant animal life:

Tracks have been encountered of large livestock here in this hollow, which. . . must have been made by bears, as droppings have been seen belonging to (them). . . Also a great many deer have been seen together, while the scouts aver that when they explored here they succeeded in counting a band of 50 deer together.⁵⁰

After marching about four and a half hours they came to rest near a creek (due west of Burlingame) and were visited by three natives - - most probably Ssalson people. They were, according to Crespi, much like Indians previously met on the Peninsula, “very well-behaved: with gifts of black pies and a sort of cherries.”

Portolá’s exhausted group marched another day trying to get around the estuary. They made it as far as San Francisquito Creek, near present-day El Camino Real at the border between San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Here, near a tall tree that could be seen for miles around (*Palo Alto*), they made camp, and Portolá ordered Sergeant Ortega with a few soldiers to continue the search. The scouting party proceeded south, then east, then north, around the Bay, but did not travel far enough up the eastern bayshore to spot the Golden Gate or, of course, the *San José*. On Friday evening, November 10, they returned to camp “very downcast,”⁵¹ according to Costansó.

The gloomy report prompted Portolá to convene a council of his officers. Although Captain Rivera refused to believe it, somehow the expedition had missed Monterey, and the sick and exhausted party was at its end of endurance. They then broke camp and retraced their steps to Sweeney Ridge, then the San Pedro Valley and on down the

coast, eating their mules along the way.⁵² At Monterey Bay, they again could not come to grips that this was the place described by Vizcaíno. On returning to San Diego, most of the party revealed that they had not been much impressed with what they had seen. It seems only Father Crespi knew that something significant had been found at this great estuary: “It is a very large and fine harbor, such that not only all the navy of our Most Catholic Majesty but those of all Europe could take shelter in it.”⁵³

Back in Mexico, opinion sided on Crespi’s side of things. Early in 1770, under orders to continue his work, Portolá sent Serra, Costansó and his second in command, Pedro Fages, on to Monterey by sea in the *San Antonio*. He set out overland again with just 12 soldiers, leaving only eight to guard San Diego. He finally realized that what the first party had twice walked by was Monterey Bay. California’s second mission and second *presidio* would be established in the area. In the meantime he sent Fages north to try to figure out what it was that they had seen at the end of the first expedition. Fages and a small group of soldiers marched north-east via an inland route, reached the San Francisco Bay and made it far enough up the east bayshore to be the first Europeans to see the opening of the Bay at the Golden Gate.

Still, Gaspar de Portolá, the sophisticated Spaniard of noble blood, saw little in all this. He thought that if the Russians really wanted this God-forsaken part of the world, of which he had grave doubts, that they should have it as a punishment for their aggressive ambitions.⁵⁴ He was soon recalled to Spain, retired and never came back to the Americas.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCOVERY OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Why had not the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay been discovered previously? The California coast had been charted and charted again. Cabrillo’s crew, Drake, Vizcaíno and the many Manila galleons had sailed right on by. Certainly the persistent fogs of the Golden Gate could have hidden it from some. Most sailors, with or without fog, desired to sail west of the Farallon Islands to avoid catastrophe, making a discovery unlikely. Mostly though, the Golden Gate was difficult to see, even close by. Presently the famous Golden Gate Bridge marks the spot. Without it, the Gate is disguised. The opening itself is small. Moreover, the islands of the Bay, with the East Bay hills as a backdrop, give the appearance that the Gate is but another rocky cove along the Pacific Coast.⁵⁵

Thus the discovery was made by the first European *land* party to reach the Bay region, and the location of the event is today known as Sweeney Ridge. With the aid of San Mateo County historian Frank Stanger, California historian Herbert Bolton, of the University of California, after years of research, confirmed the location of the dis-

covery site in 1947.⁵⁶ The site at Sweeney Ridge was designated a National Historic Landmark on May 23, 1968.⁵⁷

Local historians have long hailed the discovery as crucial to the development of the Peninsula and surrounding areas. Had not Portolá happened upon “the great estuary,” it may have taken many more years before a land party might have encountered San Francisco Bay, further retarding the march of events of the Spanish California period.⁵⁸ While Monterey was established in 1770, it only lasted six years as the Spanish northernmost outpost, for in 1776, the mission and *presidio* at San Francisco were established as a direct result of the discovery of the Bay.

The 1769 episode encouraged more exploration. In 1772, the new military governor of California, Pedro Fages, went north from Monterey as he did in 1770, except this time he took along Father Crespi and penetrated much farther north and then east. In a failed attempt to get around the Bay, he charted the landscape deep into the East Bay and discovered Suisun Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

From the descriptions of 1772, the Spanish could now begin to put together the keys to the military protection and commercial promise of *Alta* California. They could now envision that if the Golden Gate was navigable then access to the greatest natural harbor on the west coast of the Americas could be gained. Because the Gate was so narrow, the entire San Francisco Bay might be sufficiently defended from the bluffs nearby against a naval threat. Advancing that train of thought, if the Golden Gate could be controlled and utilized, and if the Bay could likewise be controlled and utilized, then the deep waters of the Delta could be used by ships to sail into the interior of California. Further exploration indicated if the Delta could be sailed, then the Sacramento River might be navigated to the north and the San Joaquin River to the south. In the era before railroads, when maritime shipping was universally the most important type of transportation, these realizations had great significance.

It had all started with the Bay discovery in 1769. Although Spain lacked the personnel and resources to fully exploit the situation, and the later Mexican authorities were even less able to take advantage of it, after the United States military take-over of California in 1846 and the Gold Rush that followed three years later, the Americans were. They fortified the Golden Gate with a variety of forts and gun emplacements before the Civil War (1861-1865). The port and City of San Francisco grew in population and economic importance so that by the end of the nineteenth century it could be considered the “Imperial”⁵⁹ city of the American West. For thousands of years, California had existed as a difficult to reach wilderness inhabited by a native people unknown to the rest of the world. From Portolá’s chance discovery of the Bay forward, all would change. This California would become within 200 years the most populated, economi-

cally powerful and culturally influential state within the most important country in the world.

For the Spanish in the 1770s, they did aspire to move with purpose. In 1774, veteran explorer and now military governor of *Alta* California, Fernando Rivera, with Franciscan Padre Francisco Palou (like Crespi, a former student of Father Serra), proceeded north from Monterey with the charge of finding the Golden Gate, this time from the south. Along the way they passed through the “hollow” that had been written about back in 1769. They named the place *San Andres*⁶⁰ (today San Andreas Valley and Lake, just east of Sweeney Ridge). They succeeded in reaching the northern tip of the Peninsula to view the Gate from that vantage point. Imagine the irony, as Rivera realized how close the 1769 party had come. If not for the report by the Indians of the possibility of finding the *San José*, Portolá’s party might have discovered the Golden Gate and the Bay.

The next step was to determine if the Golden Gate could be navigated. In 1775, under the command of Juan Manuel de Ayala, the seasoned ship *San Carlos* successfully passed through on August 5. The crew of *San Carlos* were to meet up with a land party from Monterey led by Captain Bruno Heceta.⁶¹ They explored the Bay for 42 days and were the first, among many other firsts, to map the San Mateo County bayline. The soldiers they were to rendezvous with were caught up in other duties and never met the *San Carlos*.⁶² Using a canoe carried by a mule, Heceta with Father Palou, another priest, nine men, three sailors and a carpenter did some additional exploring about the time the *San Carlos* left the Bay. Although there exists no records to prove it, local historians have surmised that Heceta named San Bruno Mountain (north-east of Sweeney Ridge) after his patron saint.⁶³

Now that the feasibility of establishing San Francisco as a port had been proven, the Spanish needed to set in motion plans to create a mission and *presidio* there. Indicative of the military importance the Spanish assigned to San Francisco, although more than 20 missions would eventually be established in *Alta* California, only four *presidios* would be built - - one at San Diego, the southern bastion: one at Monterey, supposedly the northern sentinel: San Francisco in 1776: and, the last, Santa Barbara in 1782.

By the mid-1770s, the Spanish were beginning to concede that making a successful colony of *Alta* California would require more than simply making the Indians new subjects of the King. Additional colonists were needed. A trail from central Mexico was proposed by Spanish frontier military officer Juan Bautista de Anza. Beginning in 1774, he blazed the trail that would bear his name from Sonora clear to San Francisco.

The flurry of activity in these years, included further exploration of the Coast. In 1774, under Captain Juan Pérez, the *Santiago*, with Father Crespi on board, sailed as

far as Canada's Queen Charlotte Island. In 1779, Spanish ships *Princesa* and *Favorita* made more observations of the California Coast. In 1782, the same ships with different captains accomplished yet more exploring. However, the increased activity did not keep all foreigners away. For example in 1783 and 1786, French naval commander Jean François Galaup de la Pérouse visited the Coast. Finally in 1802, Martinez Zayas charted from north of the Columbia River to Monterey in the last Spanish venture to map the Pacific Coast of North America.⁶⁴

SPANISH OCCUPATION OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA (CONTEXTUAL)

Lieutenant Colonel Juan Batista de Anza's party of 240 settlers, in 1776, made the occupation of the San Francisco Peninsula possible for the Spanish. He recruited soldiers and farmers from the provinces of Sonora and Sinaloa in Mexico.⁶⁵ Anza described his conscripts to Antonio Bucareli, the Spanish Viceroy at Mexico City:

...with regard to the forty families... , let me say that the people... I considered best suited for the purpose... are those... in the direst poverty and misery, and so I have no doubt they would most willingly and gladly embrace the advantage which your Excellency may... offer them...⁶⁶

Included in the party were soldiers, 29 wives of soldiers and their numerous children (within this contingent was the Sanchez family that would come to own a large portion of the north San Francisco Peninsula including Sweeney Ridge), 20 volunteers, three *vaqueros* (cowboys), three servants, three Indian interpreters, three Franciscan padres and officers Anza and Lieutenant José Moraga.⁶⁷ They also took with them 1,000 head of livestock. After an incredible journey they reached Monterey on March 10, 1776.

While the settlers rested there, Anza took a small group with him, including Franciscan Padre Pedro Font, to pick out sites for a mission and *presidio*. They took the eastern route through the Santa Clara Valley (as opposed to coming up the Coast).⁶⁸ They marched up what became El Camino Real on the Peninsula. Anza had the party veer to the west about four or five miles north of today's Woodside (near the Phleger Estate) in order to survey the timber there to determine if it might be useful in construction of the San Francisco settlement. At about Belmont they received the word that the Lamchin to the south and the Ssalson to the north were at war. At a good-sized creek in Ssalson country, the group rested long enough for Padre Font to give it the name "San Mateo". The City and County of San Mateo would eventually take the name too. Why is lost to history. They crossed the Creek on March 26. The feast day for St. Matthew is September 21.

On March 27, Anza's group reached Yelamu country (San Francisco). They camped

just south of today's Golden Gate Bridge. They immediately found the Yelamu to be friendly; a couple of the natives brought them firewood as a gift.

Anza chose the site for the *Presidio* on bluffs overlooking the strategically important Golden Gate. Three miles to the southwest, the site for *Mission San Francisco de Asís* was selected. Font gave the nearby lagoon the name *de los Dolores*, remembering the sorrows of the Virgin Mary.⁶⁹ After two days in San Francisco, they headed back, but only after further exploring the Carquinez Strait, the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and the Diablo Mountain Range.⁷⁰

After his return to Monterey, Anza was recalled for other frontier service. The job of moving part of the party up to San Francisco fell to José Moraga. The pioneers numbered 75. They included 14 soldiers, the wives and children of the soldiers, some settlers (including the Sanchez family), fathers Francisco Palóu and Pedro Cambón and 13 young Indian servants to assist the priests. They moved forward with help of a mule train. They also drove up a herd of 286 head of cattle.⁷¹ These last mentioned animals were important resources for the days ahead. Meat kept the settlers fed, while the hides were used for shelter, beds, saddles, ropes, thongs and binding materials.⁷² The party dedicated the *Presidio* on September 17 and did likewise for the mission on October 8.

All the while, the leadership of the Spanish was in disagreement. Serra and the Franciscans quarreled with Pedro Fages about conduct of soldiers and treatment of Indians when he was military governor. After Fernando Rivera took over in 1774, they argued with him. Rivera, who had resented Portolá's presence in California, also had issues with Anza.

Worse than internal bickering was the closing of the Anza trail in 1781. In 1780, the Franciscans established two missions in Yuma Indian country, on the Anza trail just west of the Colorado River within today's southeastern California. Governor Rivera was there in 1781. The cattle of the Spanish destroyed part of the Yuma's supply of mesquite beans. Other antagonisms occurred. The Yumas had a more war-like culture than most other California Indians. They destroyed both missions, then surprised Rivera and his 30 soldiers. All the men were killed including Rivera and four padres. The women and children of the mission communities were taken as prisoners. Some of the captives were later ransomed, but the Spanish made no attempt to rescue the hostages or punish the Yumas. The Anza trail was closed for the rest of the Spanish period of California History.

Alta California now became sort of an island. Unfavorable winds and currents of the Pacific made maritime contact difficult to the west, Russians and wilderness lay to the north, the lofty Sierra Nevadas lined the eastern fringe of California, and deserts and

hostile Indians were to the south. Therefore the rate of colonial activity was slow. In 1781, about 600 people in California could be considered Spanish. By 1821, Spain's last year in control of *Alta* California, exclusive of Christianized Indians, the number had only increased to 3,000. Even this small augmentation was due to a robust birth rate, with practically no immigration from other parts of the Spanish Empire.

Spanish military presence was light. In the early 1790s, British Commissioner George Vancouver visited *Alta* California while working out details for a treaty. He observed all four *presidios* and found them weak. Monterey's had only eight cannon and Santa Barbara just two. At San Diego, none of its guns were mounted, and at San Francisco's *presidio*, the most important position strategically in *Alta* California, Vancouver noted that it had but two cannon. Incredibly, neither of these were serviceable, having been exposed to the elements and neglected. In other words, the lightest warship in the British navy could have taken the San Francisco Bay, if it could sail that far. As a result of Vancouver's visit, the Spanish did get busy in 1793 by constructing a land battery on the bluff where Fort Point is today (the bluff was cut away in the 1850s to build the fort). However this *Castillo de San Joaquin* also fell victim to inadequate upkeep within a short time.

While the Spanish government and military seemed incapable of gaining momentum in *Alta* California, the Catholic Franciscans made remarkable progress. Before he died in 1784, Serra had supervised the establishment of nine missions and the baptism of 5300 souls.⁷³

The Ohlone people were among the first to be brought into the *Alta* California mission system, and among the San Francisco Bay Costanoan language group of Ohlones, the Yelamu, of present day San Francisco, had the first experience with a permanent Spanish settlement. Initially, the missionaries noted that the Indian people seemed fearful of the newcomers. This was the first time they had seen families coming with Spanish soldiers. However, once work commenced on building the community, the Yelamu's curiosity and friendliness manifested in new feelings. According to Father Palóu: "They came to visit us frequently, bringing their rude gifts of mussels and wild seed, which were always reciprocated with beads and some of our food. . ."⁷⁴

The padres must have been also encouraged by the respect given by the Indians to Christian religious symbols. At San Mateo Creek, Portolá had left a cross in 1769. The Indians had not destroyed or bothered it for seven years when Anza's party went by there. In fact they had left gifts to the new "white man's God"⁷⁵ of arrows, foods and feathers.

All progress on working with the Yelamu was disrupted on August 12, 1776, when Ssalson warriors attacked them. Palóu described the incident:

The heathens of the villages of San Mateo, who are their enemies, fell upon them at a large town about a league from this lagoon, in which there were many wounded and dead on both sides. Apparently the Indians of this vicinity were defeated, and so fearful were they of others that they made tule rafts and all moved to the shore opposite the Presidio, or to the mountains on the east side of the bay.⁷⁶

To no avail, the Spanish tried to reassure the Yelamu that the soldiers would protect them. Some Yelamu came back to hunt during the fall, but now an altercation took place between Spanish soldiers and the Indians which resulted in the deaths of a Spaniard and a Yelamu.⁷⁷

Not until the following spring (1777) did some of the younger Yelamu people overcome their fears and begin taking religious instruction. On June 24, the initial three were baptized at the mission. The first of these was 20-year-old Chamis from the Yelamu village of Chutchui, whose mother was from Pruristac. The other two were boys of about nine years of age.⁷⁸

It is unknown how much these youngsters understood about the significance of this commitment, but their lives would be changed tremendously and forevermore. They now lived at the Mission with its new foods, wore clothes of cloth, and lived under ceilings and behind walls. They learned to plant and cultivate crops, herd domesticated animals and tan hides. They found the padres stern. The work schedule was rigid, and there was no going back to the previous way of life. They knew if they were to run away they would be brought back by the soldiers and be whipped.⁷⁹

By the end of the year, 32 more neophytes (new Christians) were brought into the church. They were all young: 23 males and 9 females. Twenty-seven were Yelamu, four were Urebura (San Bruno) and one was a Lamchin (Redwood City).

Between 1777 and 1781, the converts continued to be predominantly children and adolescent Yelamu. In fact by 1780, most of the young Yelamu had joined the Mission. Not until 1783 were a number of married couples baptized.⁸⁰ Progress was steady so that by 1800 close to all of the Peninsula's Indians were within the mission system.⁸¹

The Aramai were among the first to be taken in of the people south of San Francisco. Indeed between 1779 and 1784, most of the Aramai had become Christians. The headman at Pruristac, Yagueche, was the first chieftain of the Peninsula people to become a neophyte and had his conversion completed before the Yelamu headman by one year. His baptism took place June 7, 1783, when he was believed to be 70 years old.⁸² He joined the church with one of his wives and two Aramai girls from Timigtac (Mori Point).

Most Chiguans (Half Moon Bay) were brought in between 1783 and 1787: the Cote-gens (Purísima Creek), 1786-1791 and the Oljons (San Gregorio Creek) 1786-1793. The Quirostes (Año Nuevo) were taken in by three missions - - San Francisco, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz during the 1790s.

A significant factor helping the Franciscans in late 1780 was the ending of antagonism between the Yelamu and Ssalson. That December, a Yelamu girl and a Yelamu village headman's son married Ssalsons (San Mateans) in Christian ceremony. Indeed by the end of 1783, of the mission's neophyte population of 221, 73 were Yelamu, despite the fact that no Yelamu chieftain had yet been baptized.

The year 1783 seems to have been a key one for *Mission San Francisco de Asís*. That year, almost as many married couples came into the church as had been the case for the seven years before. Previously only 10 couples had been baptized, but in 1783 there were nine, among them four from Pruristac, more than any other village. Considering the distance from the mission to Pruristac, and its small size, this village sent a proportionately large number of people to be converted that year.⁸³

The conversions of couples continued in 1784, including another two from Pruristac. Probably recognizing the progress being made, Franciscan Father President Serra visited San Francisco that year, at the seven-year anniversary of the first baptism at the Mission.

In 1785, larger numbers of Urebure, Ssalson and Lamachin people of the Peninsula's bayshore joined the Church. By 1787, the last of the Yelamu were in. Between 1786 and 1787, the members of Peninsula bayside conversions increased yet more rapidly. After a three year lull of activity, in 1790, more baptisms took place among the eastern Peninsula groups until by the end of the year nearly two-thirds of them were Christians. The final wave of conversion for the baysiders occurred in 1793, including the last of the Ssalsons.

The rapidity and completeness of the sweep of these people into the Church seems extraordinary. Randall Milliken in his 1995 study, *Time of Little Choice*, explains that this transformation resulted because of the shattering by the Spanish of the balances that had made Ohlones so successful in an unchanging world. While Spanish livestock took over the pasture land, Spanish law prohibited the Indians from burning brush to provide grasslands for the animals they hunted. Spanish diseases depleted local populations and broke the pattern of teamwork among the people. The survivors simply had not enough hands to continue the old ways. Stronger groups, less effected originally, could temporarily dominate their weakened neighbors.

According to Milliken the people "lost faith in the feasibility of continuing their

traditional way...,”⁸⁴ and, sadly, once the decision was made to be taken in by the Church “...they left behind a major portion of their identity.”⁸⁵ He elaborates that the Franciscans engaged in a campaign of “cultural denigration” in which they “...sought to make the native people feel ashamed of their traditional way of life and envious of Spanish culture.” In short, the old ways “...provided no answers in the context of the new social reality...” This acceptance of “...a foreign culture as inherently superior to one’s own is, in a sense, to depreciate one’s self.” The Franciscans simply replaced tribal elders as their “supernatural spirits seemed stronger.”⁸⁶ Thus the people were forced to seek a new identity.

Meanwhile the thought of any defensive alliances that the people might forge to oppose the Spanish was impossible. The Indian people of Central California, simply did not think of themselves as a single people.

Nevertheless, when one considers the few padres and soldiers involved with this cultural transformation, it is amazing that so many native people could have been indoctrinated into the new faith in so short a time. The dedication and philosophies of the Franciscans are to be acknowledged as some reasons behind their success.⁸⁷ The padres sincerely believed they were gifting the Indian people with a religion that would allow them a blissful afterlife. Without them, the Indians’ souls would be lost. By converting to Catholicism, an Indian became a *gente de razón*, that is a person of reason. He was now also a loyal Spanish subject, and intermarriage between the natives and Spanish was not discouraged.

In the eyes of the priests the new life was morally enriching for the Indians. The disciplined activities that came with their conversion was not just in their new religion but moved them from savagery to civilization. To transform the Indians from wild beings would take a huge effort that would be wrenching, even unnatural for the natives, and be of substantial work for the Franciscans.⁸⁸ Thus catechism and prayer needed the augmentation of a regimented work schedule to complete the Indians as “people of reason”.

In spite of spiritual philosophy, the realities of the mission system for the Indians were grim. By the 1780s, for the mission people at *Mission San Francisco de Asís*, this meant a life of confinement, spiritually and physically. Most lived beneath the bell tower, except for a few children of gentiles (the unconverted), who were allowed to return to their parents with the idea that they would try to tempt mothers and fathers into the mission fold as well.⁸⁹

The demanding life for the neophytes included frequent masses in which the people kneeled for long periods. They learned European skills such as spinning and weaving for the women and farming for the men. Long work days were expected, and soldiers

were in close proximity to maintain order.⁹⁰ Corporal punishment were inflicted frequently on both the men and the women.

By the 1780s, the Franciscans were realizing problems with the system at San Francisco. In order to have a successful mission community, it was necessary to have abundant fresh water, enough arable land and extensive pasturage. Mission San Francisco had none of these. Situated at the tip of the Peninsula for strategic reasons, it had limited sources of brackish water, sandy soil for cultivation and little close-by pasturage for livestock. As early as 1783, the priests were complaining to Spanish officials in Mexico about troubles feeding all the people. As the population continued to grow, so did the food problem.

Worst yet were the diseases that the Spanish brought with them, of which the Indians had no immunity. At *Mission San Francisco de Asis*, up to 30% of a population might die in a bad year. The high death rate combined with a low birth rate among the demoralized people was a disturbing trend to contend with for the padres.

The first epidemic hit San Francisco in 1785. The death rate jumped to 15.5% with 48 people dying. The particular sickness that did this awful damage was not identified in the records of the padres.

THE MISSION OUTPOST BENEATH SWEENEY RIDGE (CONTEXTUAL)

The creation of a mission outpost southwest of Sweeney Ridge in the San Pedro Valley (now the Linda Mar area of Pacifica) initiates an important theme of San Francisco Peninsula history. From this point through to our modern era, the resources of the southern part of the Peninsula (now San Mateo County) have been utilized to help San Francisco succeed, first as mission and then, later, as an important, internationally renowned city.

The idea of creating agricultural outposts for the California missions did not belong solely to the San Pedro Valley. Mission San Francisco itself would have at least two more active centers, at San Mateo and San Rafael.⁹¹ However no outpost was more important to the survival of a mission nor extensive in its activities in California than what became known as *Asistencia San Pedro y San Pablo* (Saint Peter and Saint Paul's Ranch).

What moved the padres to establish the outpost? The crowded conditions at San Francisco, and perhaps the lack of food too, had helped fester disease there. By moving down the Peninsula with some of the people the crowding could be somewhat alleviated. Moreover, the natural limitations of San Francisco required an agricultural site that could grow sufficient crops of grain, fruit and vegetables. Greater pasturage

for the livestock, especially cattle, was also needed. Finally, many potential neophytes lived south of San Francisco. Especially those on the coast were difficult to reach. An outpost closer to the gentiles would facilitate more conversions.

Why the San Pedro Valley? Back in 1774, when he was with Rivera, Father Palóu had noted the place as well-suited for a fully functional mission. Although timber for construction was not abundant, the valley did not “lack land, water, or pasture for cattle.”⁹² Indeed the Spanish were well acquainted with San Pedro. Here Portolá had camped just before discovering the Bay. Also the friendly Aramai of Pruristac came from here, and it was not far from the San Francisco Mission - - only about 10 miles. After some study, the padres agreed with Palóu’s assessment. The place appeared to have fertile soil, San Pedro Creek ran all year round, good grazing land was present, and the sun seemed to find a hole in the fog and clouds at San Pedro.

Padres Pedro Cambón and Miguel Giribet made the decision to move forward in 1786.⁹³ Construction began at the village site of Pruristac and made use of the wattle technique of erecting wooden poles upright in the ground and then plastering the framework with mud. The structures were then white washed with lime from the newly found quarry at Mori Point. By the end of 1786, the padres reported back to Mexico that they had constructed an outpost of six rooms at San Pedro, complete with palisade walls and thatch roof. The rooms consisted of a chapel with an altar, a presbytery, two living quarters, a tool room and a granary.⁹⁴ The buildings formed two sides of what might one day be a quadrangle. A 20-foot tall wooden cross was put in the middle of the complex. The padres reported that approximately 10 acres of corn and four acres of beans had already been sown, with another nine acres cleared for wheat. Two irrigation ditches had also been dug.

In 1787, three new rooms were added, forming a third side of the quadrangle. The padres also saw that 2760 yards of willow fencing was put up to keep livestock and grizzly bears from the crops. Bears had damaged the corn harvest the year before. Two more rooms were added a year later but could not be roofed before the winter. A temporary thatch cover was fabricated to protect this construction.⁹⁵ By 1789, the padres had in mind making the outpost’s construction much more permanent. A new building, 16’ x 110’, was erected, probably replacing previous construction. This time adobe bricks, one-and-a-half thick, were used to create walls. Two additional rooms were built with this material - - a new priest’s quarters and one for the *mayordomo* (or foreman).

Although the quadrangle was never completed,⁹⁶ in 1790 construction was still taking place, with more drainage ditches being completed.

The *Asistencia* was a success in its first year. By 1787, all the crops necessary for the

Mission San Francisco were grown here. The report back to Mexico even mentioned a surplus of food and that more could be cultivated if a market existed for sale of the produce. That year peach and quince trees were planted as well as grape vines to diversify the tables of the Mission population. In 1790, the Mission and *Presidio* were getting nearly all their provisions from the San Pedro Valley.⁹⁷ This included ample supplies from 36 acres of wheat, but also barley, beans, peas, rosemary, lentils and corn, plus various fruit from the plantings mentioned above.

The population count of *San Pedro y San Pablo* was never definitely stated in the reports of the Franciscans. However, we have knowledge that there was considerable activity there among the people, beyond the construction and successful farming endeavors. The first recorded birth took place on March 10, 1786 - - a baby girl. The church of the outpost recorded its first baptism on June 15, 1787. Father Cambón wrote:

*I solemnly baptized a child, who was born on the 7th of the month, the legitimate child of Hilarion and Ursula, neophyte Indians of this Mission of San Francisco. . . He put on the name of Tito Maria. Diego Olbera, a servant of the mission, and his wife Maria Josepha, were sponsors. . .*⁹⁸

In fact 25 of the 109 baptisms recorded by the priests at *Mission San Francisco de Asís* were conducted at San Pedro that year. The neophytes included people from both the coast and Bayside communities. The padres were delighted with the activity there and remarked that the new outpost would allow them to recruit neophytes as far south as Año Nuevo. In his report to Mexico, Governor Pedro Fages, despite his differences with the Franciscans, commented on the hard work of the missionaries and the “fortunate results” at San Pedro.⁹⁹

During the years of the outpost’s greatest activity, although most coast people still received baptism at San Francisco, a significant number were brought into the Church at the *Asistencia*. The first were Cotegan (Purísima Creek) and Oljon (San Gregorio Creek), including the Oljon headman, 30-year-old Ysus. Indians from as far down as Año Nuevo (the Quirostes) would eventually receive baptism there.¹⁰⁰ By 1791, operations were still robust. That year 70 baptisms were recorded at the *San Pedro y San Pablo* Church.¹⁰¹ Eventually, 160 baptisms would be performed there.¹⁰²

The first recorded burial at the outpost took place May 5, 1786. Another death that summer was a granddaughter of Yagueche, once the headman at Pruristac. In 1787, Father Giribet conducted five more funerals there. Eventually more than 135 people were buried in the Valley, in a cemetery that has been lost in time. By mid-1787, Padres Cambón and Giribet had recognized that the number of people at San Pedro warranted their commitment to having one priest say Mass there every Sunday. Between 1789 and 1791, there were nearly equal numbers of burials at the Mission as there was

at the *Asistencia*. This might infer that an equal number of neophytes lived at the two places, giving San Pedro a possible population of 300 people.¹⁰³

Among those baptized at *San Pedro y San Pablo* in 1791 was a Quiroste named Charquin. Within just a few days of his new Christian experience, this neophyte fled to hide in the Santa Cruz Mountains, near Año Nuevo, the place he had lived before. That winter he became the first San Francisco Bay Area Indian to organize active resistance to Spanish authority. A Spanish patrol captured Charquin. He was imprisoned at the San Diego *Presidio* in May of 1793. Some have speculated that this hostility may have played a part in the eventual decision to withdraw, or at least partially withdraw from the San Pedro Valley.

From the point of view of the Franciscans, the founding of Mission Santa Cruz, in 1791, may have led to consideration that less activity on the Coast would now be required of the priests at San Francisco. Also that year, Padre Cambón, who had helped establish *San Francisco de Asís* with Palóu back in 1776, decided to retire. His energy may have been a crucial factor in keeping the activities at *San Pedro* so vital.¹⁰⁴

There can be no doubt that disease, which first struck the *Asistencia* in 1791, had influence in diminishing activity there. It might have been measles. By the end of the year the death rate at San Pedro had jumped from an average of about a dozen a year to 47, while baptisms dropped to practically none. Perhaps witnessing the devastating effects of this illness caused Charquin to flee. He was joined by others. In 1792, another 50 people died.

Activity at San Pedro dropped substantially in 1792. The last wedding there took place January 10. Only ten people were baptized that year, all before July (in San Francisco, there were 123 baptisms in 1792). Seemingly, an abandonment was occurring.

The next year a new farming center was established at San Mateo Creek on the Bayside of the Peninsula (at today's Baywood and El Camino Real). Livestock found good grazing there, and the Franciscans built an adobe building and began planting corn, vegetables and wheat. No report came from San Pedro in 1794.¹⁰⁵

With determination, but with fewer neophytes, the padres made San Mateo a huge success. At the start sheep ranching was its primary mission, but because San Mateo's adobe building existed at El Camino Real, about mid-way between the San Francisco and Santa Clara missions, it also became sort of a half-way house or "Mission Hospice."¹⁰⁶ Other centers of activity augmented the work at San Mateo during the time of *Mission San Francisco de Asís*' domination of the Peninsula landscape. Eventually a cattle herd of 10,000 head and an equal number of sheep, with hundreds of horses and mules

grazed on “open range” as far south as San Francisquito Creek on the Bayside and Tunitas Creek on the coast.

By 1810, cattle raising had become the most important economic activity of the Spanish, and this was extended into the following Mexican period of California and Peninsula history. San Mateo County historian Alan Hynding termed all California “a sprawling cattle kingdom”¹⁰⁷ of which the Peninsula was certainly a part.

The cattle were of the rugged longhorn variety, animals that needed little care as they roamed the Peninsula free of fences. At first, two herds existed: one owned by the Church and the other belonging to the soldiers. By 1790, the Church’s herd, which had been about 200 to start with in 1776, had grown to nearly 1,800. With horses, mules and sheep, their livestock numbered about 3,600. The *Presidio*’s herd by that time was 1,215. The animals were differentiated by branding. Those belonging to the priests carried an “F” for Franciscan. Those wearing an “R” were property of the soldiers and their King (*Rey*).¹⁰⁸

Over the objections of the soldiers, in 1791, the missionaries convinced the Spanish government that just one herd was necessary. They argued that space was limited on the Peninsula and that only one herd of animals could survive. They lobbied for the “King’s” cattle to be moved to Monterey.¹⁰⁹

The soldiers complained bitterly about the way in which cattle were made available to them for the ensuing five years. Protests from the Commandant of the *Presidio*, Jose Dario Arguello, finally led to a report (1796) to the Viceroy which in turn resulted in action. *Alta* California Governor Diego Borica designated a special ranch be set aside of more than two square leagues for the troops. They called it *Rancho Buri Buri*. It was equivalent to a 15,000 acre foot print that included the south side of San Bruno Mountain, and today’s South San Francisco, San Bruno, Millbrae and the northern half of Burlingame. In other words, it extended from the San Andreas Valley, just beneath Sweeney Ridge, down to the Bay. Cattle branded with the “R” certainly grazed on the Ridge. *Buri Buri*’s corrals were situated on El Camino Real.

A revival, of sorts, was occurring on the other side of the hill. In fact, activity never really stopped in the San Pedro Valley. Even in 1793, a year after the devastating epidemics, a baptism occurred on April 14 (the last). Eleven burials took place, nine in the spring and two in the fall. Perhaps this indicates more farm workers on the site during seasons associated with planting and harvesting. After 1793, the records of the Franciscans are sketchy about crop production. However, Sweeney Ridge and San Pedro Valley saw increased ranching, as the Franciscans’ herds grew throughout the Peninsula. The previously cited 1796 report to the Viceroy insists food production from San Pedro was still important; the document asserted that without the outpost: “it would be impossible (for the mission) to subsist.”¹¹⁰ Thus while the ecclesiastical function of the *Asistencia* ceased, it was still

important to the sustainability of the San Francisco mission community. Mission records of 1798 and 1799 tell us that children were still being born at San Pedro, but were later baptized at San Francisco.

A letter written by Franciscan Martin Landecta, in 1800, speaks of many cattle in the Valley: “20 cows are killed each week.” Also he cites an incredible number of sheep - - 6,000 - - “are at San Pedro” and that “. . .much frijole and maize has begun to ripen.”¹⁰⁹

As late as 1828, Father Tomas Estenaga of *San Francisco de Asís* reported that at San Pedro there was still “cultivation” and pasture for “horned stock”. A census completed that year lists eight men, eight women, six boys and four girls living in the Valley. These 26 Indians compare with only 22 living at San Mateo at the same time. The difference was that six “religious” people lived at San Mateo, while the Indians were on their own at San Pedro.¹¹²

Mission San Francisco de Asís began undergoing secularization in 1834, and the Mexican government confiscated the properties of the Franciscans. While an inventory mentioned a corral at “Pillar,” (or *Rancho Corral de Tierra*), no mention was made of buildings or any improvements at San Pedro. Five years later, the Valley and surrounding lands including Sweeney Ridge was granted to Francisco Sanchez.

The year after the disaster of 1792 at *San Pedro y San Pablo* was also the peak year for Coastal Peninsula people counted within *Mission San Francisco de Asís*. Some 197 neophytes (28%) were among the total of 711. Because of continuous epidemics, their number fell to 128 in just two years. By 1800, mission Indians from the San Mateo Coast numbered only 81 individuals.¹¹³

Among the Aramai, of the 40 that had been baptized since the 1770s, only 25 were still alive by 1794. As the years went by, some of these became important in the mission community. Hilarion, son of Yagueche (Christian name - - Luciano Tiburcio) the ‘old’ Pruristac headman, was known as an *alcalde*, or village boss at the mission. He and another Pruristac man, Jorge, were killed in the service of the Spanish in a skirmish with Indian people across the Bay.

By 1822, only one of the original Pruristac people still survived in the mission community. This was Manuel Conde, born about 1767 and also a son of Yagueche (or Luciano Tiburcio). Children born to the villagers were referred to as mission Indians. Some of the native people counted in the San Pedro census of 1828 may have descended from the original people of Pruristac.¹¹⁴

Of course the larger story of the fate of the Ohlone people is not a happy one. By 1810, all of them had been taken into the missions. Of the 17,000 people that once made-up this culture, few were left after 41 years of contact with the Spanish.

THE MEXICAN ERA (CONTEXTUAL)¹¹⁵

Sweeney Ridge came into the possession of a single individual for the first time in 1839, when, as part of *Rancho San Pedro*, it came to be owned by Francisco Sanchez. Sanchez's property included the San Pedro Valley, and on the site of *Asistencia San Pedro y San Pablo* (and before that Pruristac), he built an adobe home that still stands today as a museum. His land grant consisted of about two leagues of property, approximately the footprint of the City of Pacifica today.

The process by which these lands came into the hands of Francisco Sanchez began with the successful ending of the Mexican Revolution in 1821. Part of the promise of the struggle for independence was to complete the process of secularization that had been the commitment of the Church when it first helped colonized *Alta California*. According to the plan after 10 years, the Indians were supposed to get their land back. Now the Revolution called for secularization to actually occur and occur it did, but not as the Franciscans or the framers of the Revolution had envisioned it.

Under the new Mexican government, real thinking about secularization was set aside at first, while other problems were addressed. Nevertheless, most everyone realized that the end of the mission era was coming.¹¹⁶ As the missions fell apart, the morale of the resident Indians plunged. Most eventually abandoned their mission communities.

On August 17, 1833, the Mexican Congress authorized a law to secularize the California missions. The decree implied that the original pledge of the Franciscans would be enforced - - that each of the native mission communities would receive its own local government, with its own leaders. The Indians themselves would be given lands they could cultivate; the properties of the missions such as animals, tools, seed, etc. would also be given to them.¹¹⁷ The next year the immediate secularization of ten of the missions took place,¹¹⁸ among them *San Francisco de Asís*. The process of confiscation began immediately, including the Church's holdings in the San Pedro Valley. In September, Joaquin Estudillo was appointed commissioner to inventory and preside over the secularization process for the San Francisco mission. The mission Indians seemed poised to receive what had long been promised to them. Missionary control over them did end immediately. However, local authorities such as Estudillo and those that came later, never followed through with giving the land back to the Indians.¹¹⁹

In California there was much at stake. Millions of acres of land, many tens of thousands of livestock and other properties once owned by the Church would eventually come into the hands of individuals through the issuance of some 500 land grants.¹²⁰ Instead of distributing all this property among the mission Indian communities, the commissioners in charge of the process worked with the various Mexican-Californian governors to give these grants to well-placed individuals who had been part of the

military during Spanish times or political favorites within the new regime. Governor Juan Alvarado, who presided over some of the division of the San Francisco Peninsula, explained that the mission Indian population was decreasing as the needs and numbers of the old Spanish families were increasing. The commissioners and governors issued the grants demonstrating considerable favoritism; many times the transactions benefited themselves.¹²¹ All up and down California, huge parcels were given out, some as big as 100,000 acres. On the San Francisco Peninsula, where land was valuable and more people were present, the grants were smaller, the largest, of 35,000 acres, was given to the Arguello family.

The old soldiers' ranch, *Buri Buri*, became the focus of José Antonio Sanchez. Sanchez came to San Francisco as a baby with the Anza party of 1776. He grew up at San Francisco becoming a soldier, first under the Spanish and rose in rank to lieutenant under the Mexican regime. His value as a soldier was well-known, having taken part in over 20 campaigns of Indian skirmishing and expeditions of exploration. Sanchez actually occupied *Buri Buri* in 1825, before secularization had occurred. He built his adobe house at the site of today's Peninsula Hospital in Millbrae. Governor José Castro finally awarded him his 15,739 acre land grant in 1835. *Buri Buri*, with its prime grazing land, was regarded as the prize grant of the Peninsula.¹²²

Of the 17 land grants issued on what would be considered San Mateo County land today, four went to members of the Sanchez clan. Bordering *Buri Buri* to the west at Sweeney Ridge and down to the coast, was *Rancho San Pedro* which went to José's son, Francisco Sanchez, in 1839. North of San Pedro, Francisco de Haro, José's son-in-law, gained *Rancho Laguna de La Merced* in 1837. In 1844, another son-in-law, Domingo Feliz, acquired *Rancho Feliz*, which was down the San Andreas Valley, southwest of *Buri Buri*. Adjacent to *Buri Buri* to the south, and to Feliz to the east, was *Rancho San Mateo*. The Sanchez's petitioned for this property, but it was held in reserve for the Indians still living at the old mission outpost at San Mateo Creek.

As during the mission times, the *rancheros* used the land primarily for cattle grazing. Thousands of the half-wild longhorn animals roamed the open ranges of the Peninsula with brands that told to whom they belonged.

The great numbers of cattle changed the Peninsula's landscape. They grazed nearly to extinction many native shrubs and grasses. At the same time the missionaries, and later Mexicans, unintentionally brought with their new crops a variety of Old World invasive weeds that competed with the native plants.¹²³ Observers also commented on the many rotting carcasses on the open range. *Vaqueros* killed and skinned the cattle during the *matanza* (slaughtering time) and let the bodies lie where they fell. This last mentioned phenomena was due to the advent of California's first great trading endeavor - - the hides-and-tallow industry.

Besides secularization, another promise of the Mexican Revolution was the concept of “free trade”. As people of a Spanish colonial possession, the *Californios* were forbidden to engage in commerce with representatives of any nation except Spain. The new Mexican government opened the long shut door. The thirst among the people here for finished manufactured items, from weapons and tools to clothing and furniture, was substantial. However, what could be bartered? The cash poor, land rich *rancheros* had much of just one commodity, and that was cattle. The meat would spoil on long voyages without refrigeration, but the by-products of the beasts, hides and tallow, could be successfully traded.

The business developed into a lucrative one, enough that the hides became known as “California Dollars”. Back east the hides were made into leather shoes and for dozens of other uses. Tallow had many applications as well, including use in manufacturing candles, soap and fuel.

Trading ships from all over the world, but especially the United States, came to California. Estimates from the years 1826 to 1848 suggest that something on the order of 1,250,000 hides and 62,500,000 pounds of tallow were shipped out of California. Among the most active ports was the village at *Yerba Buena* Cove that would evolve into the City of San Francisco.

Cattle raising was considered a gentlemanly pursuit among the *rancheros*, farming being deemed beneath their dignity. Some planting took place for a few necessities. Most *ranchos* had a field which was fenced to keep out the livestock. The fences were made of willows for posts with saplings strapped to the posts with rawhide to serve as rails. The fenced area was never more than about 40 acres, which might contain a combination of beans, peppers, corn, pumpkins and a few vegetables. The diet of the *Californios* did not vary too much. Beef, beans and tortillas accounted for the most meals.¹²⁴

For the owners of the *ranchos*, life could be easy and relatively carefree. Their hospitality to travelers was legendary. Entertainment, food, even use of a horse could be counted on as a courtesy without charge.¹²⁵

Historians of San Mateo County speculate that the 17 *ranchos* families and their workers probably numbered no more than 500 individuals, a substantial decrease of people from when Ohlones had the Peninsula, before 1769.¹²⁶

What of the San Francisco mission Indians? Yet another disaster hit them. With the new government’s policies the Franciscan priests could no longer provide for the neophytes. Starvation joined continued problems with communicable disease to devastating effect. Some Indians ran away. At the time of the Mexican Revolution, about

1,100 Indians were still included in the population of people controlled by *Mission San Francisco de Asís*. The number dropped to about 200 at the time of secularization.¹²⁷ When the *rancheros* took control of the landscape, many of mission Indians simply went along with the property as laborers.

By 1839, all the Indians still assigned to the mission (between 80 and 90 individuals) lived at the old outpost at San Mateo Creek. Governor Alvarado sent William Hartnell as an “Inspector General” to see to the needs of these people. Hartnell recommended that they be given the land known as *Rancho San Mateo*, which extended from San Mateo Creek to the Sanchez’s *Rancho Buri Buri*. Nothing came of the recommendation except holding off the ambitions of the Sanchez family, as mentioned. The land was eventually granted to Governor Pio Pico’s clerk, Cayetano Arenas, in 1846. With the advent of the Bear Flag Revolt and coming of the Mexican-American War, Arenas sold *Rancho San Mateo* to the American mercantile firm of Mellus and Howard. About 1850, W.D.M. Howard bought out Henry Mellus to establish the first of the great Peninsula estates. After Howard began making his improvements, no more was recorded about the Indians.

Time was running out for the *ranchero* owners as well. While the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War guaranteed their property rights, the former Mexican citizens were rendered landless in time. Their problems stemmed from the original form of their wealth in land and not cash. California, before the American takeover and the Gold Rush, had no credit system or banks. There was some silver coin but little currency. When it came time to defend their land grants in court, the *rancheros* had little recourse other than selling parcels or mortgaging their real estate. Property taxes became a problem as well. In a general way, one can say that the old *ranchos* came into the hands of the lawyers and bankers of the new American regime.

FRANCISCO SANCHEZ AND RANCHO SAN PEDRO

Rancho San Pedro, awarded to Francisco Sanchez in 1839,¹²⁸ consisted of two leagues of land (approximately the footprint of today’s City of Pacifica). It, of course, included within its boundaries Sweeney Ridge. Sanchez decided to build a house at the site of the old Mission *Asistencia* at San Pedro Creek, before that the Indian village of Pruristac. Despite the ever present threat of grizzly bears, this proved a very good choice. Here in the fertile valley, the sun seemed to shine, even when the rest of the coast was fogged-in.

Sanchez’s grandfather had come to California with Anza back in 1776 with Francisco’s father, who was but a baby at the time. Francisco was the second son (of four in total) born to José Antonio Sanchez II and Maria Ana Josefa Soto. The date of his birth was

April 13, 1805, and the place was San José.¹²⁹ It is probable he began schooling at San José in 1812 at the age of seven. That he could read and write with some skill was unusual for the *Californios*. After the Mexican Revolution, Francisco decided to follow family tradition by entering the military. In 1824, at the age of 19, he joined the local militia, the San Francisco Company at the *Presidio*. In 1830, he was made quartermaster there, and by 1837 he had become captain, a rank he held until the end of the Mexican era. Between 1838 and 1839, and again between 1841 and 1843, he served as the Commandant of the *Presidio*. Sufficient evidence exists that the militia was not extraordinarily active at this most strategic of all California locations. In 1840, the troops there included 12 privates and a sergeant. After 1843, apparently there were no troops serving there at all. When the Americans came to take California in 1846, Francisco was again the Commandant, mostly in title only.

He was also involved in civil matters. In 1834, when a small local government was being organized at San Francisco, he was made secretary of the Council. It began to function in 1835, as secularization of the Mission was taking place. In 1842, he was made *alcalde*, the sort of combined mayor and judge of the community. In 1844, now serving as Captain of the Port at Yerba Buena, he was called on to put down a mutiny on a ship at anchor. Sanchez reportedly killed one of the mutineers by running him through with a sword. Afterwards, he resigned from that post.

He married Maria Florencia Teodora Higuera in 1833. The 15-year-old bride was marrying a 28 year-old man. She went by the name Teodora and descended from an original Anza pioneer man and a California Indian woman. Between 1834 and 1858, the Sanchezs' apparently had 13 children, seven sons, four daughters and two babies that died in infancy. At first the family lived at the *Presidio*. Francisco owned two lots in Yerba Buena but sold one and rented the other. Most of the people living at Yerba Buena were "foreigners," that is, people from the United States and other places.

As his father had, Francisco started living at his *rancho* before it was officially given to him in 1839. He built a temporary dwelling and then, in 1842, began to build his substantial adobe home.¹³⁰

He constructed the house on the foundation of part of the outpost and probably used some of its adobe bricks and other materials such as brass nails and timbers. It has been estimated that he used 15,000 bricks in the construction of this 64' x 24', two-story, six-room structure. Lime for the plaster work most likely came from the quarry at Mori Point that had been used by the Franciscans 57 years before.¹³¹ The shingles were cut from redwood trees southeast from San Pedro, in the Woodside area. Labor for this project was almost certainly California Indian. Even as late as 1860, the United States census shows that Sanchez still employed two Indians, a cook and a herdsman.¹³² Undoubtedly, when completed in 1846, his adobe was the most substantial

home on the Peninsula. That Sanchez was the most influential man among his peers is demonstrated by the series of events that culminated in the Battle of Santa Clara.

Sanchez, at first, was friendly toward the Americans in California. In January of 1846, Captain John C. Fremont of the United States Army and American Vice Consul at Yerba Buena William Leidesdorff visited him at his San Pedro Valley home. Fremont, officially surveying California for reasons that remain vague to history, wished to feel out the *Californios* about their loyalty to Mexico, in certain anticipation of the coming war. After “a savory supper” and sleeping in a “good bed,” Fremont went away impressed and spoke of Francisco’s “cordial hospitality”.¹³³

And Francisco had a favorable opinion of the Americans. A short time after Fremont’s visit, he attended a *junta* in Monterey at which the *Californios* were attempting to reach consensus about the political future of California. It was given among them that Mexico had little chance of holding this place much longer. Some wanted to face the inevitable and become one with the greatest maritime power in the world - - the British Empire. Others wished to side with France, since it was powerful, and also a Catholic nation. Sanchez joined Mariano Vallejo and suggested that annexation to the United States ought to be the course, based on the similar history of the Americans and *Californios*. Both had thrown off colonial domination and now were challenged with making the American West a suitable place to settle and develop.

Sadly for Sanchez and the *Californios*, by June California was in a state of great confusion. American settlers in the Sacramento and Napa valleys joined with Fremont and his 60 armed men to initiate the “Bear Flag Revolt,” whose purpose was to create a “California Republic”.¹³⁴ Tragedy struck the Sanchez family when Fremont issued orders that resulted in killing three *Californios*, Francisco and Ramon de Haro, Francisco’s nephews, and José de los Berryessa,¹³⁵ another uncle of the boys. Fremont had made camp at Mission San Rafael and received reports of enemy spies in the vicinity. The three *Californios* were unarmed and had merely landed a small boat on the Marin shore in order to visit relatives. Fremont’s scout, Kit Carson, spotted them at long range and asked for orders. Fremont’s reply was to gun them down. It is reported that their bodies were stripped of personal possessions and then left unburied at the conclusion of this - - the most heinous episode of the Revolt.¹³⁶

Of course the news was bitterly received by Sanchez. The nephews belonged to his brother-in-law, Francisco de Haro, who lived close-by at his *rancho* at Lake Merced. The 19-year-old twins were favorites of Sanchez, and were often in his company when he visited Yerba Buena.

With great relief, Francisco received word that on July 7, Commodore John D. Sloat had landed at Monterey and raised the American flag. The Bear Flag Revolt was

thankfully concluded. While proclaiming California a possession of the United States, Sloat made two important promises. First, that the former Mexican citizens would be treated the same as American citizens. Second, that all private property, including livestock, would be respected. Any confiscation of property for the war effort (now people also learned that the United States and Mexico had been at war since May 13), would be repaid at fair market value. The words and demeanor of Sloat had a calming effect on Sanchez and the *Californios*.

However, on July 23, Sloat gave in to an illness and relinquished his command of the Pacific squadron to Commodore Robert F. Stockton. The ambitious Stockton had a different attitude about the *Californios*. Desiring to distinguish himself in the field, he allowed enough provocations that the *Californios* were in revolt by the end of the year.

In the Bay Area, Stockton sought to ally himself with Carlos Weber. Weber was an ex-revolutionary from Homberg, Prussia, who was forced out of Germany. In 1836, he showed up in Texas where he became involved with the war for independence. In 1841, he came to California and settled at San José. Here he gained the reputation of quite an entrepreneur, establishing a flour mill, general store, salt works, bakery, candle-making operation, blacksmith shop and a “disreputable” saloon, known as the Weber House.¹³⁷

Stockton asked Weber to organize a force of 10 men to maintain order at San José. Weber used the authority to recruit 65 “Rangers,”¹³⁸ with the emulation of the Texas Rangers certainly in mind. Using his appointment as sergeant, but without orders to do so, Weber directed his militia to confiscate livestock from the various local *ranchos* to supposedly support Fremont’s activity in southern California. Apparently, less than 300 animals were ever delivered of the estimated 6,000 taken. His raids reached as far south as the San Juan Bautista neighborhood and as far north as the Sanchez family’s *Rancho Buri Buri*.

Francisco Sanchez’s patience with this state of affairs gave out when on December 11, his brother, Manuel, and another *Californio* were arrested at Yerba Buena as spies and held on the naval vessel, *Savannah*, apparently on trumped up charges. A few days later on the 16th, the American *alcalde* there, Washington Bartlett, rode down the Peninsula with a party of five armed men, on a reconnaissance of some type. They stopped at *Buri Buri* with the stated purpose of purchasing 30 head of cattle. Francisco Sanchez took the opportunity to capture the men, perhaps as a reprisal for the taking of his brother. Rallying to Francisco’s side, about 100 *Californios* joined him in the Peninsula hill country. They ended up camped just north of *Mission Santa Clara* while another revolt was occurring simultaneously in southern California.

At Yerba Buena an expeditionary force was organized to rescue Bartlett under the

command of Marine Captain Ward Marston. His force consisted of 35 Marines, 15 sailors, 36 of Weber's Rangers, and 15 volunteers from Yerba Buena. Marston, whose ancestors were present at the Boston Tea Party, had 32 years of military experience behind him, as he moved his column south. What his men faced was a long forced march at the end of December and early in January when the Bay Area was in the midst of its winter storm season. Peaks in the vicinity were snow-capped. The muddy roads made the march difficult.

The forces were about evenly matched, both with about 100 men. The *Californios* had the advantage of being mounted on horseback. The Americans were on foot, but were better armed. They also towed a cannon which frequently became stuck in the mud.

On New Year's Day, 1847, Marston's contingent became tired of the search and decided to head to San José and then find passage back to Yerba Buena. The day after, they stumbled upon the *Californios* at present-day El Camino Real and the Lawrence Expressway.

At a safe distance, out of range of the Americans, Sanchez and his men sort of circled Marston. When the Marines' cannon became stuck in the mud, yet again, the *Californios* took the opportunity to move forward. At the *Mission Santa Clara* there was considerable excitement from the sounds of battle.¹³⁹ However, although there was much noise, the casualties were remarkably low. In fact there were no casualties.¹⁴⁰ Later that day, calmer heads prevailed, as Sanchez rode into *Mission Santa Clara* to meet with Marston. A deal was hammered out whereby all the *Californios* would be granted amnesty in exchange for releasing their hostages and laying down their arms. Sanchez's brother was later freed, and the unnecessary depredations of Weber ended. On January 7, the *Californios* formally gave up their weapons to the Marines. Afterwards, members of both sides mingled in a friendly fashion. Obviously everyone was relieved that no one had been hurt. Thus concluded the Battle of Santa Clara.

AMERICAN PERIOD AND SANCHEZ'S RANCHO SAN PEDRO

The United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, ending the Mexican-American War. In a great territorial grab, the United States picked up most of the future states of California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah and parts of Colorado and Wyoming for just \$15 million, and promised that former Mexican citizens in the new American lands would be protected. Ironically, nine days before, on January 24, an employee of Mexican land grant recipient John Sutter - - James Marshall - - spotted something shiny, glimmering at him on a bank of the American River at Sutter's Mill at Colma. Communications were not good and it took months, but by the end of 1848, tens of thousands were on their way to find their fortune in gold. California had finally become the *El Dorado* that Cortés had dreamed about.

The transformation of California was monumental. Among the many changes brought to the San Francisco Peninsula was the dismantling of the *ranchos*, most of which disappeared after 15 years.

At first, the new American laws recognized the responsibility of the peace treaty and protected the property rights of the *rancheros*. The Peninsula, being so close to the hub of economic activity at San Francisco (renamed from Yerba Buena by Washington Bartlett in 1847), saw immediate ramifications that came with the “rush” of new people. A clash of values between the new and old people was inevitable.

In 1841, the United States Congress passed a law permitting individual settlers to claim up to 160 acres of frontier government land for purposes of establishing farms. Some of the new Americans applied these “squatters rights” to the great *ranchos* of California, and the *Californios* soon found themselves under siege by people living and working on their properties.

A terrific blow to the *rancheros* occurred in 1851 with the passage of the Gwin Act. This legislation placed the legal burden of proving the validity of the land grants on the *Californios*. The long, expensive process to achieve confirmation left many of the original *rancheros* bankrupt. Attorneys, money lenders and bankers gained substantial portions of the California landscape. *Rancho Buri Buri*, for example, came to be owned by 50 individuals by 1865, with just 5% of the land still in the possession of the Sanchez family.¹⁴¹

Somehow, in all this confusion, Francisco Sanchez managed to hang on to his *Rancho San Pedro*. Local legend has it that one of his first actions was to dig a five-foot ditch on Sweeney Ridge to keep the squatters on *Buri Buri* off *San Pedro*.¹⁴² Certainly his reputation as the fighting leader of the Battle of Santa Clara bolstered his image as one not to trifle with. Another reason could be that while it was close to San Francisco, the hilly, hard-to-get to nature of *Rancho San Pedro* may have discouraged the Yankees, who were grabbing up parcels on the flatter, easier-to-access Bayside.

Sanchez successfully piloted his confirmation of *Rancho San Pedro* through the courts. His 8926.46 acres were awarded to him on March 20, 1857.

In fact, Sanchez did well under the new regime. In August of 1849 he was elected an alternate delegate representing San Francisco at the California Constitutional Convention at Monterey. After California became a state in 1850, he was elected to San Francisco County’s first Board of Supervisors. Then, when San Mateo County was formed in 1856, he became the first *Californio* to run for local office. Although he lost the election, he was consistently listed as one of the County’s greatest property owners, right up until his death in 1862. He was 57 years-old when he fell from his horse

and died a few days later. His body rests at *Mission San Francisco de Asís*.¹⁴³

Teodora was left with the responsibility of the house, property and family. Four of her children were still under 12 years old. Eventually, financial problems set in, and she had to liquidate portions of the *rancho*. She still had the house until selling it in 1871.

In 1879, General Edward Kirkpatrick acquired the house. He enlarged it and added rooms. He installed formal gardens. In the late 1880s the house became "Hotel San Pedro" with rooms for sportsmen renting for \$10 a week. During Prohibition (1919-1932), the adobe served as a speakeasy - - and maybe more than that. Later, as artichoke growing took over the San Pedro Valley, at times farmers used it as a bunk house for workers. In 1946, the San Mateo County Historical Association drew attention to it as a relic of the past. The County bought it and five surrounding acres the next year. Today, it stands as a house museum and historic park.

Before his death, Francisco Sanchez witnessed enormous change on the San Francisco Peninsula. Roads in the new San Mateo County replaced Indian foot paths and Spanish oxcart trails.¹⁴⁴

The most dramatic metamorphoses occurred at the tip of the Peninsula. The Gold Rush had made San Francisco internationally known.

For the San Pedro Valley, it had its own school district by 1869.

For Sweeney Ridge, the biggest change brought by the Americans was the type of cattle that grazed on it. The Spanish longhorn had disappeared with the old hides-and-tallow industry of the Mexican Period. Now dairy cows roamed where *vaqueros* and grizzly bears had only a generation before.

THE DAIRY INDUSTRY AND SWEENEY RIDGE

The Spanish-Mexican longhorn cattle were fine for hides and tallow, but the meat of the animal was tough and the breed made poor dairy cows. With the great influx of people coming to California during and following the Gold Rush of 1849, a market instantly developed for better beef and dairy products - - especially milk, cheese and butter. Profit-motivated Americans, such as the Johnston brothers of Half Moon Bay,¹⁴⁵ early on decided to take advantage of potential demand and drove herds of dairy cattle from eastern locations to California.

The dairymen realized success in California, not just because of the new market, but because of the favorable environmental conditions here. Henry DeGroot, commenting for the *Overland Monthly* in 1870, wrote this about the Peninsula:

This, formerly the great cattle-raising (country), is now the favorite dairying district of the State – the moisture brought in upon the ocean air tending to the constant recuperation of the pasturage: while the comparatively cool summer climate facilitates the making of butter and cheese. . . . Apart from its genial and equable climate this is one of the most fertile, picturesque, and beautiful regions of California. . . . With a climate so mild, and pastures ever renewing themselves, cattle thrive without fodder or shelter, living wholly in the open fields, and subsisting on the native herbage throughout the winter.¹⁴⁶

Indeed as early as 1853, the Johnston brothers and Graham Knowles established California's first commercial dairies in what would be called San Mateo County. Knowles' ranch was on the north Peninsula, in today's Daly City. His operation included a home delivery service into San Francisco. By 1860, there were many small dairies down the Peninsula. Those close to the City sold milk to consumers; those farther away (because of the lack of refrigeration) made butter and cheese. These dairies produced more than 200,000 pounds of butter and 23,000 pounds of cheese in that year.¹⁴⁷

At the same time that dairies were changing the Peninsula's landscape, the eucalyptus tree (introduced to the Bay Area in 1856)¹⁴⁸ was also altering the appearance of such places as Sweeney Ridge's east and west hillsides.

Some things still had not changed. As late as 1859, a rancher in the San Pedro Valley lost 15 cattle in one week to grizzly bear attacks. The rancher baited a trap and caught an 800 pound monster.¹⁴⁹ Newspaper reports from Half Moon Bay, in 1861, spoke of grizzly bear depredations on ranches there as well. The critters were finally poisoned out of the San Mateo County hill country in the 1870s.

Along with dairy ranching, the Peninsula also saw the proliferation of small farms. During the late 1860s, settlers purchased or leased Sanchez properties in the San Pedro Valley. Irish and American farmers planted potatoes and cabbage. Later Italian immigrants brought irrigation to the Valley and grew artichokes and other truck garden crops. In 1909 they introduced Brussel sprouts and became the first to commercially produce them for market in San Francisco.¹⁵⁰ Between 1907 and 1920, growers in the Valley were boosted in their work by the existence of the Ocean Shore Railroad which chugged by up to the City with their crops.¹⁵¹

Whether farmer or dairy rancher, probably the most famous of the new agriculturists on the Peninsula was John Donald Daly. He acquired 1,000 acres of property in 1865 to establish his San Mateo Dairy just south of the county line with San Francisco. His 235 cows produced about 300 gallons a day for San Francisco consumers. After the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, many refugees from the City came to live on the dairy

lands. The place would eventually be named for this dairyman pioneer - - Daly City.¹⁵²

Speaking of place names, a family in San Francisco engaged for many years in the livestock business was probably the source for the naming of Sweeney Ridge. Daniel McSweeney and his family were involved in the cattle business in the City as early as 1854. Daniel was born in Ireland in 1831. He and his brother James decided to come to America in 1850, a year of famine in Ireland. Their brother Edward also came to the United States, but a little later. Daniel and James first arrived at Philadelphia, but Daniel, hearing about the Gold Rush, decided to go to California. He took a ship to Panama, crossed the Isthmus and then found passage to San Francisco. He tried gold mining for a couple of years until he broke his leg in an accident. Recovering in the City, he decided in 1854 to engage himself in the growing cattle business centered in San Francisco. He dropped the "Mc" from his name and opened stockyards at Sutter and Stockton Streets. His company, D. Sweeney and Company, did well, and he invested in real estate with his profits. In 1876, he took a trip back to Ireland. The next year, he decided to retire there, but because of the political turmoil in Ireland he found himself deeply involved with land reform issues, encouraging the peasants to stand-up to British landlords. In 1881, he was arrested and thrown in prison, and stayed in jail for a year and a half. After being freed, he was immediately on his way back to California, now adding back "Mc" to the name McSweeney. He died in San Francisco in 1893 at the age of 62.¹⁵³

Daniel included his brothers in the Company, which evidently engaged in livestock sales of all types - - horses, dairy cattle, beef cattle - -¹⁵⁴ and also butchered meat for sale.¹⁵⁵ The family had land holdings down the Peninsula in a variety of locations and at different times. Edward Sweeney did most of buying and selling of this property. Purchased were parcels near Pilarcitos Lake, in today's Daly City, and also land within the old *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, *Rancho de las Pulgas* and *Rancho San Pedro*, including portions of Sweeney Ridge.¹⁵⁶

Edward bought Sweeney Ridge parcels in September of 1874 from E.W. Burr and J.M. Shotwell, and then sold them less than a year later to Spring Valley Water Company (June, 1875). Others in the area were also selling out to the Water Company, as it was buying up property in the area to protect its watershed. Because of their various holdings, the Sweeney family could have been raising cattle in the area for some time. The Ridge was sometimes known as Irish Ridge too. For whatever reason, by 1892, the United States Geologic Survey had given the Ridge its name as we know it today.¹⁵⁷

Certainly the most successful name associated with the dairy industry in San Mateo County (and whose cows grazed on Sweeney Ridge) was Richard George Sneath. Born in Maryland in 1826, he was the oldest of three brothers. The family moved to Ohio, manufacturing agricultural tools. With his father's death in 1842, he ran the

family's company until 1850, then came to California via the Isthmus of Panama. He decided to engage in business in Sacramento, becoming involved in the building trades. He opened a hay lot there and also entered into the livestock business. He then bought a quartz mine in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and operated one of the first stamp mills in the state. This business was not successful, so he returned to Sacramento to establish a grocery store. By 1852, he had moved to San Francisco, travelling back and forth to Sacramento as business demanded.¹⁵⁸ With the excitement involving San Francisco's famed Vigilance Committee of 1856, he became involved in City politics,¹⁵⁹ successfully running for Supervisor in 1858 on the People's Party ticket, which was supportive of the work of the Vigilantes. In 1862 he opened a wholesale house on Front Street in San Francisco and a branch followed that one up in Oregon. In 1869 he began purchasing property in San Mateo County. He maintained a variety of entrepreneurial interests in San Francisco (in banking mostly) but is best remembered for his dairy business down the Peninsula, where his cows grazed on lands known today as San Bruno, Pacifica, Sweeney Ridge and holdings of the San Francisco Water Department.

By 1875, Sneath had what many felt was a model operation in place. He called it Jersey Farm and claimed it to be the largest Jersey (Jersey is a breed of bovine) dairy in the world with 1,000 head. More than 100 workers produced, from these cows, on average 1,100 gallons of milk everyday for consumption in San Francisco. Six-mule teams pulled large wagons up to the City. These wagons could carry 200 milk cans each. Twice a day the teams lumbered up the Peninsula to the Dairy's offices at 835 Howard Street. From there the company delivered milk to San Francisco customers.¹⁶⁰

By 1882, famed California author John S. Hittell could write this about the growing business:

The most notable milk rancho of California is the Jersey Farm Dairy, of R.G. Sneath, at San Bruno, 14 miles south of San Francisco. It has an area of 2,700 acres, extending across the peninsula from the ocean to the bay. Its herd of neat cattle numbers about 1,000, and from 500 to 600 cows are milked daily. It has about 20 bulls and 50 cows of pure Jersey blood, and about 150 half-breed Jerseys, and 50 three-quarter bred. None but pure Jersey bulls are used on the place. The milk product of 1880 and 1881, amounted to 400,000 gallons for each year, of which about 380,000 gallons were sold yearly in San Francisco, and the remainder used in rearing calves. This, so far as we know, is the largest fresh milk dairy on the globe.¹⁶¹

In an *Overland Monthly* magazine article in 1888, Sneath, himself, described a portion of the Dairy's work force:

*...the milkers receive twenty-five to thirty dollars per month and... are generally Swiss. They commence milking at eight A.M. and eight P.M., and take two and one-half hours to milk thirty cows each. They are mostly strong, healthy young men, and generally do not speak English. They are much more reliable than men of other countries, and do not drink and squander their time or money.*¹⁶²

Jersey Farm stretched four miles, from north to south, and three miles, from El Camino into the coastal hills. Within the main building complex, at what was called “Ranch One,” stood Sneath’s house, which was destroyed by fire about 1900. There was also a blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, flour mill, slaughter house, vegetable gardens and water ponds. This Ranch One was the Jersey Farm’s center of activity. The blacksmith shop was referred to as the “hospital” since this was where all the battered milk cans were repaired. The mill ground feed for the cattle; it was powered by the wind and sometimes by a steam engine. The largest barn at Ranch One was 248’ x 48’ and three stories high. Two hundred and forty-eight cows enjoyed individual stalls on its first floor. The upper floors stored hay. At the center of the building’s first floor, Sneath developed a unique cooling system for the milk as it passed through several tin tanks. These containers were chilled by spring water running alongside. Next door to the barn existed a building for cleaning the milk cans. At its center, Sneath installed an iron tank with a furnace under it. The tank was sectioned in thirds and contained boiling water in one part, warm water in the second and soapy water in the third. The cans and can tops were scrubbed out with a unique brushing device.¹⁶³ Ranch One was west of El Camino and east of Sneath Lane in the Golden Gate National Cemetery of today.

Ranch Two was located on Skyline Boulevard and included today’s San Francisco County Jail. Ranch No. 3 was also known as the Sweeney Ridge Ranch. It was at the highest elevation of the Sneath property (about 1300 feet) and was used for spring pasturage.

By 1894, a road wound its way to the Ridge, up from Ranch One. Buildings on the Ridge serviced Ranch Three. Their concrete footings can still be seen on National Park property about a football field northeast of the Portola gate on the south end of the Sweeney Ridge trail.¹⁶⁴

By the turn of the century, Sneath was leasing some of his property to farmers who grew artichokes and other crops. In 1906, Sneath combined with John Daly and the D.O. Mills family to create a larger firm, called the Dairy Delivery Service. In 1929, Borden Dairy absorbed this partnership.¹⁶⁵

During the 1930s, the Sneath family began divesting itself of its San Mateo County properties. In 1932, Richard’s son, Lee J. Sneath, sold about 250 acres of pasture land to San Francisco City and County for the purposes of building a jail. The six-story

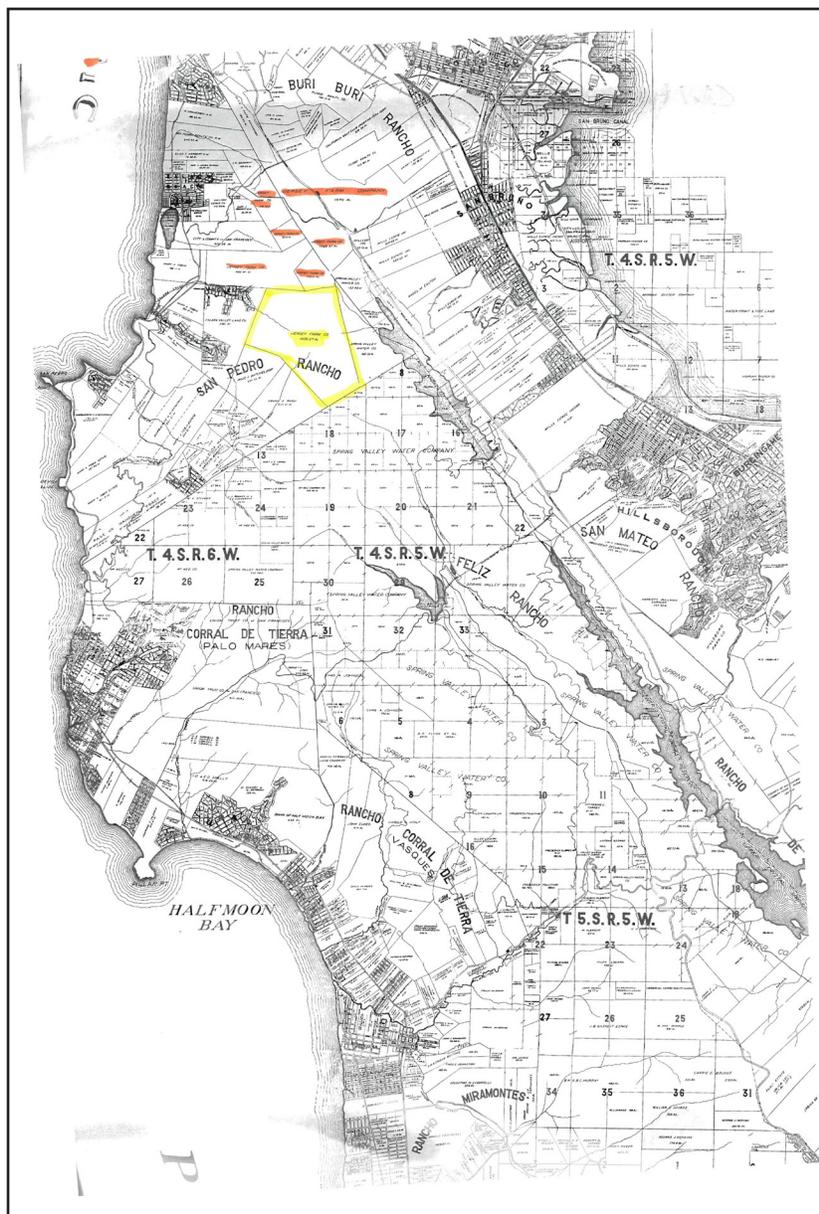


Fig. 2.2: The Jersey Farm Company's lands in 1927. Outlined in yellow is Ranch No. 3.

structure was constructed in 1935 to hold 554 prisoners. Today this original building still stands next to San Francisco's new jail. It is visible from the northern portion of Sweeney Ridge. Also visible from the Ridge is another 162 acres that the Sneaths sold for \$180,000 to the United States government in 1938, for the purpose of creating the Golden Gate National Cemetery.

The Works Progress Administration directed the Cemetery's construction. The superintendent, foreman and office employees were all veterans of World War I. The first coffin was laid to rest at the cemetery on July 25, 1940. Neighboring the cemetery that year was an outfit called Avensino-Mortonsen, that leased Sneath land for raising commercial flowers.

In that same year, San Mateo County had reached its peak in the realm of dairy production, with some 13,575 milk cows still producing food products within its borders. But the Sneath real estate holdings continued to diminish, giving way

to suburban real estate speculation. Up and down the Peninsula's east side, housing tracks replaced farmlands, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the Sneath's held their mountain pasture on Sweeney Ridge until the early 1970s.¹⁶⁶

THE WATERSHED (CONTEXTUAL)

When a visitor hikes to Sweeney Ridge and turns east to view the Peninsula's Bayside from the discovery site, two bodies of water are immediately visible, the San Francisco Bay, of course, and San Andreas Lake. This lake stands where Portolá made his right turn in 1769, when he proceeded down the valley. The San Andreas Lake is a man-made feature of the landscape. A dam was constructed to create it in 1868, in order to

help solve a critical water problem for the City of San Francisco.

The Spanish had recognized the water problem, which in part was a major reason for their establishing the mission outpost in the San Pedro Valley. By the time of the American take-over of California in 1846, brackish water sources (probably deemed undrinkable by today's standards) were just adequate for the 500, or so, people living at Yerba Buena. However, with the discovery of gold, San Francisco rapidly became the most important city in the West, with a population of 78,000 by 1860. Lack of water was universally recognized as the new city's greatest resource problem. Between 1850 and 1852 alone, San Francisco was destroyed by fire six times, resulting in staggering financial loss due to the absence of water to fight fires.

San Franciscans even found drinking water difficult to obtain. During certain shortages, the precious liquid had to be barged in from Marin County. Water peddlers then distributed water on regular routes. Some strapped barrels to the backs of donkeys and sold water by the bucket. As much as a gold dollar was charged for a bucket during particularly dry times.

Recognizing the possibilities for profit, several entrepreneurs formed the Mountain Lake Water Company in 1851 to bring water to town from the Presidio. A competing company, the Bensley Company, went into business in 1856, and under the direction of its engineer, Alexi Waldemer Von Schmidt, it dammed the mouth of the Presidio's Lobos Creek to create a 2 million gallon a day supply.

However, these efforts were not enough. In 1858, yet another firm, the Spring Valley Water Company was formed. At first its chief supply consisted of a spring near Portsmouth Square.

While Bensley was clearly the most important water provider for San Francisco, in 1860 it lost its engineer to the smaller Spring Valley Water Company. It seems Von Schmidt had a falling-out with the Bensley Company and left to become chief engineer and the largest investor of Spring Valley.

Not long afterwards it was Von Schmidt who got the idea of looking South to the newly created County of San Mateo for more abundant supplies.¹⁶⁷

His first pick for building a reservoir was Pilarcitos Creek, due south of Sweeney Ridge, and not visible from it nor any of today's Peninsula highways. He made this choice because of the good rainfall and the elevation (benchmark 724 feet, 697 at the Spillway)¹⁶⁸ of the place, allowing for rapid flow of water by gravity feed to the City. By August of 1862, a preliminary system of earthen dam, tunnel and flume allowed water to flow from San Mateo County to San Francisco.

In 1864, Von Schmidt left Spring Valley, and Calvin Brown became chief engineer. That same year, Brown hired Herman Schussler as his assistant at \$50 a month. Schussler became the principal architect for the Company for a generation. The German-born, 21-year-old immigrant from Zurich spoke little English, arriving in town on horseback with just a carpet bag. However, his engineering education was superb, and he began his work with improvement projects for Pilarcitos.

In the meantime, Spring Valley's major competition was encountering difficulties. The Bensley Company suffered as soil was eroding into its Lobos Creek reservoir. Customers complained about muddy water. Not long afterwards, Bensley was caught tapping into a Spring Valley main. Consequently, it was forced out of business, leaving Spring Valley as San Francisco's sole provider of fresh water until it was bought out by the City in 1930.

In May of 1866, Schussler replaced Brown as chief engineer. While completing his Pilarcitos project in 1867, he was already planning for a much larger project, to create a reservoir in the San Andreas Valley.

Farm lands were bought up, and a system of pressure piping and tunnels was engineered to carry water 3,400 feet from Pilarcitos Creek to the San Andreas Valley. Schussler's reputation was enhanced in a major way as few projects like this had been attempted before.

Construction of the San Andreas dam commenced in April of 1868. According to records kept by the Company's superintendent, William H. Lawrence, the work crews consisted of many Chinese laborers.¹⁶⁹ The earthen dam took two years to construct. It stood 95 feet high and was 710 feet long. It had the ability to store 6 billion gallons of water for San Francisco consumption, six times the capacity of the Pilarcitos reservoir.¹⁷⁰

Schussler's work was hardly done. In 1877, Upper Crystal Springs Lake was formed by building an earthen dam at today's Highway 92, the road to Half Moon Bay. By this time the business methods of the Spring Valley Water Company, a private monopoly, came under criticism. In order to avoid problems that had hurt other water providers, such as the Bensley Company, Schussler called for buying up not just enough land to establish the reservoirs, but many surrounding acres as well. To this end, the Company enlisted the aid of the courts to condemn farmlands and even the resort community of Crystal Springs and the town of Searsville. These properties, at times, were bought up at 10% of their actual value, igniting protest.

Schussler's greatest engineering achievement, and the most heralded project of the Spring Valley Company, was the building of Crystal Springs dam between 1887 and

1890, to create lower Crystal Springs Lake, visible from Highway 280 at the Doran Bridge. This 150-foot high interlocking concrete block dam was the largest of its kind when completed, and it remains the largest of its kind to date. Its successful construction can be measured by the earthquakes it has endured (without damage in both 1906 and 1989).

By 1900, the Spring Valley Water Company owned 20,000 acres of Peninsula watershed. As a private monopoly it continued to be the focus of community criticism. That year, the citizens of San Francisco adopted a new city charter which allowed for them to own their own water supply. A copious source of water was located at Hetch Hetchy within Yosemite National Park. The City built a new system to deliver this mountain water to the reservoirs in San Mateo County. The Hetch Hetchy project was completed in 1934.¹⁷¹ Today San Francisco Water Department lands border Sweeney Ridge to the east and south.¹⁷²

DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS AT SWEENEY RIDGE

When Sweeney Ridge visitors stroll north from the discovery site markers, they come across buildings formerly occupied by the United States military from the 1940s through to the 1970s.

Before December 7, 1941, few Californians believed that the state might be subject to foreign attack. The bombing of Pearl Harbor changed everything. Within San Mateo County the reaction was practically instantaneous. On December 8, armed military sentries appeared on Crystal Springs Dam, the Western Pipe & Steel shipbuilding plant and the San Francisco Airport. Soon after, the United States Coast Guard instituted a Beach Patrol on the Coastsides, with stations in the old McCloskey home (“the Castle”) in Pacifica and in Half Moon Bay (see the *Rancho Corral de Tierra* and Milagra Ridge sections of this study for more about World War II defense activities on the San Mateo County Coast).

COAST GUARD RADIO STATION NORTH OF THE NOTCH

Those responsible for the nation’s security at the federal level had a different take on the possibility of war and what it might mean for California. Thus military preparations on Sweeney Ridge began more than a year before the Pearl Harbor disaster. On October 11, 1940, the United States Coast Guard was authorized to initiate negotiations with the City and County of San Francisco to acquire Sweeney Ridge property directly west of San Francisco County Jail for the purpose of creating a radio station. At the same time the Coast Guard gained authority to inquire of the Jersey Farm Company its willingness to sell a right-of-way for purposes of constructing a road.¹⁷³ The Sweeney Ridge installation was to replace the San Francisco radio station at Fort Funston.

It had been commissioned on February 1, 1937. This station's building was a former life boat house on the beach about a mile south of the zoo at Golden Gate Park.¹⁷⁴

On July 29, 1941, the Jersey Farm Company formally offered the sale of the road right-of-way for \$1,000, and on August 6, 1941, the U.S. Attorney General's Office agreed with the terms of the deal.¹⁷⁵ The Attorney General then consented to the expenditure of \$8,750 for purchasing the San Francisco Jail property on November 27, 1941.¹⁷⁶

The Coast Guard characterized its new land holding as "rough, elevated land, varying from approximately 650 ft. to 950 ft. in elevation."¹⁷⁷ On March 31, 1944, exclusive jurisdiction over the property was accepted by the Secretary of the Navy as the Coast Guard had become part of the Navy's efforts during the War. Today most of this 86 acres is the portion of the GGNRA that lies south of Skyline College and north of the "notch" (the cut that separates the old Coast Guard parcel from the former Nike radar site).

Surveys and plans for the radio station were completed about February, 1942. A bid from contractor J.H. Pomoroy and Co. was accepted February 26. A fixed fee for the contract was signed on March 18, and the construction was completed on June 23, 1943. Costs broke down as follows:¹⁷⁸

Site and rights of way from City and County of San Francisco, Calif.	\$8,750.00
For road right of way from Jersey Farm Co.	1,000.00
Preliminary surveys	1,600.00
Contract Teg-34320 with J.H. Pomoroy & Co., Inc. for construction	240,000.00
Approximate cost radio receiving, transmitting and control equipment	58,126.00
Miscellaneous minor improvements	2,000.00
Total	\$311,476.00

A Coast Guard map from April, 1943, of what was first called the San Francisco Radio Station, showed the topographical characteristics of the property and the improvements (see accompanied map). The Coast Guard's roads hooked around the parcel, beginning at a parking lot to the east which is probably the San Francisco Jail's parking lot of today. The "Jersey Farm Road" led to the barracks and equipment building that, until recently, stood on Skyline College, and are now covered by its new maintenance buildings. The present trail leading west and then south on the GGNRA is the continuation of the Coast Guard road to the ridge, then called "Radio Station Road." As it turns south, the map depicts the proposed site of a water tank for the City of San Bruno that was eventually completed. The first edifice encountered on the ridge line

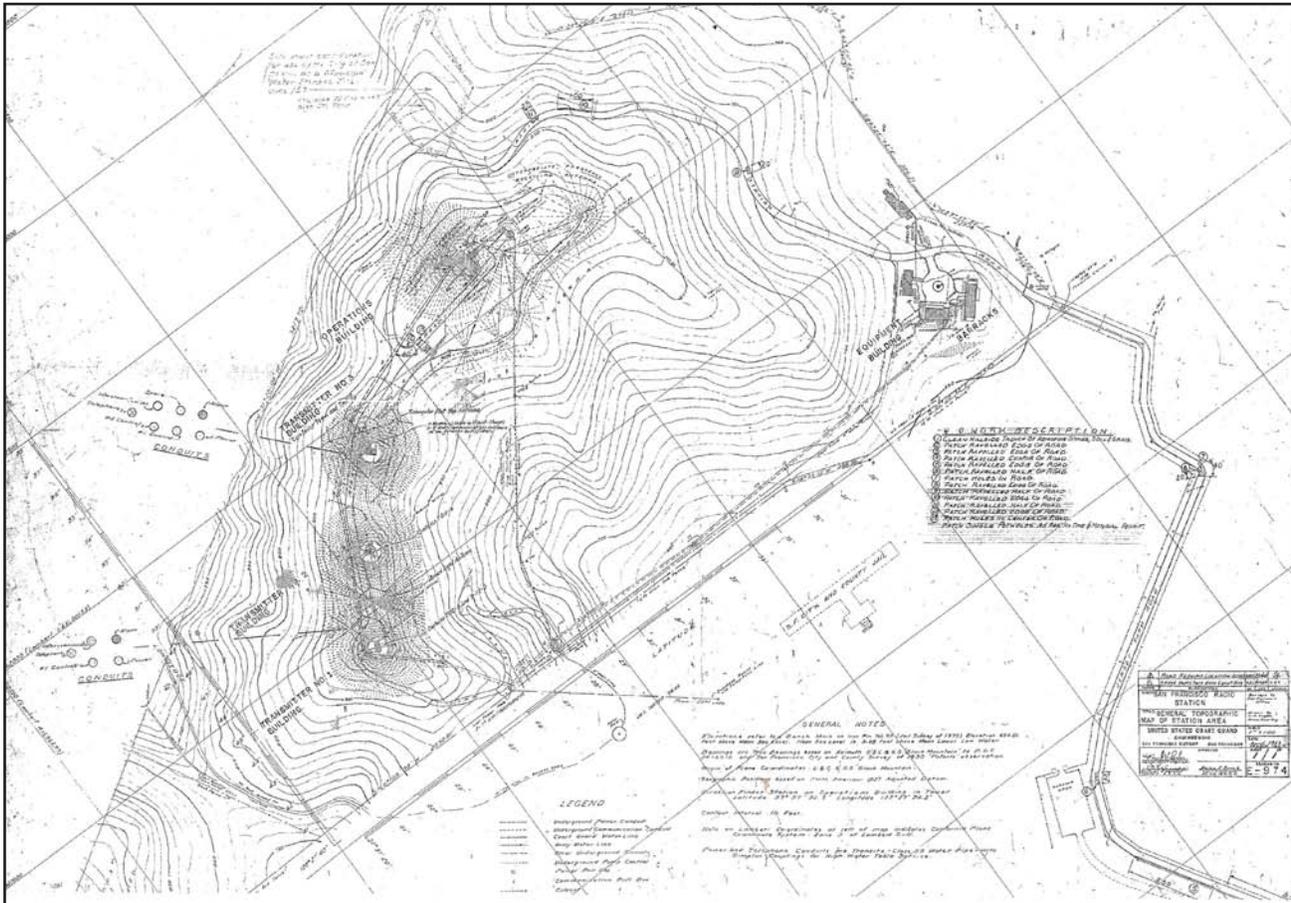


Fig. 2.3: Coast Guard map from April 1943, showing topography of Sweeney Ridge and improvements. United States Coast Guard.

was the Operations Building, now gone; however the building pad is still visible, and some debris can be detected. Next to be viewed was Transmitter Building Number 3, then Transmitter Building No. 2. Both of these structures are also gone, but building pads and debris are visible. The last in line, Transmitter Building No. 1, still stands. Why it was the only survivor will be explained below. Other improvements that were part of the Coast Guard station include antennas, a water tank, a pump house and utility poles.

Fig. 2.4: Aerial photograph of Sweeney Ridge. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



Below are two photographs. One, an aerial, shows the barracks and equipment building on the far left, the road to the Operations building, which is just right of center, and the

Fig. 2.5: The operations building. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



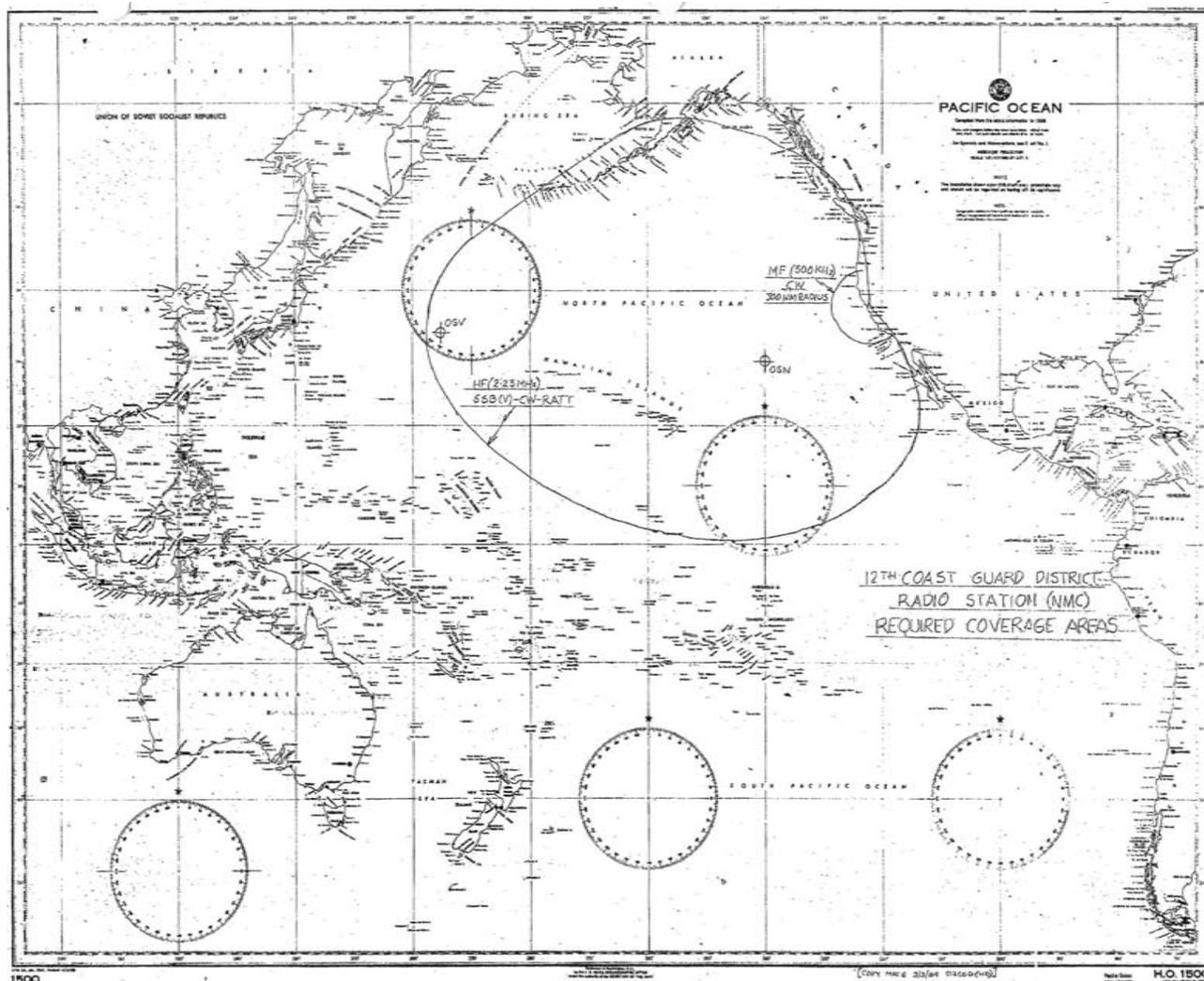


Fig. 2.6: Map showing the range of the radio station at Sweeney Ridge. United States Coast Guard.

three transmitter buildings on the far right. At the top, center, is San Francisco County Jail, with the road to the parking lot, top left. The second photo is the Operations Building. The map following the photos shows the radio range of the station. It could receive messages as far north as Oregon and far south as Los Angeles, and at least 300 miles out to sea.

See Appendix VIII for the Coast Guard's "Telephone Line Record" from July 14, 1955. Now under the Coast Guard's District 12, this report reveals how the buildings of the station were linked with telephones. It also shows the layouts for the barracks and garage.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the Coast Guard was preparing to declare its "U.S. Coast Guard Radio Station San Bruno, Calif." surplus. In an August 30, 1972 "survey"¹⁷⁹ of properties, the structures of the station were listed along with their size, construction type and monetary value. (See Appendix IX for this document). The report reveals that the completion of the Point Bollinas/Point Reyes Radio Station, slated for

early 1973, meant that the Coast Guard would have no further purpose for this installation and that “the property can be put to better use by another agency.” The Coast Guard recommended the station be turned over to the General Services Administration “for disposal.”

In this account all structural improvements are listed, described, dated and valued in dollar amounts. The extent of the station can in part be determined by the number of antenna masts (“wood poles with guy wire”). There were 20, 90 footers, one at 106 feet and two at 116 feet. For the “Communication Antenna System,” there were an additional six wooden poles at 90 feet and 5 aluminum antennas. All antennas were recommended for removal along with other equipment and materials. The barracks and garage were deemed “suitable for storage and maintenance purposes only.” All other buildings, except the Operations Building, were judged usable only for their original missions.

The Operations Building was seen as convertible for a variety of purposes. This was still a substantial structure valued at \$96,000. From its elevated first level, it had commanding views: of the ocean to the west, the Bay, watershed and jail to the east, coastal mountains to the south and San Francisco to the north.¹⁸⁰

Of course all that remains standing of the buildings is a portion of Transmitter Building #1. While buildings #1 and #2 were only 300 square feet, #3 was 540. The values of #1 and #2 were estimated to be \$7,300 each. #3 was much more, \$25,224. In a Coast Guard “Report of Excess Real Property,”¹⁸¹ completed on November 10, 1972, the value of the station’s land was placed at \$9,750. The buildings, utilities and facilities at \$300,511 (see Appendix X).

The August Survey recognized that revocable permits existed with the City of San Bruno for its water tank and a transmission line, and that since 1964, the San Mateo County Community College District had a permit for use of the barracks and garage as storage facilities for Skyline College. This included 6.7 acres of land. It acknowledged that a letter from the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department indicated interest in reacquiring the station’s real estate.¹⁸² The survey recommended “. . . that the property adjacent to the Barracks & Garage area be donated to the San Mateo [County] Junior [Community] College District. That the City of San Bruno [be] allowed to retain the land on which their water storage reservoir is situated, and that the remaining property be donated to the City and County of San Francisco.” While the College District and San Bruno received their properties, San Francisco’s request was not approved.

Since 1943, the function of U.S. Coast Guard Radio Station San Bruno was to receive and send messages all over the Pacific. Far beyond its accepted range, the radio crews received distress calls from ships at sea sometimes 2,000 miles away. A Christmas card,

from 1962, indicates that personnel at the Station consisted of a commanding officer, an executive officer, three radiomen “in charge,” and 28 operators and technicians.¹⁸³

By February of 1973, the Coast Guard’s new computerized base at Point Reyes was ready to replace the Radio Station on Sweeney Ridge. The last message was sent out by Warrant Officer John W. Hammack:

*Final transmission: 1. After more than 32 years of faithful continuous 24 a day service this radsta has been relieved of responsibilities as of this date by CGCom-msta SFran. 2 CGRADSTA SFran at San Bruno Ca. Signing Off. CWO4 J.W. Hammack commanding officer.*¹⁸⁴

The next year the Army shut down its installations on Sweeney and Milagra ridges as well.

As the Coast Guard began removing its properties from Sweeney Ridge, it still had responsibility for its maintenance and protection. Commander R. T. Nelson in a memorandum, as Operations Division Chief, indicated that it appeared that it would be at least April, 1973, before the General Service Administration could turn the property over to another entity. In the interim, he warned that vandalism might occur as soon as the old station was unattended. He also mentioned that: “. . .there are groups of people such as the Indians that might try to occupy and lay claim to it if vacated.”¹⁸⁵ Perhaps a repeat of the takeover of Alcatraz Island (1969-1971) was on the minds of federal officials.

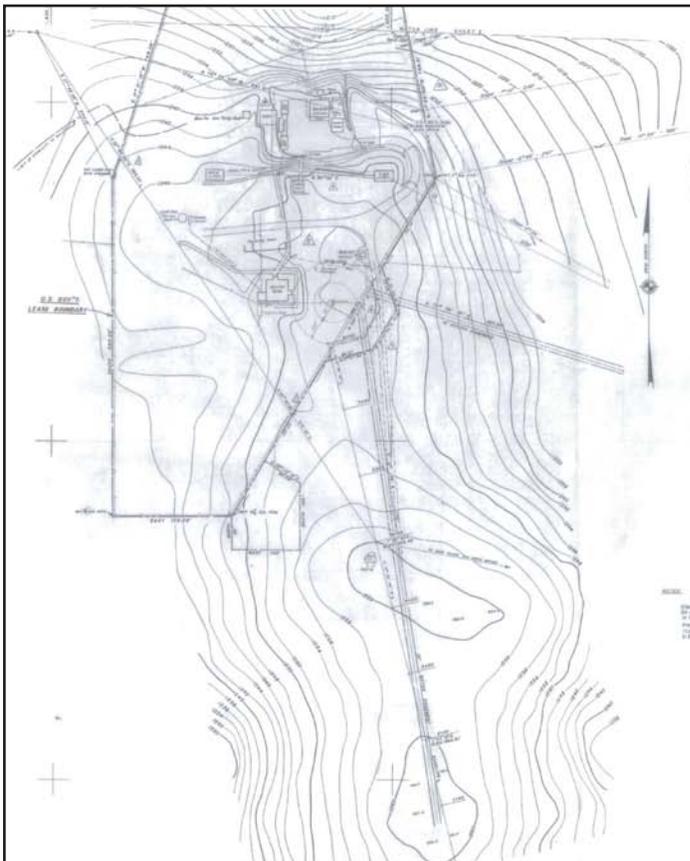
On August 28, 1973, the United States government granted a permit to the San Mateo County Community College District for the old barracks and garage plus some surrounding land. Then in April of 1974, the land south and west of the College property was given over to San Mateo County for parks and recreational purposes.¹⁸⁶ This parcel included acreage west of San Francisco County Jail, the road to the ridge, the Operations Building and Transmitter Buildings #2 and #3.¹⁸⁷ The land starting at Transmitter Building #1 and south to include most of the “notch” up to the Nike radar site was reserved for Cal-trans for a project that would have extended Highway 380 (which never materialized).¹⁸⁸

San Mateo County’s acquisition of the old Coast Guard Station was made possible by President Richard M. Nixon’s Land and Water Conservation Fund. In November of 1977, the County’s Architectural and Engineering Division created a demolition plan for the site (see next page) which included destruction of the Operations Building and Transmitter Buildings #3 and #2. Transmitter Building #1 was spared because it was within the Cal-trans property. The plan included drawings of the buildings and a map indicating where activities took place (see drawings and map on the next page). As the County prepared for the work, a report from March 13, 1978 stated that the intention



Fig. 2.9: Building #1, the lone remaining structure at the old Coast Guard Station. Lee Davis photograph, San Francisco State University.

Fig. 2.10: Original topographic study of the Nike radar site. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



of this work was to “. . .keep Sweeney Ridge in its Natural Preserved state.” Instructions to the contractor and the plan itself is present in this report as Appendix XI.

As the County prepared to turn the site over to the GGNRA, historian L. Guidry created the 1993 map displayed on the next page to show the sites of the various buildings and improvements torn down in the County’s work. Please note that Guidry’s “Building #3” and “Building #1” are reversed. Building #1 is the structure that survived.

In 1994, the County turned over the former radio station property to the National Park Service and, at that same time, granted its southern Sweeney Ridge property and Milagra Ridge to it. See the portions of this report on the Nike radar site on Sweeney Ridge, the preservation of Sweeney Ridge and Nike missile site on Milagra Ridge for more on this transference.

NIKE RADAR SOUTH OF THE NOTCH

On the south side of the “notch” and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of the present discovery site markers, the Army began installation of a guided missile Nike radar site in 1953.

The below map refers to an original topographic study completed on October 8 of that year and shows the original improvements. The remnants of this site are now on GGNRA Sweeney Ridge lands. This property, listed by the San Mateo County Assessor as parcel number 018-170-020, was leased by the Army which never purchased by it.¹⁸⁹

In the Milagra Ridge portion of this study, the relationship between it and Sweeney Ridge is explained in more detail. Basically, both were together known as battery SF 51. Milagra was SF 51-L - - L for Launch, and Sweeney was known as SF 51-C - - C for Control. Control meant radars to spot an enemy plus radars to guide the missiles launched from Milagra to the target. The Milagra section of this study explains the Cold War strategies involved with the Nikes, the evolution of the missiles themselves (from Ajax to Hercules missiles)

and how SF 51 was the best of its kind at the end of the Nike era (1953-1974).

David Bridgman and his father, Richard H. Bridgman, Jr. were stationed at Sweeney when it was manned as a radar site by the National Guard. David has volunteered considerable time to this study in order that its writers understand how the missile system functioned, at least in a general way. By 1963, after the replacement of the original Ajax missiles by the Hercules (which had nuclear capability), the radars on Sweeney worked in the following manner:

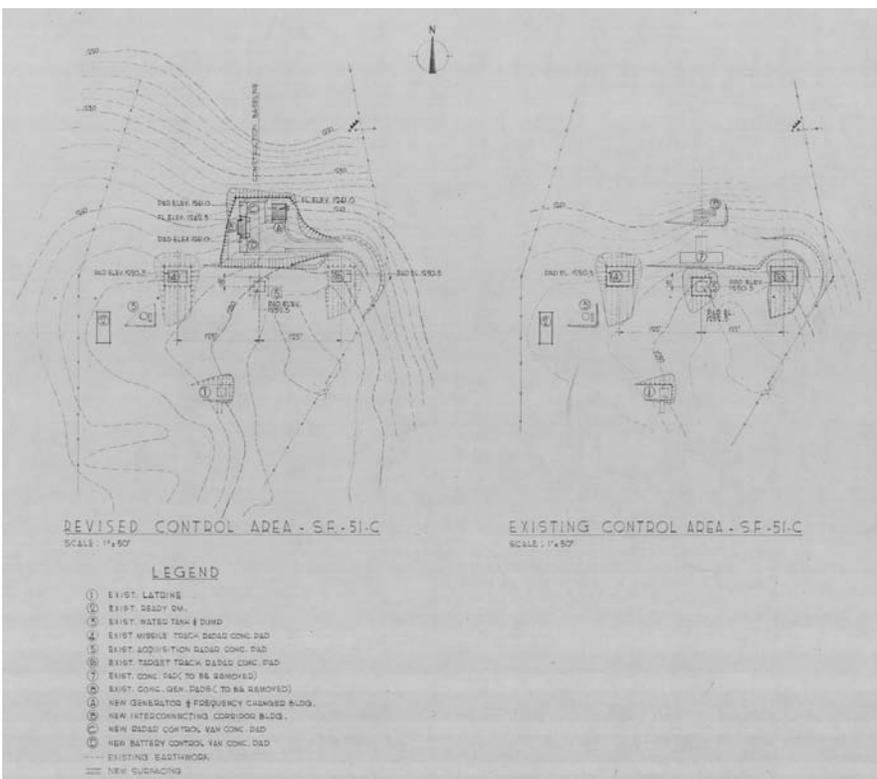
High Power Target Acquisition Radar - - worked 24 hours a day scanning 200 miles out for possible enemy attack.

Low Power Target Acquisition Radar - - with more resolution could then pick up a single target, or an air fleet, 140 miles out and more precisely follow it.

Target Tracking Radar and Target Ranging Radar - - locked in the path of the enemy. The “tracking” unit showed the angle to which the target(s) was (were) flying; the “ranging” indicated how far away the enemy was.

Two Computer Vans RC and BC - - assimilated all this information to tell the missile set to be launched about the flight of the target(s). RC meant radar controlled, which tracked the enemy with scopes. BC meant battery control, whose grids guided the missile to the enemy.

Fig. 2.11:
Map showing improvements made to the site in 1956. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



Missile Tracking Radar - - guided the launched missile to the intercept point. It then triggered a conventional or nuclear explosion which would hit above the target(s), knocking it (them) out of the sky.

A variety of improvements were made to SF 51-C for better performance of the Ajax and eventual deployment of the Hercules. The next map shows improvements made in 1956.

In place already were systems for the Target Tracking and

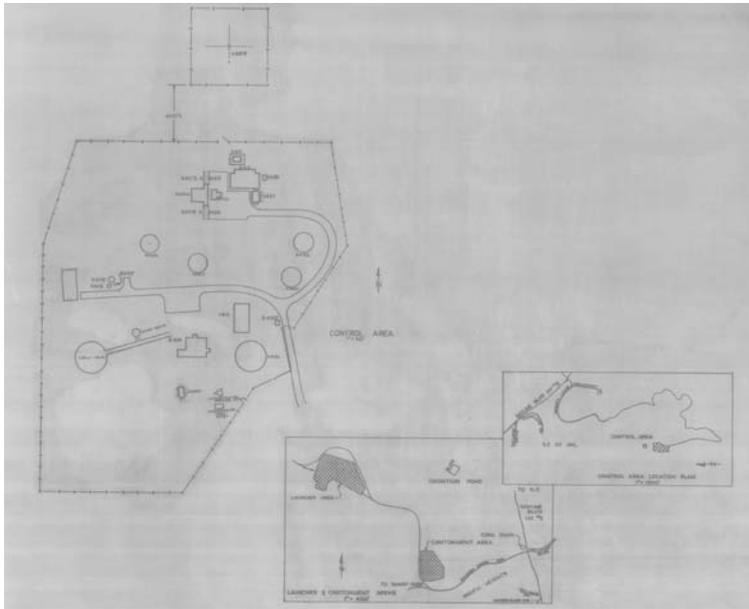
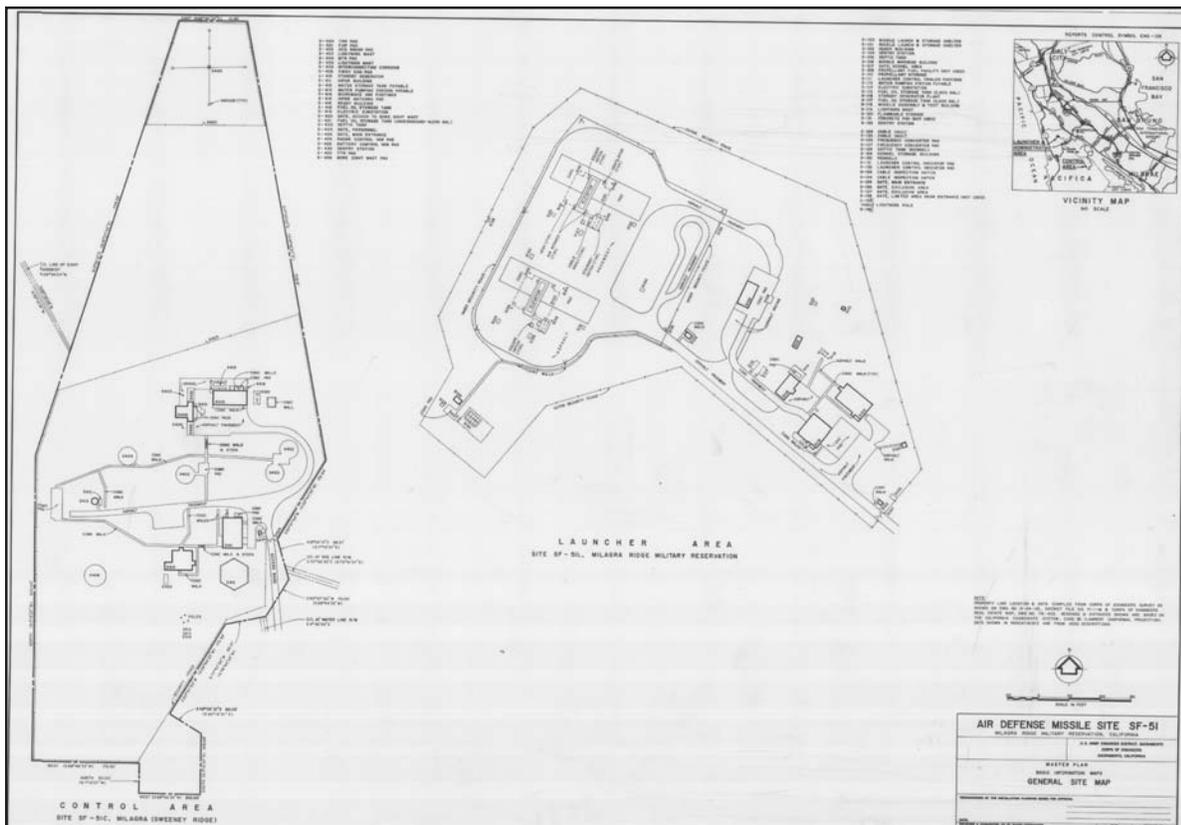


Fig. 2.12: 1967 map showing final layout of the site. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.

Low Power Acquisition radars. Just added on the north side were the generator building and “corridor building” (both still standing) plus new pads for the computer van. After this construction the next map, July 18, 1967, shows the final improvements. Most notably, to the south a High Power Acquisition radar has been installed, along with a Target Ranging radar. This map also shows the road to the control area, from San Bruno; today it is used as a trail for hikers visiting this GGNRA park. Also shown is the road to the launch area at Milagra.

The next map shows both Sweeney and Milagra in their final form as a fully functioning missile battery capable of launching nuclear armed Hercules missiles. The last map was recently drawn by David Bridgman, which also shows Sweeney’s final appearance. The photograph following this map shows in the foreground the

Fig. 2.13: Map of Sweeney Ridge and Milagra Ridge. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



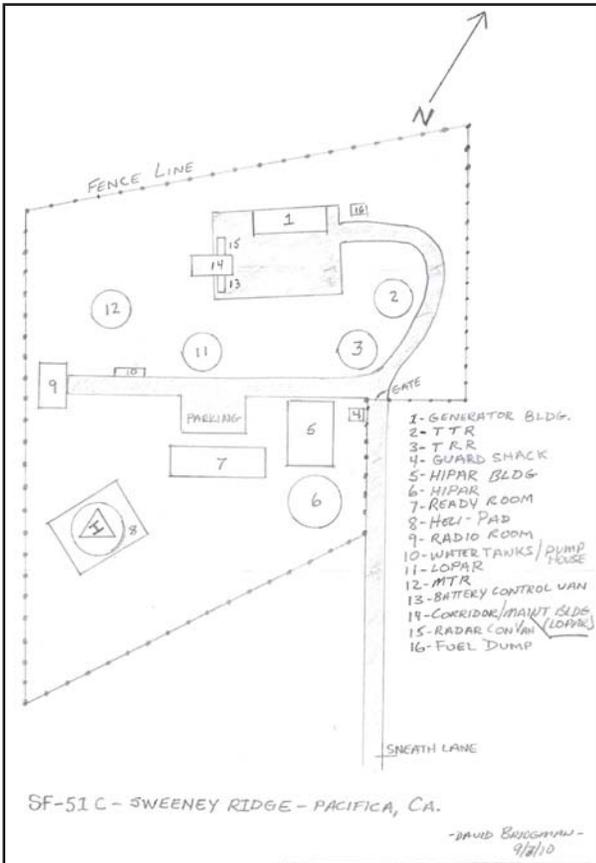


Fig. 2.14: David Bridgman's recent map of the installation at Sweeney Ridge.

Fig. 2.15: Aerial photograph showing the installation and Milagra Ridge in the background. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives.



massive High Power radar dome. Nothing is left of it today. Even its pad is covered by vegetation. To its left is the ready room, which still exists, and to its left is the helicopter pad now also covered by chaparral. To the right of the helicopter pad was the communications building, now gone. The small dome radar just to the right of the High Power unit is the Missile Tracking Radar. Its pad has disappeared, under the brush. To its right, the T shaped radar is the Low Power unit. Its pad can be seen. The “corridor building” and generator building are to its right. The Target Tracking and the Target Ranging radars are just in front of the generator building. Their pads still exist. In the background are some interesting features as well. At the top right is Milagra Ridge. Some of its improvements are visible in this shot. Lower, on the right, are the municipal water tanks and to the right of those are the Coast Guard’s improvements, including the antennae farm and, on the far right, the Coast Guard’s main building.

The next photo, a 360° panoramic shot, is lent to this project by David Bridgman. Taken about 1968 from the east side of SF 51-C from the center of the site,

from left to right at first we are looking south. In the foreground on the left is the Tracking Radar dome. Behind it is the High Power unit. Note that the High Power support building is obscured in this photo. Inside this building were the electronics necessary to operate this radar. The vacuum tubes of the electronic components, before the days of the silicon chip, made it so hot within the building that a massive air-conditioning devise was a crucial component of it operations. The High Power building and the next building in this photo, the ready building, still exist. Next, to the southwest, is the Low Power dome. The T is covered. To its right is the Missile

Tracking Radar. Now looking west to the right of it, down the steps and behind the Volkswagen, is the radar control computer van. To its right is the Low Power building, renamed from “corridor building” as previously referenced. It too had essential air-conditioning, and it too still exists. To the northwest is the generator building and then the fuel dump. We are now looking north. All three of the Coast Guard’s transmitter buildings are visible as its

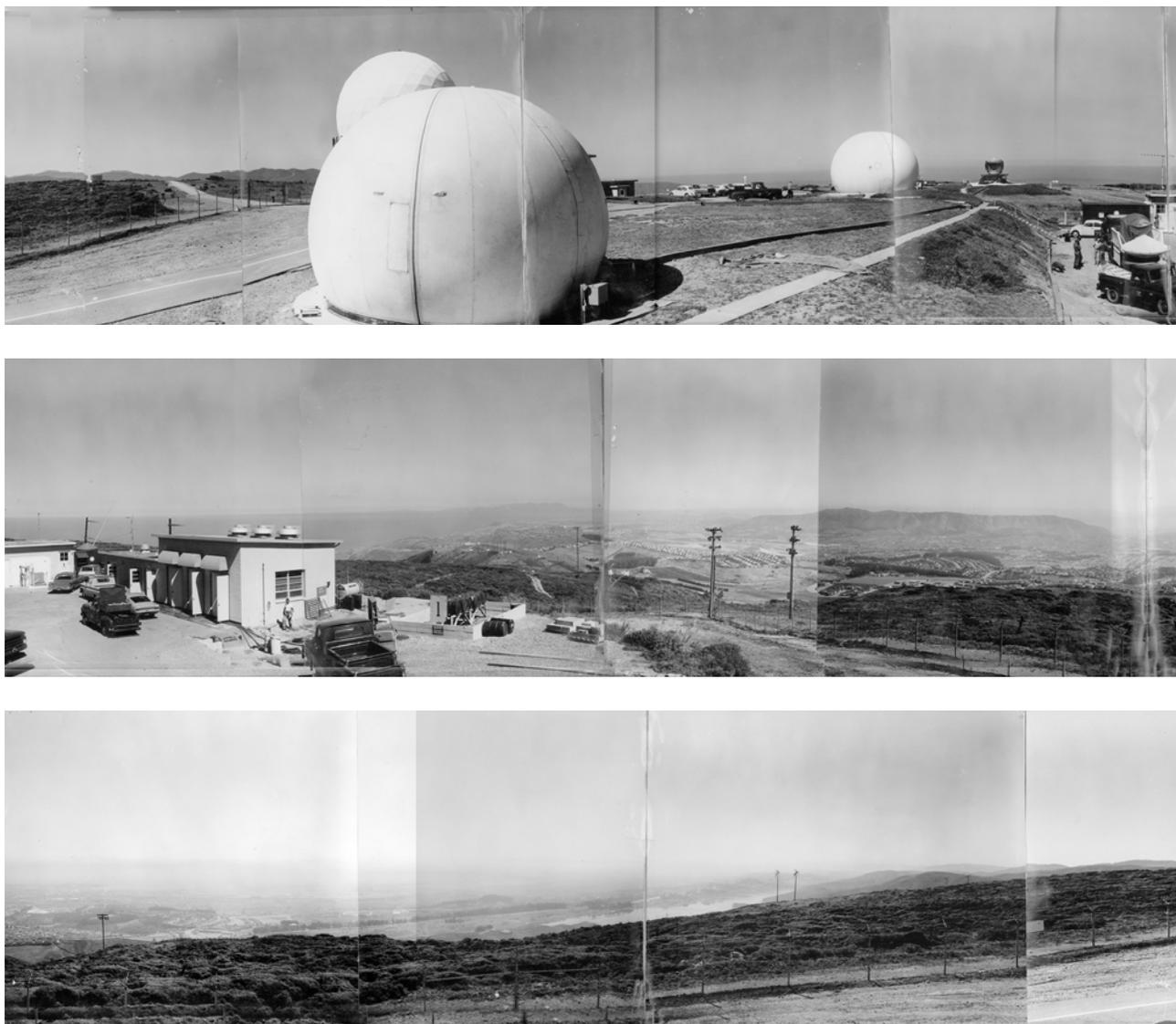


Fig. 2.16: Panoramic photograph of the Nike radar installation at Sweeney Ridge, taken around 1968. David Bridgman photograph, San Mateo County Historical Society.

main building. Also note the various Coast Guard antennas. To the northeast can be seen San Francisco County Jail, then San Bruno Mountain. The paved road to the site can be seen to the southeast along with San Andreas Lake behind it.

The surviving buildings were diagramed as the National Guard prepared for decommissioning SF 51. The resulting drawings were collected by the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department and then given to the San Mateo County Historical Association. Note the generator building was about 1400 square feet. The High Power building was close to 1600. See the large space for its air-conditioning unit at the lower right. It alone took up some 225 square feet. The Low Power building was smaller with about 900 square feet. The ready room included bunks, kitchen and toilet facilities. It was less than 1450 square feet. The tiny guard house was forty square feet.¹⁹⁰

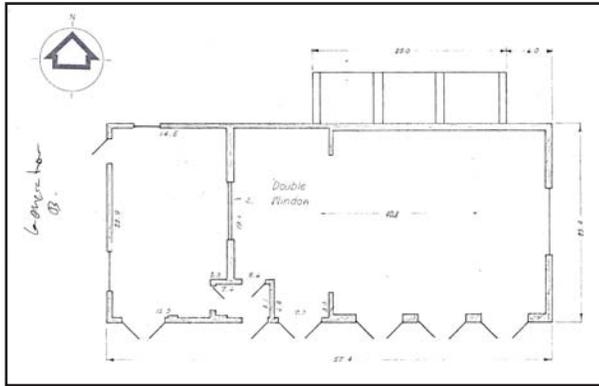


Fig. 2.17: Diagram of the generator building.

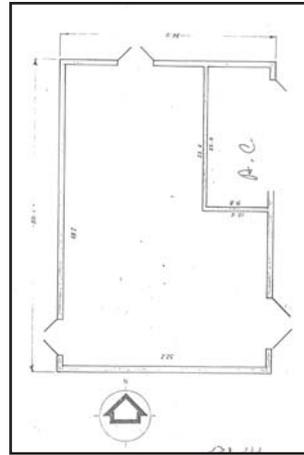


Fig. 2.18: Diagram of the High Power building.

SF 51-C was decommissioned along with SF 51-L in 1974. Again, for a more thorough description of its history, see the Milagra Ridge section of this study.

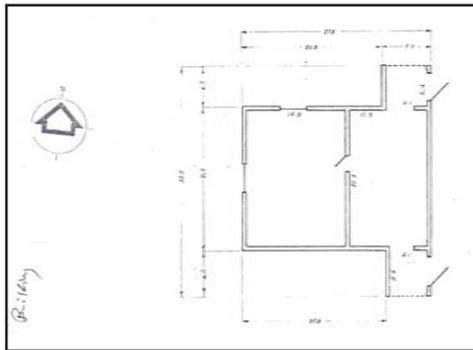


Fig. 2.19: Diagram of the Low Power building.

FLYING TIGER CRASH AT SWEENEY RIDGE, 1964

Historic Sweeney Ridge is notable for a tragic event in its past. The night of December 23-24, 1964 was a wet one. Pacific rain and winds were battering the San Francisco Bay Area as they frequently do in late December. A Coast Guard helicopter had already been lost during that series of storms. That night a combination of light rain and fog hindered visibility and rendered atmospheric conditions unstable.



Fig. 2.20: Diagram of the ready room.

San Francisco International Airport Flight 282 was Flying Tiger Line 1049H N6915C MSN 4812,¹⁹¹ scheduled for departure for New York City. The plane was a Lockheed Super H Constellation, a four engine propeller craft.

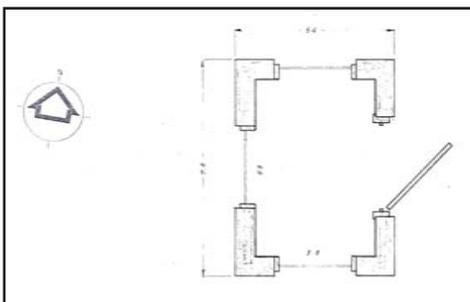


Fig. 2.21: Diagram of the guard house.

These “Super Connies” had achieved distinction because of their long-range which allowed for non-stop transcontinental airfreight routes. This particular flight had originated in Japan and had come to San Francisco for refueling before proceeding on its second leg to the east coast. It carried 41,000 pounds of cargo, including electronic equipment, bolts of fabric, women’s scarves, bandanas, purses, and costume jewelry.¹⁹² It also carried 136 pounds of mail and 5,000 gallons of fuel. Its total weight equaled 142,073 pounds, only 27 less than the maximum allowed.

Flight 282 was originally scheduled for a 9 p.m. departure but had no flight engineer. Flying Tiger requested Paul M. Entz,

down in Los Angeles, to catch a flight up to San Francisco to take on the duty. The 37 year old from North Hollywood arrived at 11:15 p.m.

The other two members of the crew were Pilot Jabez A. Richards and Co-pilot Daniel W. Hennessy. Richards lived in New Jersey. The 49 year-old had been with Flying Tiger since 1950 and had 14,911 hours in the air, 3,942 of them flying Super Constellations. Hennessy was local to the Bay Area. The 33 year old lived in Hillsborough. He was a Korean War veteran with 3,636 hours in the air, 1,277 of them with the Super Constellations.

At 12:13 a.m., December 24, San Francisco International Airport's Ground Control granted 282 permission to taxi to Runway 28L. The planned flight path was to pass through the "gap" between San Bruno Mountain on the right and Sweeney Ridge to the left. The "Super Connie" took off at 12:28.

Witnesses to the take-off later reported that the plane veered far to the right and then turned to the left making a steeper turn than usual before leveling-off. The conjecture here is that the crew was attempting to correct their heading after experiencing strong crosswinds.¹⁹³

Within three minutes they asked the airport: "Departure Tiger... you got us - ah over?" The ground controller advised them to progress to 11,000 feet. Then from the plane: "Roger, how do you have us tracking toward the, ah, gap?" The controller then asked what their altitude was. "900" was the answer. The controller then radioed: "You're left of course..."¹⁹⁴ There was no response to this warning and then 282 disappeared from the radar scope.

Up on Sweeney Ridge, Coast Guard Watch Officer Paul Anderson said that he heard 282's engines "throbbing at full power," normal but it sounded too low. The building then shook as the plane crashed just 25 to 100 feet away from Transmitter Building 2 (the building that still stands today is Building 1). Apparently, six Coast Guard men were in the transmitter building at the time.¹⁹⁵ "The motors were going along, and then there was suddenly a big ball of flame."¹⁹⁶

Sadly, 282 was 2.5 miles left of the "gap." Only 4.3 miles from the airport, its left wing had struck the east side of Sweeney Ridge at about 820 feet above sea level. The "Connie" exploded on impact. Momentum carried debris over the 930 foot top of the Ridge and about 75 feet down its western slope. In what was a bit of an exaggeration, in its afternoon edition of that day, the *San Mateo Times* quoted Sherriff Earl B. Whitmore as saying: "Had it been 20 feet higher, it might have cleared the ridge."

Coast Guard Senior Chief Radioman Philip Ellia lived in Pacifica and had just gotten

in bed when he received a phone call about a “big explosion” from the watch crew. He arrived on the scene about 20 minutes later, along with local police and fire fighters. He remembered the ridge “littered with debris”.¹⁹⁷ In fact, he heard reports that women’s scarves and white gloves were found in many places in west San Bruno the next morning. The largest pieces of the plane still left were portions of the rear fuselage and some of the tail. The scarves and costume jewelry were everywhere along the ridge.

The reaction of the Coast Guard men on the scene was admirable. In the barracks (at today’s Skyline College), Radioman Fred Goodwin was on the phone with his wife when it happened. All the men on the watch rushed the quarter mile up to the ridge and encountered flames. They became frantic, not knowing if the plane was a passenger craft or not. Luckily it was not, and luckily it had missed the Coast Guard Building 2, and it had missed the Main Operations Building, and even more luckily it had not hit San Francisco County Jail, which was downhill from the crash site. Sadly, however, all three crew members of 282 were killed instantly.

Of great concern for the Coast Guard was the loss of power and thus most of its transmitting capabilities. This was highly undesirable in the midst of Pacific Storm Season. However, they were able to get a generator functioning in the Operations Building, and then regained power.¹⁹⁸

The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) and the County Sherriff roped off the area and closely guarded it until a CAB investigating team could be called to the site. Unfortunately, unlike today’s commercial jets, the “Connie” carried no flight recorder. At first, local newspapers were full of reports about the physical health of pilot Richard.¹⁹⁹ The official investigation found that a faulty switch in the plane’s radio transfer assembly could have contributed to the confusion of the crew, and problems were found on other “Connie’s” immediately afterwards,²⁰⁰ but the probable cause of the accident, determined by the CAB team, was that the pilot, for unknown reasons, had gone off course into an area of rising terrain. Downdraft activity and turbulence hindered the plane’s climb enough that it could not clear the Ridge.²⁰¹ (See the CAB “Investigation:” report as Appendix XVIII of this study.)

The Sweeney Ridge Trail is just 25 yards away from the initial point of impact (Latitude 37°37’28” by Longitude 122°27’48”) which is within the National Park. A report from 2002 mentioned that much debris could still be encountered, including pieces of the aircraft’s outer skin, components of its landing gear and costume jewelry from its cargo bay.

In 2007, another interested party found that remains of the old Coast Guard buildings had been mixed with the “Connie’s” wreckage. However, large pieces from the plane

could still be found, including “one or two flaps, a door complete with latch-handle-and-locking mechanism, and the radio blade antenna. . .” Also of interest was “a portable am/fm radio that was brutally twisted” which “bore scars of the crash including a small pebble imbedded in its face.” Another find was “one of the wing fuel cell caps, still wearing top coat of red paint.” The report mentions “dozens of pieces with Lockheed pat numbers” and of course portions of the cargo. In fact some of the costume jewelry, gloves and scarves were still wrapped in “melted or scorched”²⁰² plastic packaging.

SHELLDANCE BROMELAID & ORCHID NURSERY

Natural wonders seen looking west from Sweeney Ridge include views of the Pacific Ocean, the Farallon Islands and the rugged San Mateo County coastline. Manmade features include the Pacifica Pier (1973) and suburban development from Daly City to the north to Pacifica directly in front of the visitor.

Also within the Park is the Shelldance Bromelaid & Orchid Nursery just below the Ridge on National Park lands at 2000 Cabrillo Highway in Pacifica. Herb Hager began building this establishment in 1949 on an artichoke field. He had been an employee of Rod McLellan at McLellan’s substantial flower growing operations over the hill.²⁰³

McLellan took over his father’s Burlingame floriculture business in 1926, and then moved it, in 1937, to South San Francisco. Here he developed the gardenia as a corsage flower. By 1945, he was shipping three million gardenias annually. In the meantime, he began cultivating orchids as houseplants. Orchids up until that time were thought to be too difficult to grow for the mass market. However, McLellan believed otherwise and made his company, renamed Acres of Orchids, the greatest orchid grower in the world.²⁰⁴ While the McLellan family sold the South San Francisco location in 2005, and divested itself from the flower business, the Shelldance nursery continues today.

Hager originally named his establishment Vallemar Orchids. The state-of-the-art greenhouses (for the 1950s) that he built are still present. He relocated to Salinas to continue his work, where he earned world-wide attention for hybridizing new lines of orchids.

In 1976, Nancy Davis, and Michael and Bruce Rothenberg leased the property and renamed it Shelldance Nursery. They met Hager’s widow, Gladys, and continued in the orchid business. Their greatest success was selling 20,000 plants to the government of Singapore for placement in its National Botanical Gardens. The three proprietors favored environmental preservation of the lands around them and were supporters of the GGNRA becoming stewards of the property they held. Nancy Davis recently

stated that before Hager and his 1950s era redwood greenhouse buildings, it is her understanding that there were no structures at this location.²⁰⁵

SUBURBS TO THE WEST (CONTEXTUAL)

The view to the West shows suburban development from the shore up the valleys of Pacifica, stretching like huge fingers, east toward Sweeney Ridge. Suburban development on the San Mateo County Coastside began with the Ocean Shore Railroad, which was organized in 1905. Despite being damaged by the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, the railroad was operational through to the Tobin station (which still stands near Point San Pedro) by the fall of 1907.²⁰⁶

A subsidiary of the railroad, the Ocean Shore Land Company, sold lots to prospective commuters as track was laid southward. Five communities were established that would eventually become Pacifica: Edgemar, Salada Beach, Brighton Beach, Vallemar and San Pedro Terrace. The Land Company launched an ambitious advertising campaign that included such promotions as free train rides and lunches for prospective buyers from San Francisco that were met at the beaches by multilingual salesmen and brass bands. In anticipation of a growing community, mail service was established at Salada and Rockaway in 1907.

The next year, successful San Francisco attorney, Henry Harrison McCloskey, decided to become one of the new commuters. He built Bendemier as his residence. The large home on the hillside overlooking Salada Beach was completely walled with the only access through a gate. A caller would announce himself from a telephone outside the gate. Its turrets and other embellishments gave the house a medieval appearance, enough so that locals called it “The Castle.” After McCloskey’s death in 1914, the place gained a disreputable reputation as an abortion factory, and then, under the name of Chateau Lafayette, a speakeasy. It is said that a still was present in the house, and that rumrunners were signaled from its towers. As mentioned previously, during World War II the Coast Guard used the house for defense purposes. Today, it is owned by a private party, but is still known as “The Castle.”

With the sale of lots, a school was established at Salada in 1914, and in 1919, local legendary entrepreneur, Charles Gust, opened a hamburger stand at Rockaway. His son, Nick, later built the popular “Nick’s” restaurant there.²⁰⁷

Even with this progress, the isolation of the Coast was only slightly breached by the Ocean Shore Railroad. Although lots were sold, few individuals actually built homes. The real estate bubble burst. The railroad never completed service to Santa Cruz, as originally promised, and it stopped operating trains in 1920. Automobile roads and highways began servicing coastsiders, but artichoke fields still covered the San Pedro

and other local valleys. The San Mateo County shoreline remained a sleepy place for a while longer.

From Sweeney Ridge, the visitor will see a green belt that runs from the hillside down to the beach; this is the Sharp Park Golf Course and Sharp Park Archery Range. Mrs. Honora Sharp gave this 450 acres to San Francisco for recreational purposes in 1935. That same year, the residents of Salada Beach and Brighton Beach decided to combine their communities and changed their name to Sharp Park.

The greatest transformation for the San Mateo County Coast, and indeed for San Mateo County on the whole and actually for all of California, came with World War II. Defense works and industry became ubiquitous. For the County and State, war-time defense industry meant jobs and jobs meant new people and new people needed places to live. Between 1940 and 1960 the County experienced sharp population growth, and now the north coast saw substantial development.

The most important economic engine for the Peninsula was San Francisco International Airport.²⁰⁸ Its construction projects, directed by Mike Doolin, resulted in a vastly improved utility by 1954. On August 27, San Francisco Mayor Elmer Robinson dedicated the new \$15 million Central Terminal. The jet transportation era began in 1959, and by 1966, the work force at the airport was more than 20,000, with a payroll higher than \$165 million. The next year, 12 million passengers used it, bringing with them millions of dollars in revenue. By 1977, 30,000 worked at the airport.²⁰⁹

The north coast's proximity to the airport and the availability of inexpensive property inspired developers like Henry Doelger in Daly City's Westlake District and Andrew Oddstad in the Linda Mar area (San Pedro Valley) to begin building hundreds of houses over what had been sand dunes and farms. In 1955, only one year after the completion of the Central Terminal at the airport, Pacifica got its first shopping center at Linda Mar, near where Gaspar de Portolá had camped in 1769.

By the late 1950s, the north coast was transfigured. From an area mostly known for its discouragingly damp windy climate, it had been totally altered by inspired developers. One environmentalist wrote: "One hundred and sixty-seven years of farming was virtually over."²¹⁰

In fact between 1940 and 1950, the population of the north coast doubled and then doubled again between 1950 and 1960. For many of these new homeowners, their ranch style houses gave them, these children of the Great Depression and veterans of World War II, a piece of the "California Dream." For others, the development of the monotonous housing tracks of "Little Boxes" (song by Malvina Reynolds) spreading across the landscape equated to urban sprawl and environmental disaster.

People, living within the coastal communities that had been originally laid out by the Ocean Shore Land Company, saw that municipal services were needed. They feared loss of self-determination by being swallowed up by the City of San Bruno, just over Sweeney Ridge to the east; and so, in a close election (2601, yes to 2113, no) they voted to incorporate into the City of Pacifica in 1957. They named their city for the statue created by Ralph Stackpole for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition at San Francisco's Treasure Island; the statue symbolized the hope for peace in the Pacific region.

The same year that Pacifica incorporated, the *San Francisco Chronicle* took note of the developing activity on the north coast. Its Sunday, February 17 edition declared:

Destiny, as both San Mateo county officials and most Coastsiders see it, is a solid strip of cities rivaling the urban string down the Bayside of the Peninsula.

The pressures are mounting. Subdividers are running out of land on the Bayside.²¹¹

Three years later, the *San Mateo Times* announced that "The Coastside Giant Is Stirring" and named the key ingredient to make future growth on the Coast possible:

The giant has been stirring. Now he is about to awaken.

But total awakening of this giant depends, all experts agree, on one thing. Roads.

When San Mateo county's Coastside will begin to reach towards its ultimate depends on how soon an adequate system of freeways is developed to serve the area between Pedro Point and Half Moon Bay.

Plans for these future freeways are already on the drawing boards. Survey crews from the state division of highways have been busy during recent months mapping a route around Pedro mountain - - bypassing Devil's Slide.²¹²

Imagine what *Times* reporter Vern Krogh would have said in 1960, if he could have known that in 2010, fifty years later, the Devil's Slide bypass is still not a reality. Krogh concluded his article with the County's predictions for the future. Officials had informed him that San Mateo County's population of 440,000 would expand to 800,000 by 1990, and 219,000 of these people would be Coastside residents.

Startling predictions like this helped create an environmental backlash. Awareness in the 1960s about the potential for more building on the Peninsula manifested into political action. On the Bayside, the Crocker Land Company was turned away from

its efforts to develop San Bruno Mountain. On the Coastside, the key ingredient to growth, as described by Vern Krogh in 1960 - - roads and freeways - - was held up because of opposition to Highway 380, that would have created a cross-county (east to west) freeway (through the “notch” on Sweeney Ridge), and the Devil’s Slide bypass, which would have opened the coast (from north to south).²¹³ Political action in the 1970s, and a movement to fund preservation through land trusts in the 1980s, continued to slow growth in San Mateo County, especially on the Coastside. Today the population of San Mateo County is about 700,000.

PRESERVATION OF SWEENEY RIDGE

Consumers Ice, a holding company formed by the Sneath family of the old Jersey Farm Company still held ownership of Sweeney Ridge as the Nike missile radar installation faced decommissioning. In the new age of suburbanization, Consumers began planning residential building that would have added 4,550 housing units to the north Peninsula.²¹⁴ However, forces were long in motion to recognize the historic and natural values of Sweeney Ridge and to preserve them as a public benefit.

As San Francisco prepared for its Portolá Festival of 1909 (marking the 140th anniversary of the Bay’s discovery), a variety of translations of the journals of the original members of Portolá’s party began appearing. A wide disparity of ideas about the location of the discovery site resulted. In fact a monument was built in Montara (which still exists) claiming the final climb up to the discovery site started from there.²¹⁵

Finally in 1927, Dr. Herbert Eugene Bolton, Chairman of the History Department at the University of California at Berkeley, published a translated version of Father Crespi’s journal in which he mentioned Sweeney Ridge as the probable site. One of his students, Dr. Frank M. Stanger, became founder of the San Mateo County History Museum and naturally had an interest in furthering the understanding of the Portolá story. In 1947, he took a jeep excursion with students from San Mateo Junior College in search of the place of the great discovery.²¹⁶ While driving down the coast he read Crespi’s account. At Rockaway Beach Stanger noted what he thought to be the most practical ascent and took that route up to Sweeney Ridge. From that experience he visualized Portolá’s path and appreciated the Ridge’s sweeping views. Afterwards he called his old professor for help in launching a drive to recognize Sweeney Ridge as an important historic site. That year the San Mateo County Historical Association sponsored a tour of Sweeney Ridge. Bolton and about 100 San Mateo County and San Francisco people, including elected officials and representatives of the California Historical Society, made the trip. Among those present was George T. Brady, an ancestor of Sergeant José Ortega. Bolton confirmed at that time that this was where Portolá’s expedition had first seen the Bay. As the most esteemed California historian of the time, his testimony gave impetus for further acknowledgment of the site.²¹⁷

While Dr. Stanger hoped to create a large momentum on the Ridge, little progress was made until March 30, 1965, when Nita Spangler, President of the San Mateo County Historical Association, called for a special meeting to discuss the future of the site. Two things were at work. First, within four years the bicentennial of the discovery would occur. Second, the expansion of highway systems and suburban development could vastly alter the Ridge and obliterate the discovery site. That afternoon, Spangler inspired the formation of the Portola Expedition Bicentennial Foundation. Authorized by the County, and formally incorporated on July 1, 1965, the Foundation elected Spangler as its first president. Other founding members included Pacific Telephone executive George Dean (who also led the early movement for preservation of Fort Point), Director of the San Mateo County Development Association, Henry “Bud” Bostwick, Director of the Wells Fargo Bank History Room, Irene Simpson, Co-publisher of the Pacifica Tribune, Peggy Drake, Superintendent of the Jefferson Union High School District, Ed Morgan, San Mateo Times Publisher J. Hart Clinton, builder L.C. Smith, plus a representative of the San Mateo County Fair Association, St. George La Fitte, Ronald Cambell of the David Bohannon organization (developers of Hillsdale in San Mateo) and, of course, Dr. Stanger. The local enthusiasm had to weather outside skepticism. The state park commission judged Sweeney Ridge as of only secondary in historic importance.²¹⁸

However, the oncoming bicentennial of the discovery kept momentum building. In April of 1968, the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation for the United States Senate Committee on Internal Affairs gathered at the San Francisco Presidio to discuss a variety of issues. Testifying on the importance of the Ridge were United States Representative Pete McCloskey, members of the Portola Foundation, Pacifica political luminaries, including Grace McCarthy, and State Assemblyman Leo Ryan. Ryan stated his specific concern for the dwindling natural beauty of the Peninsula due to development.

A month later, on May 17, 1968, Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall had Sweeney Ridge listed as a National Historic Landmark (National Register of Historic Places No. 68000022). The State of California also declared it a California Landmark (No. 394).²¹⁹

Locals now turned their attention to preservation of the site. Beginning in 1968, an annual excursion to it, as a commemoration of the Portolá party’s march, took place. Hikers and equestrians joined supervised caravans of automobiles and met at the top to listen to a variety of speakers. In 1969, the Pacifica Ministerial Association initi-

Fig. 2.22: Plaque at Sweeney Ridge commemorating Gaspar de Portolá's discovery of the San Francisco Bay. Lee Davis photograph, San Francisco State University.



ated an annual Easter Sunrise Service on the Ridge.²²⁰ On the scholarly front, a variety of publications drew attention to the Portolá expedition, including Frank Stanger and Alan Brown's *Who Discovered the Golden Gate?* of 1969 (published by the San Mateo County Historical Association). Allowing for improved accessibility, the Boy Scouts established a hiking trail from Pacifica to the site in 1972. Not everyone within the diverse group seeking recognition for Ridge agreed about its future. Leaders within the Portola Foundation opposed environmentalists by favoring the extension of Highway 380 from San Bruno to Pacifica near the discovery site and championing an automobile road to allow tourists to visit it.²²¹

Nevertheless in 1973, San Mateo County and the City of Pacifica came to agreement with Matthew Dillingham, representing Consumers Ice, to purchase, for \$100,000, 18 acres of the Ridge encompassing two knolls which included the probable spot where Portolá made the discovery. Negotiations had begun in 1969. The County came up with the money by receiving matchable Housing and Urban Development funds.

In the meantime, Consumers Ice was making its own plans. By 1969, it envisioned leveling the Ridge and on 250 acres creating a town center, including building 2,700 (no longer 4,500) dwelling units with supporting community amenities. An additional 70 acres would be used for a high-rise corporate office center. The plan proved impractical almost immediately since it called for use of SF 51-C, which was still very much an active Nike radar site. The mounting opposition to the westward extension of Caltrans' Highway 380 was also a factor.²²²

Still, with its beautiful views and its prime location near San Francisco International Airport, those in the world of real estate development had continued interest. In April of 1972, the West Aspen Company, a subsidiary of Texas International, completed the purchase of 1000 acres of the Ridge surrounding the discovery site. Negotiations with Consumers Ice had gone on for two years and included resolution of a lawsuit brought by one of Consumers Ice's stockholders who wanted cash instead of Texas International stock for the buyout.²²³ West Aspen reportedly paid between \$2 million and \$2.5 million for the property.

The original West Aspen proposal for development called for the building of 3,500 homes. Consultant John Bus, with the planning firm Duncan and Jones, guided West Aspen in scaling down its plans to 1,500 homes and a shopping center. This last plan would have left 75% of the land as open space, but for many this was not enough.²²⁴

California State Assemblyman Leo Ryan was perhaps the most outspoken. In 1972, he was recognized as the central figure trying to dissuade development on the Ridge.²²⁵ He gathered together San Francisco and San Mateo County leaders from business, labor, environmental organizations and government, including GGNRA officials. A

group called “Common Ground” was formed out of these efforts as Ryan became a United States Congressman in 1973. He remained an important advocate for saving the Ridge, right up until his tragic murder during the Jonestown Massacre in Guyana, on November 18, 1978.

The year before Ryan’s death, in 1977, the North Coastal Reserve Committee had taken on the Sweeney Ridge cause, replacing Common Ground as the principal advocacy organization involved. Soon after a particularly intense Pacifica City Council meeting, the Reserve Committee handed over the Sweeney Ridge issue to Pacificans United to

Save Our Hills (PUSH). Pacifica activists had originally organized PUSH as their city began working on a new general plan. By the spring of 1978, PUSH volunteers were promoting the ideas proposed by Congressman Ryan about creating an urban park. They knocked on the doors of their neighbors and set up tables at shopping centers in order to convince local people that they must appeal to the Pacifica City Council to preserve Sweeney Ridge.



Fig. 2.23: Monument commemorating Carl Patrick McCarthy's efforts for the preservation of Sweeney Ridge. Lee Davis photograph, San Francisco State University.

Complementing the efforts of PUSH, the Portola Foundation continued its activities. Member Carl Patrick McCarthy (husband of Councilwoman Grace McCarthy) organized the creation of a 15 minute slide show to highlight the story of Portolá’s ascent to the discovery site. He also led tours up to the top. It is said that between 1966 and 1981, he escorted 11,863 people on 941 excursions.²²⁶ (A monument to McCarthy was erected at the discovery site in November of 1983.)

Feeling the pressure, West Aspen seemed ready to balk, but the passage of California’s Proposition 13 made local efforts at preservation more difficult. Since January of 1974, San Mateo County had assumed the lead in the effort to preserve the Ridge. With the November, 1978 passage of this initiative, the Board of Supervisors found itself needing to suspend its acquisition program. Proposition 13, in fact, had made it difficult to provide enough funds for simply maintaining and operating existing County Parks.²²⁷

The door seemed to open for West Aspen. On July 5, 1979, its representative, Douglas B. Martin, Jr., went before Congressmen Phil Burton (San Francisco) and Bill Royer (San Mateo County) of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs. He referred to an application his company had submitted in November, 1978, and remarked how Pacifica city staff would soon be finishing their evaluation of the project.

He also referred to the feasibility study being compiled by the Department of Interior, examining alternatives for Sweeney Ridge. Martin urged the Congressmen to do what could be done to have a decision made about what the federal government would do before West Aspen spent more time and money on the project. Martin then proposed that Congress allow for his company's plans to go forward. He pointed out that most of the Ridge would be left as open space, that housing was desperately needed in the Bay Area, that the 18 acre discovery site would be preserved and that views from the site would be unobstructed. He described how West Aspen would provide some commercial building near the discovery site in order that visitors could "stop and seek refreshment and shelter out of the coastal winds and to enjoy the views."²²⁸ He pledged that West Aspen was prepared to provide trails and areas for picnicking. Finally, he remarked how Proposition 13 and the "California Taxpayers Revolt" had made it clear that the people of the state were not interested in open space and parks that were "non-revenue producing."²²⁹ The logic here struck at the heart of the matter. Local and state ability to purchase and maintain Sweeney Ridge had disappeared. Only the federal government could stand in the way of development of the Ridge. The question became: should Congress take on the responsibility or not?

For most everyone at the hearings, the answer was a resounding "yes." According to the *Pacifica Tribune* of July 11, 1979, "40 of the 49 speakers went on record in supporting of extending the GGNRA to Pacifica and Sweeney Ridge."²³⁰

This included Amy Meyer, co-chairman of People for a Golden Gate National Recreation Area, John Wheeler of the Committee for Green Foothills, John Curtis of the Sharp Park Improvement Council, Ferd Simons, chairman of PUSH, Ruth Paige of Keep Pacifica Scenic, Julie Ann Williams of the Vallemar Homeowners, Dr. Jon Galehouse, geology professor from San Francisco State, Jane Gates, co-coordinator of United Citizens for Pacifica, Jan Dutton of the American Association of University Women, Sandy Damarco of the Ridgeline Association of Homeowners, Bob Scowcroft of Friends of the Earth, John Jacobs, Director of the San Francisco Planning and Research Association, Michael Rothenberg, co-owner of Shelldance Nursery, John Wade of the Sierra Club, Earl Schmidt, a trustee with the California Historical Society, and past Pacifica Mayor, Grace McCarthy. At the end of the hearing Phil Burton remarked how impressed he was with the large number of people "able to talk intelligently about a very complex situation."²³¹

The work of those advocating preservation continued. Feeling this pressure, on December 18, 1979, the Pacifica Planning Commission rejected the West Aspen plan by a unanimous 6 to 0 vote.²³² The issue of preserving Sweeney Ridge and making it park land was now left with the federal government, and leading the charge in Washington D.C. was Congressman Phil Burton. Burton was already credited as the person most responsible for creating the GGNRA. After Leo Ryan's murder, he took over the

Sweeney Ridge challenge. Ultimately, he too would die (in 1983) before the Sweeney issue was completely settled. His wife, Sala Burton, succeeded him in Congress and saw to the ultimate success of the effort.

By the end of April, 1980, Burton a Democrat, was ready to move legislation to purchase the Ridge. San Mateo County Congressman Bill Royer, a Republican, withheld his backing citing uncertainty over local support. Burton responded: "We're going to proceed."²³³

On May 20, 1980, the House of Representatives approved extension of the GGNRA and the federal purchasing of Sweeney Ridge by a vote of 300 to 102. The bill came in the form of HR3, a bipartisan measure co-authored by Burton and Royer. Royer had come around and had taken the floor "to urge immediate passage." Burton later praised Royer for "his very effective leadership."²³⁴

The same team of Burton and Royer then piloted the measure through the Senate. On December 28, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed Senate Bill 2363. He had done it after fracturing a collarbone while skiing just before meeting with Algerian officials at Camp David in an effort to free the hostages held in Iran. The authorization became part of federal law, No. 96-607. Tom Constantino, an aid to Congressman Royer, commented that President Carter had eliminated bill-signing ceremonies, so none took place for the "Sweeney Ridge bill."²³⁵

While the original legislation allowed for as many as 26,000 acres of public lands to be acquired by the GGNRA in San Mateo County, this new law allowed for purchase of 1,050 acres of privately held property as well - - that of course was the West Aspen section of Sweeney Ridge. This process would take negotiation - - three years of it in fact. Stepping in to facilitate the acquisition was the Trust for Public Land, a non-profit organization whose mission is to enable such transactions to occur as smoothly as possible. Thus West Aspen sold Sweeney to the Trust as a paper transaction, and the Trust then helped urge Congress to fund the required enabling legislation. Trust director Putnam Livermore was credited with moving the final agreement forward with Secretary of the Interior William Clark in 1983. The federal government agreed to pay West Aspen (through the Trust) \$8.5 million in the end.²³⁶

The celebration for Sweeney Ridge becoming part of the GGNRA took place on May 12, 1984 at a "Dedication Day." Activities included hikes, horseback rides, shuttle bus service to the Ridge and postal cancellations. A program at the discovery site featured presentations by Pacifica Mayor Peter Loeb, Congressman Tom Lantos and Senator Alan Cranston. A conciliatory "Message to Pacifica Residents and Visitors" was included in the printed program for the day by the West Aspen Company.²³⁷

Hearings on what the public desired to do with the Ridge began in November, 1984.²³⁸ The coalition that saved Sweeney had acted in concert while the land was in danger of development; however, consensus about what to do with it fell apart in these initial meetings. A major point of contention was whether to install a paved road to the discovery site for automobiles. Other debates discussed the advisability of building restroom facilities, camp grounds, picnic accommodations and paved parking lots.²³⁹ To this day (2010), few of these improvements have been made.

In 1985, San Mateo County turned over its holdings on Milagra Ridge (see Milagra Ridge portion of this study) and those acres north of the “notch” that had been occupied by the Coast Guard to the GGNRA. At the same time the County decided to relinquish its right to the 18 acre discovery site. Two years later the City of Pacifica decided to do likewise (as it shared with the County, authority for those 18 acres).

ENDNOTES

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- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- ¹⁴¹ Stanger, *South*, p. 47.
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- ¹⁶³ Jean Katherine Scott, "The Sneath Ranch or Jersey Dairy," Manuscript, San Mateo County Historical Association, June, 1940, pp. 1-9.
- ¹⁶⁴ The Map on the next page shows the Jersey Farm Company's lands in 1927. Outlined in yellow is Ranch No. Three. From: Official Map of San Mateo California, 1927, compiled from Official Records and Surveys by Geo. A. Kneese, County Surveyor.
- ¹⁶⁵ Svanevik, *San Mateo*, p. 43.
- ¹⁶⁶ Babel, *Top*, p. 72.
- ¹⁶⁷ Mitchell P. Postel, "San Mateo County and San Francisco's Search for Water," *California Vignettes* (compiled by Robert F. Schoeppner and Robert J. Chandler), San Francisco Corral of the Westerns, San Francisco, CA, 1996, pp. 50-52.
- ¹⁶⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Montara Mountain Quadrangle, California, 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) 1997.
- ¹⁶⁹ Svanevik, *San Mateo County*, p. 18.
- ¹⁷⁰ Hynding, *From*, p. 75.
- ¹⁷¹ For more on the history of the water resources of the Peninsula, see the GGNRA's study, *The Top of the Peninsula: A History of Sweeney Ridge and the San Francisco Watershed Lands*, by Marianne Babel, which is listed in the bibliography of this study.
- ¹⁷² For other descriptions of historical points of interest looking east from Sweeney Ridge, including Sign Hill in South San Francisco, ship building slips of World War I and II, Tanforan, San Francisco International Airport, Golden Gate National Cemetery and Mount Diablo, see Appendix VII.
- ¹⁷³ U.S. Coast Guard, "U.S. Coast Guard Radio Station, San Bruno, San Mateo Co., California," memorandum, July 28, 1943.
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- ¹⁷⁹ U.S. Coast Guard, "Proceedings of a Board of Survey, U.S. Coast Guard Radio Station, San Bruno, Calif.," Survey No. 12-065-72, August 30, 1973.

¹⁸⁰ David L. Moore, Superintendent of Parks, San Mateo County, interviewed on July 7, 2010 by Mitch Postel of the San Mateo County Historical Association.

¹⁸¹ U.S. Coast Guard, "Report of Excess Real Property," San Bruno Radio Station, November 10, 1972.

¹⁸² R.T. Nelson, Commander, USCG, Comptroller, 12th Coast Guard District, letter to Reuben M. Greenburg, Undersheriff San Francisco, July 31, 1972.

¹⁸³ Christmas card displayed in Coast Guard, "Memorabilia," accessed July 20, 2010.

¹⁸⁴ "Last Words Through Pacifica Skies from Coast Guard Radio," *Pacifica Tribune*, February 7, 1973.

¹⁸⁵ R.T. Nelson, Chief Operations Division, Comptroller, Memorandum, February 13, 1973.

¹⁸⁶ David Sox, USCG, email to Mitch Postel, San Mateo County Historical Association, June 2, 2010.

¹⁸⁷ San Mateo County, Architectural and Engineering Division, "Demolition of Certain Structures at Sweeney Ridge, San Bruno, California," November 8, 1977.

¹⁸⁸ Moore interview with Postel, July 7, 2010.

¹⁸⁹ Project researchers Jerry Crow and Therese Smith reviewed County records on this issue. They found the Sneath Family's Jersey Farm Company owned the parcel in 1950. Later in that decade Consumers Ice, a holding company for the Sneaths, owned it. The lease was evidently never an interim measure for the Army, as no move toward acquisition of the site was revealed by these researchers in their perusal of County records between 1947 and 1957.

¹⁹⁰ See Appendix XXVIII for photos of SF 51-C taken by Lee Davis and her San Francisco State University interns, circa 2006.

¹⁹¹ Civil Aeronautics Board, "Investigation of Aircraft Accident," SA-382 File No. 1-0064, adopted June 2, 1966.

¹⁹² "Bruno Plane Crash Kills 3," *San Mateo Times*, December 24, 1964, p. 1.

¹⁹³ Nicholas A. Veronico, <http://www.wreckchasing.com/connie.htm>, Pacific Aero Press, 2007, p. 2, accessed July 3, 2010.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ "Cargo Plane Crash Kills Three Airmen," *Redwood City Tribune*, December 24, 1964.

¹⁹⁶ Check-Six.com, "The Crash of 'Flying Tiger' Flight #282," December 24, 1964, 2002, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ Veronico, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ "Crew of Plane Had Heart Trouble," *Redwood City Tribune*, December 28, 1964; and "Airliner's Pilot Had Heart Trouble," *Redwood City Tribune*, December 30, 1964; and "Aeronautics Investigator Completing Probe of Plane Crash," *Redwood City Tribune*, January 4, 1965.

²⁰⁰ Check-Six.com, "The Crash of 'Flying Tiger' Flight #282, December 24, 1964, crash site, Site Today," 2002, accessed July 3, 2010.

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²⁰⁴ Postel, *San Mateo County*, p. 176.

²⁰⁵ Davis interviewed by Levy, May 1, 2010.

²⁰⁶ Jack R. Wagner, *The Last Whistle: Ocean Shore Railroad*, Howell-North Books, Berkeley, CA, 1974, p. 43.

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²⁰⁸ See Appendix VII for more about the Airport.

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- ²¹³ County of San Mateo, *San Mateo County*, pp. 31-32.
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- ²²⁰ "Agreement Regarding Portolá Discovery Site," City of Pacifica and the United States National Park Service, 1987, p. 2.
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- ²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
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