

RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA (AND THE MONTARA LIGHTHOUSE STATION)

R*ancho Corral de Tierra* was a land grant issued in two parts during the Mexican Era of California history. It extended from the southern base of Montara Mountain in the north to Pilarcitos Creek at Half Moon Bay to the south and took up lands from the ocean on the west into the coastal mountains to the east. Francisco Guerrero y Palomares owned the property north of Miramar or *El Arroyo de en Medio*,¹ and Tiburcio Vásquez possessed the grant south of there.² Today, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area has park space on the eastern side of Guerrero holdings, encompassing real estate behind the communities of Montara, Moss Beach and El Granada.³ It includes open space, ranches and farms.

For the purposes of this study, topics will include not just the history of the Park's acreage, but the immediate surrounding areas as well that were part of the original *Rancho Corral de Tierra* which, of course, did not exist in isolation. Thus information is presented about the pre-Spanish contact in the vicinity, the stories of both land grant families, early agriculture on the San Mateo coast, the whaling station at Pillar Point, shipwrecks and the Montara Lighthouse, the commercial fishing industry and the history of Princeton-by-the-Sea, the Ocean Shore Railroad's El Granada, World War II defense installations, big wave surfing at Maverick's, San Mateo County's preservation efforts at the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and the activities of the National Park Service at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

PRE-CONTACT AND EUROPEAN ARRIVAL (CONTEXTUAL)

In 1994, archeologist Mark Hylkema discovered a portion of a crescent-shaped stone tool while completing investigations inside the fault at Seal Cove within San Mateo County's Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, west of the National Park's property at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. By use of radiocarbon dating of nearby shell and charcoal, the tool was determined to possibly be between 5,500 and 8,000 years old.⁴ The age of the artifact startled those interested in the San Francisco Peninsula's prehistory because it suggests the presence of previously unknown people that were here before the Ohlones by 500 to 2,500 years. (At the earliest, the Ohlones are thought to have arrived in the Bay Area about 5,000 years ago.) Who these people were is a mystery. Evidence of other ancients living in California going back as far as 10,000 years has been found. From the bone tools and few remains of such remnants, it is theorized that these early natives lived a nomadic existence; they followed the migratory patterns of large animals and waterfowl. The Hylkema crescent is made of Franciscan Chert

which is found east of the San Andreas Fault. The tool is on display at the San Mateo County History Museum in Redwood City.

Actually, Hylkema found four different earthen layers within the deposit, indicating that humans lived in the *Rancho Corral de Tierra* neighborhood for many hundreds of years. Hylkema's most recent find included a cooking hearth between 600 and 800 years old. Meanwhile, geologists found it most interesting that the offsets seen in the different ground layers indicated two significant earthquakes had occurred locally during times before European contact.⁵

When Portolá came through in 1769, the people at what became *Rancho Corral de Tierra* were Ohlones that spoke the San Francisco Bay Costanoan dialect, as did all the local tribes that lived in today's San Mateo and San Francisco counties. Besides a number of archaeological sites, the only hint of their occupation of the land exists in some of the remains of their trail system. Perhaps for as many as 5,000 years, these people traveled over and back from Montara Mountain on paths, portions of which are still visible. At McNee Ranch State Park, just north of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, the Indian trail is visible uphill from Gray Whale Overlook near Saddle Pass on the North Peak Access Road. The Indian path probably followed the ridge line south, behind the Willow Brooks Estates area in Pacifica's Linda Mar District, up Montara Mountain to Saddle Pass, to the ridge above Green Valley, before dropping down to Martini Creek. When modern-day hikers stand on Saddle Pass, they are at the point where the Indian people crossed the mountain, and, where later on, Spanish explorers, Franciscan missionaries, hard riding vaqueros, and users of early American roads traversed it.⁶

The Ohlone people occupying the territory from Montara Mountain down to Half Moon Bay called themselves the Chiguan. At the time of Spanish contact (1769), the entire local tribe consisted of no more than 50 people. Mission records reveal the presence of two Chiguan villages. Ssatumnumo existed in the Princeton-Pillar Point area and was closer to National Park Service land. The other, Chagūnte, was further south near Pilarcitos Creek, in today's Half Moon Bay.⁷

The first recorded European sighting of the area was accomplished by Francisco Gali aboard the sailing ship *San Juan Bautista* in 1595. As he cruised southward along the California coast, just before resting at Monterey, he described Pillar Point, due west of National Park property at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.⁸

On October 28, 1769, Spanish soldier Captain Gaspar de Portolá, looking for sites for settlement in *Alta California*, crossed Pilarcitos Creek and entered into Chiguan country. His engineer, Miguel Costansó, described the place around Half Moon Bay as "lacking in wood" and "very little inhabited". As they approached Pillar Point he complained: "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; no grain, no meat (four bags of it that were left being saved for the sick)...⁹ It was here that the officers proposed slaying mules for food, but the men elected to put this drastic step off for a time of greater need. After all, the Spanish were able to hunt ducks and eat what the local people gave them. However, the native cuisine caused diarrhea among many of the men including Captain Portolá and Costansó. Once at Pillar Point, the party made camp. Costansó noted the weather changed; the winds, rain and fog let-up. However, overnight it began raining again. Costansó called the place *Llano de los Anseres*, or Goose Plain, because of the abundant water fowl.

Franciscan Padre Juan Crespi reported that because Portolá seemed too ill to continue, they rested at Pillar Point for a day. He described how the villagers of the nearby point (probably of Ssatumnumo) gave the Spanish tamales, as did all the Ohlone people Portolá's group met on the San Mateo County Coast.

Finally on October 30, the weather cleared, and they set out again. Portolá wrote that his men had to "make two bridges," and now it was his turn to complain about there being "no wood". Crespi also mentioned the lack of trees. They had awakened the camp at 4 a.m., crossed Martini's Creek and came up to the base of San Pedro or Montara Mountain. Costansó wrote:

We broke camp and went along the shore until, leaving the point with island rocks to the west of us [near the famous Maverick's waves], we passed over some knolls and across... hollows with... deep gulches full of water at which we were delayed by [having to] throw small bridges over them. We stopped close to the sea-shore, along which the way was entirely shut off by a high cliffy hill at the root of which ran a small stream [Martini's Creek] of good water, coming out of a pocket in between various elevations... we placed the camp, up against the hills...¹⁰

Crespi's October 30 journal records his calling Pillar Point, *la Punta de los Angeles Custodios*, Guardian Angels Point. He named the campsite at Martini's Creek, *el Arroyo Hondo de Almejas*, the Deep Creek at the Musselbed, for obvious reasons.¹¹

The Chiguan next met Spaniards in 1774. Captain Fernando Rivera with Franciscan Padre Francisco Palou led a land party up from Monterey to further explore the San Francisco Peninsula. They became the first Europeans to spot the Golden Gate from the south. During the mission, they met the people at Ssatumnumo who were still friendly. Rivera offered the headman, Camsegmne, tobacco, cloth and toys. Camsegmne was, by ten years, the younger brother of Yagueche, headman of the Aramai to the north.

Between 1783 and 1791, most of the Chiguan were baptized at *Mission San Francisco de Asís*. In the 1790s, the Mission Fathers began grazing cattle in the *Rancho Corral de Tierra* area. These lands that Portolá, Costansó and Crespi had criticized for lack of wood were perfect for livestock raising. For centuries the Indians had been burning the landscape to make it better for the herds of large grazing animals that they hunted. The Ohlones had made conditions perfect for the Spanish new intentions for the mid-coast.¹²

THE VAQUERO WAY (CONTEXTUAL)

Texas cowboy, artist and historian Jo Mora made a compelling argument in his 1949 book, *Californios: The Saga of the Hard-riding Vaqueros, America's First Cowboys*, that the *Alta California vaqueros* at the Franciscan missions were the first cowboys of the West:

I have had some grand arguments in years past as to who the first cowboys were. It is curious the twist lots of folks have on Western history. My last verbal tilt on this subject was with a "back East" professor who considered himself quite a rooster in his history and who had been touring the West making a "study" of the cowboy. He claimed that the first American cowboy appeared on our national scene in Texas in the 1850s, and with this I heartily disagreed. I maintained that the honor belonged to the California vaquero, who had arrived some eighty years earlier, and thus the argument started.

He asserted that my candidate should not be considered, since California was under the flag of Spain when the first vaquero arrived - - all of which should brand him as a "foreigner" and not a genuine American cowboy. That sounded logical at first, but for all that, the argument was full of holes and wouldn't hold water.

At the time California stepped into the spotlight Texas was under the very same flag - - Spanish - - and under the Mexican flag later, since both regions were contiguous parts of the same empire. Then the Texans, by force of arms, took their land away from the Mexicans in 1836 and established themselves as a separate nation under the Lone Star flag, and were accepted as such by the United States and other nations. Well, that wasn't the United States, was it? Then came the ups and downs of those turbulent, scrappy days with our sister republic across the Rio Grande. After a lot of this and that, Texas was finally admitted into the Union in 1845.

Now let's look back and see what was happening to Alta California during those hectic days. We'll find that while all the fireworks were going on south of the Rio Grande, the Stars and Stripes were hoisted at Monterey, California, by Com-

modore Sloat in 1846, and California became part of the United States and has remained so ever since. Texas in 1845 - - California in 1846. Pretty close timing, but as yet the Texas cowboy hadn't made his appearance on the United States stage as a distinct character.

You see, my professor claimed the cowboy came into being in the 1850s. Well, he was correct more or less, because with the Texas cowboy you just can't set a definite date. But we still find that the California vaquero had been taking his dallies on what was now United States territory for eighty years before the Texas cowboy came into the picture. And you can start a lot of broncs and take a heap of dallies in that time, brother.

My opponent in the argument had trouble trying to clear away this hurdle, except with hems and haws and then finally with the statement that the very name my candidate bore, "vaquero," really stamped him as a foreigner. Of course that was plain ignorance on his part, and I think, way down deep, he still thought the only "Americans" were the original tourists who came over in the Mayflower. I assured him, however, that even when I was a child, in much of the cow country in Texas the word "cowboy" was seldom used. They all called themselves "vaqueros" and, I believe, do so to this day in many sections.¹³

The Spanish soldiers and missionaries had brought cattle with them at the start of their quest to colonize *Alta* California. They considered these longhorns their most important resource right from the beginning, and this includes the party of settlers that Lieutenant José Moraga brought to the tip of the San Francisco Peninsula in 1776 to create the mission and *presidio*. Throughout California the favorable geographic and climatic conditions, coupled with the preparation of the environment through fires intentionally set for hundreds of years by the Indians, fostered vast increases in the population of these semi-domesticated animals. They roamed the coastal areas as they pleased, until taken by Franciscan-trained *vaqueros* at the *matanza* (the slaughtering time).

During mission days, people in California developed a diet that included wine for drinking, olive oil for cooking and beef for eating. Vegetables and grains were grown, but cattle-raising dominated all other economic and food producing pursuits by the end of the era. One would assume that cows' milk and butter and cheese would be part of the diet too, but they were rarely seen on the table. Instead goats' milk was preferred.¹⁴

By 1810, *Alta* California had become a meat-eating cattle empire. Although outlawed from doing so by the Spanish crown, the priests, soldiers and common people began to use the hides and tallow of the animals in bartering for finished products from other

countries. In part, they were compelled to do so because of the revolution in New Spain which caused the cessation of Spanish shipments from San Blas.

Whether speaking of the herds of the Church or of the military, someone had to watch the longhorns. The California *vaquero* had charge of branding calves, slaughtering the adult animals, butchering them for meat, stripping them for hides and rendering tallow from their fatty parts.¹⁵

Who were these *vaqueros*? Sometimes they were soldiers, but usually they were California Indians.¹⁶ Imagine that. The first cowboys of the West were the historically disrespected California Indians. One of the principle icons of American culture has its roots in California and in a people written off for decades as primitive and cowardly, almost subhuman.

Just before secularization of the mission lands, there were an estimated two million cattle in California, plus great numbers of sheep, goats and horses. In 1833, the Mexican Congress began the process of seizing Church lands. On August 9, 1834, The Act of Secularization provided for the dismantling of *San Francisco de Asís*.¹⁷

As discussed previously, secularization was originally meant to return land to the California Indians, but as it worked out, favorite political friends and former soldiers were gifted vast land grants instead. For example, a group of Indians at the San Francisco mission petitioned for property south of Pilarcitos Creek in today's Half Moon Bay, but the California governor at the time ignored them. The land was later awarded to Candelario Miramontes as *Rancho San Benito*.¹⁸

For an Indian to become a *vaquero*, he had to have the trust of one of the padres. Problems did occur, as an Indian on horseback had better ability to runaway, and then, even worse, create problems as a thief or a provocateur of insurrection. It is therefore not surprising that one of the differences that manifested itself after secularization was the preference by the *rancho* owners to recruit their cowboys among mixed-blooded men instead of full-blooded Indians.¹⁹ Of course, as the years rolled by, there were more and more mixed-blooded people.

The skills necessary in a *vaquero* remained the same. From horseback he had to be expert in herding and roping. Off the horse he had to have the strength to wrestle a calf to the ground for branding.

The *rodeo* was the time in the spring when the calves were branded. They were identified by their mothers in order to distinguish what calf belonged to what *rancho* out on the open-range. It also allowed owners to sort out strays. Usually *rodeos* were held

in turns with the various neighborhood *rancheros* hosting *fandangos* which concluded the doings.²⁰

The *matanza*, when the slaughtering took place, was the second important time of the year. At times this operation was performed by *vaqueros* who, for the simple sport of it, would dodge the long horns of the critter and cut the animal's throat from the saddle while mounted on a speeding horse. Cattle were left where they fell. Then crews would skin them, and cut off the fatty portions for melting. Bags from the hides were made to contain the hot tallow.²¹

One of the many hazards of the *matanza* was being menaced by grizzly bears. They could smell all this activity and loved the taste of tallow. At any rate, as the carcasses were left on the open range, the grizzly bears acted as scavengers. Their population, which had been numerous before, increased dramatically during the Mexican California period.²²

The hides were dried and then, with the bundles of tallow, were loaded on ox carts or pack animals to be taken to market. One of the promises of the Mexican Revolution - - free trade - - was particularly welcomed in California. For the San Francisco Peninsula, American William Richardson ran a warehouse and exchange business at Yerba Buena. From docks such as José Sanchez's embarcadero at San Bruno Point, the hides and tallow would be taken by vessels to Yerba Buena and then traded with Yankee and other ships' captains.²³

Mexican *Alta* California was a sparsely settled frontier. By the end of the period (1846), it is doubtful that more than 7,000 people could actually call themselves Mexican citizens in all of the territory. Few could read or write. There were no secular schools, newspapers, cities, banks or hospitals.

In 1841, American naval lieutenant Charles Wilkes, commanding a six-ship squadron, visited the San Francisco Bay and was astounded by what he perceived as an "absence of all authority."²⁴ He noted in his journal that the San Francisco *Presidio* was a garrison in name only and was actually abandoned. Civil authorities at Yerba Buena seemed lacking as well. He did meet the *Alcalde* of Yerba Buena (who happened to be Francisco Guerrero) but found him rather pompous. After some conversation with locals, Wilkes learned that the Governor of California was unpopular - - "so much that his orders have not been complied with, and have been treated with contempt..."

For the *vaquero*, this was an isolated place in which the people had to be self-reliant. That included their celebrations and entertainments. The *rodeo* and *matanza* became special times of the year during Mexican times, when the *vaqueros* could show-off their considerable skills. There were also frequent dances and picnics. Their games

were as rough as the country. A favorite sport was “*carrera del gallo*” in which a live rooster was buried with just head and neck protruding from the ground. Teams of riders would attempt grabbing the bird and “carry him away” from horseback. The *vaqueros* also found enjoyment in playing with (of all things) grizzly bears. They would rope them for fun and sometimes bring them to a nearby mission community or pueblo for a well-promoted fight with a strong longhorn bull.²⁵ A bear and bull ring existed in the San Francisco mission neighborhood.

As far as diet went, there was not much difference in the fare from mission days. Most meals consisted of beef, beans and tortillas, seasoned with green peppers.²⁶ On the San Mateo County coast, there was some cultivation of crops, but activity was limited to the immediate tastes of the people. Most Coastside *ranchos* possessed a garden area, fenced to keep the livestock out. Small willows for poles and saplings for rails were strapped in place with rawhide, similar to mission days. A field of 40 acres was considered large. Some grains, beans, corn, peppers, pumpkins and a few vegetables were grown.²⁷

Also as in Spanish times, despite the presence of thousands of cows, dairy products were rare. It took three *vaqueros* to milk a longhorn - - one to grab the head, one to hold a rope on the beast’s back legs and one to perform the milking. California’s great nineteenth-century historian, H.H. Bancroft wrote that “milk pails were unknown, and the *ranchos*’ assortment of crockery was small, so that if several cows were milked, all the tumblers, tea-cups, and bowls were brought into requisition.”²⁸

The *ranchero* and his family took delight in watching *vaqueros* milk cows, coordinate bear-and-bull fights, lasso wild animals and display their skills during the *rodeo* and the *matanza*. The San Francisco Peninsula was a remote agricultural backwater,²⁹ but here, during the Mexican regime, cattle and land represented power. Thus the *rancheros* were considered rich, almost aristocratic.

Many of the ranch owners such as Francisco Guerrero y Palomares and Tiburcio Vasquez of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* rarely actually stayed on the ranch. They mostly lived at Yerba Buena and engaged in duties of politics, business and pleasure. Watching and caring for the longhorns and producing the byproducts from them were the jobs of the *vaquero*.

By 1840, California *rancheros* were selling between 50,000 to 80,000 hides to 20 to 30 foreign merchant ships each year. Visitors describing the landscape commented on the hideous nature of the carcasses of cattle rotting after the *matanza*.³⁰ However the *vaquero* “wrapped in his ‘serape’ . . . with huge spurs jingling like bells”³¹ made an impression of these horsemen as knights of the pastoral San Francisco Peninsula. From the

ocean, at the beginning of the Mexican period, French sea captain Auguste Duhaut-Cilly wrote while sailing from Santa Cruz to San Francisco this of the Coastside:

*The land is generally quite high in the interior and is everywhere crowned with conifers. It then slopes gently toward the shore but rises again to form a long line of hills, from which it descends at last to the sea, which here beats against vertical cliffs and then glides in sheets of white foam onto beaches of sand. . . Plains and hills were clothed in a splendid green, and everywhere we saw immense herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. . . this long strip of eighteen leagues is one continuous pasture.*³²

TWO LAND GRANTS³³

In 1839, Francisco Guerrero y Palomares and Tiburcio Vasquez were each given a land grant for property that was collectively called, and continued to be known as, *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. During 1790s, the Franciscans decided to graze cattle at what they called *El Pilar*, the land around Pillar Point. They selected this section of the Peninsula, only 22 miles distant from the mission, because of its fresh water streams, marine terraces (of alluvial fan deposits that made for fertile grassy fields) and natural boundaries (to keep herds from wandering).

This last mentioned feature factored into the naming of the place. If visitors stand on National Park property across from Half Moon Bay Airport, they will see what the Spanish saw. A ridge stands right on the coast to the west with hills to the north and east and the shore of Half Moon Bay to the south, forming an enclosure that appeared as a large natural corral, or *corral de tierra*, “corral of the earth.”³⁴ Thus the Franciscans changed the name of this part of the coast to *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Which padre gave the new name and when were not found during this study.

FRANCISCO GUERRERO Y PALOMARES

Francisco Guerrero y Palomares received title to the northern portion of the property that is now possessed, in part, by the National Park Service. He was born in Tepic, Mexico in 1811. At the age of 23, he joined the Hajar-Padres Colony of 1834 and traveled to California.³⁵ This group was formed to take advantage of the secularization policy and also to provide a buffer settlement against Russian incursion north of San Francisco Bay. They sailed from San Blas in two ships bound for Monterey, however the one carrying Guerrero put in at San Diego and those colonists traveled overland from there. The members eventually assembled as a group at *Mission San Francisco de Solano*, today’s Sonoma, where Mariano Vallejo and his men assisted them. Funding for the colony ran out, and they disbanded in March 1835, after only about three months together. The party scattered throughout California. American Charles

Brown, who is mentioned in the Phleger Estate portion of this study, had joined the group after it arrived in California, and he stayed briefly with them in Sonoma.³⁶

There is considerable confusion among local historians as to Guerrero's name and hence the name of his *rancho*. Commonly, English speakers do not understand the custom of those of Spanish heritage to add one's mother's name after that of one's father. Thus Guerrero, and not Palomares, is the correct last name for this *ranchero*, and his *rancho* ought to be referred to as the Guerrero, rather than Palomares, portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

After his arrival in California the young man acquired title to several properties in Yerba Buena, and, after five years, he had elevated himself enough among his peers as to be named *juez de paz* or justice of peace for the lands around San Francisco. As such, it was his duty to assist with the secularization process for the *Mission San Francisco de Asís*, including redistributing property, repair of Church buildings and establishing community necessities, such as a jail.³⁷ He also published police regulations for the *pueblo*. Later on he served as administrator of customs, in which he received 25% of the receipts collected. His abilities were recognized enough that he was named *alcalde* (sort of mayor), as had other men of importance, such as Francisco Sanchez, and then became sub-prefect for regions north of San Jose, with a salary of \$500 a year. He was, in fact, sub-prefect at the time of the United States takeover in 1846 and was held in high enough esteem to continue as a person of authority into the American period. As the renowned historian, Zoeth Skinner Eldredge wrote: "Guerrero was a man of high standing and well regarded by Americans as well as Californians."³⁸

He married the daughter of an *alcalde*, taking the hand of the beautiful Josefa de Haro, whose father, Francisco de Haro, was, in fact, *alcalde* of Yerba Buena twice. De Haro was also owner of a *rancho*, north of his brother-in-law, Francisco Sanchez. Guerrero and Josefa would eventually have 10 children, but only two boys lived to adulthood, Augustin and Victoriano.

Guerrero applied for a land grant for *Corral de Tierra* in December of 1838. He cited his military record, proved his Mexican citizenship, drew up a *diseño* (a simple map of the land he desired), and promised to make improvements including building an adobe house. The next year, the same year that he became justice of the peace, he received his 7766.35 acre *rancho*.

On a current map, one can trace the grant as beginning at Montara Mountain to the north, the ocean to the west, *Arroyo de en Medio* (Medio Creek) to the south and the first mountain ridge to the east. The land grant area includes today's communities of Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton and El Granada. National Park properties are inland from these populated areas.

Arroyo de en Medio is maybe the most significant placename associated with *Corral de Tierra*. Its original application was *El Arroyo del Rodeo de en Medio* translated roughly as “Central Rodeo Creek.”³⁹ Here was the boundary between Guerrero and his neighbor, Tiburcio Vasquez. For the *vaqueros* of both *ranchos* this was a good location for rounding up cattle. The ravine with the beach in front of it and the hill in back made for yet another natural corral and a good place for shared *rodeos*.

The creek furthest north, on Guerrero’s land, was at the base of Montara Mountain and was originally known as *Arroyo de la Cuesta* (Creek of the Mountains).⁴⁰ In the 1890s, the Martini Ranch occupied the place and the Creek took its name as Martini Creek.⁴¹

Working southward, on Guerrero’s property, Pablo Vasquez, Tiburcio’s son, related in a letter in 1892 to Stanford professor Mrs. Earl Barnes, that San Vicente Creek (which first appears on maps in 1854) took its name from the “patron saint of the first civilized settler” in the vicinity, except no one has ever actually identified this individual.⁴²

The next creek down Vasquez called *Arroyo Guerrero*, after the owner of this part of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. After Guerrero died, Josefa married James G. Denniston, and in the next century, the creek took the name of this American pioneer.⁴³

Continuing south *Arroyo de en Medio* has already been discussed. Into Vasquez rancho property, today’s Frenchman’s Creek was originally called *Arroyo del Monte* (Timber Creek in this context),⁴⁴ because the *rancheros* found useable wood there. Why it was renamed Frenchman’s Creek is rather a mystery. Local lore tells of some French-Canadian horse thieves that were caught there about 1842.⁴⁵

Finally, separating the Vasquez portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* from Candelario Miramontes’ *Rancho San Benito* is Pilarcitos Creek. As mentioned, in the 1790s, the Spanish gave the area around Half Moon Bay the name *el Pilar*. It translates to mean “the Pillar” and was named for the rock visible off Pillar Point. By 1838 the name changed to *los Pilarcitos* or “Little Pillars.” The creek took the name *Arroyo de los Pilarcitos* about the same time.⁴⁶

All three mid-coast grant recipients, Guerrero, Vasquez and Miramontes were absentee owners. Why was this so? As stated above, Francisco Guerrero had important official positions at Yerba Buena which stood in the way of his living on his *ranchito*. Similarly Tiburcio Vasquez was supervisor of the San Francisco mission’s livestock, and Candelario Miramontes was an officer at the *Presidio*.⁴⁷ Furthermore, travel to their coastside properties was a problem. The roads in every direction over the hills from San Francisco were primitive and impassable during certain times of the year.

The men also had personal business to take care of at Yerba Buena. For example, Miramontes grew corn, peas and potatoes in the present San Francisco downtown area, selling the produce to passing ships' captains.

For Francisco Guerrero, living at Yerba Buena gave him the chance to meet non-Mexican traders involved in the hides and tallow business. American entrepreneur William Heath Davis noted how Guerrero and his wife threw frequent dances at their home. He tells of a July 4 party held in 1836 when the couple invited him, some American seamen, local dignitaries and members of the Hudson Bay Company to attend. The affair lasted until dawn. He also writes of Guerrero organizing an 1844 strawberry picking, week-long camping trip, complete with picnics and barbeques. Davis mentions: "Evenings at the camp were spent in singing, telling stories and playing twenty-one and whist."⁴⁸ The outing ended with a grand dance at the mission. Davis described Josefa as:

*... a graceful woman, with full, brilliant black eyes, [who] wore her hair unconfined, flowing at full length, rich and luxuriant, reaching nearly to her feet; as she moved in the figures of the dance she presented a fascinating picture of youth and beauty that I could not but admire.*⁴⁹

As for Francisco, Davis indicates that he "encouraged the immigration of foreigners to California" and at times "defended their rights." According to Davis: "He saw that the country must necessarily pass from control of Mexico." In his official capacities:

*... he gave great satisfaction, showing no particularity to his countrymen over foreigners, treating all with equal justice. Albeit a thorough Mexican and loving his country, he had, as he often expressed it, no dislike to Americans.*⁵⁰

Davis regarded Guerrero "as one of the most important men in the district." His prominence can be somewhat determined in that Guerrero Street in San Francisco was named for him.⁵¹ Davis' remarks are indicative of his respect and friendship for this *Californio*. Out of concern for his future, he once suggested that Guerrero look out for himself by petitioning the governor for land: "He replied that he had already taken steps to secure a grant at Half Moon Bay, five or six leagues in extent."

About 1839, Guerrero had an adobe house built at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. It sat at the foot of the hills at Guerrero or Denniston Creek on what is today on GGNRA land. Its ruins were still visible in 1911, when the *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 20) reported it as "a few hundred yards of where Portolá passed on his way to discovery of San Francisco Bay."⁵² Indeed, passengers on the Ocean Shore Railroad could see it, as it was within a half mile east of the tracks, a little north of El Granada. It made for a picturesque scene, as it was surrounded by fields of flowers and vegetables under

an old magnolia tree. From the house, the Guerrero family had a view of Half Moon Bay, Pillar Point and the Pacific Ocean. The site is within a eucalyptus grove across U.S. Highway 1 from the Half Moon Bay Airport. In the opinion of the author of this study, an archeological investigation of the site is warranted.

The adobe itself was 24 feet wide and 60 feet long.⁵³ On the first floor it had four rooms. An attic was present. A porch existed across its entire front.⁵⁴

Until 1906, the house existed in good shape, but the great San Francisco Earthquake in April did considerable damage to it. In June of 1911, it was slated to be taken down by lease holders A. Belli and P. Marcucci of the farm surrounding it. Evidently the lease allowed for demolition of the adobe in order to capitalize on the lumber it contained. However, Harry C. Peterson, curator at the Stanford University Museum, found out about it and secured a delay. On June 19, accompanied by a correspondent from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and representatives of the heritage group, Sons of the Golden West, a meeting took place at the adobe. Peterson and company found it in the middle of an artichoke field with a farm hand, recently arrived from Italy, living there.

An article appeared the next day in the *Chronicle* trying to draw public interest in the house and support for Peterson's quest to preserve it:

*Here in the early days gathered the elite of the State who spent hours dancing, singing and feasting. Here were organized the grizzly bear hunts, the bull fights and horse races. Today it is but a relic of the past, replete with romantic memories, one of the few that can be shown to the Eastern visitor. . . It will prove a strong incentive to the fair visitor of 1915 [the Panama Pacific International Exposition] to take the trip by Ocean Shore Railroad down that side of the peninsula, and for that reason, if no other, it should be kept intact.*⁵⁵

As a result of the meeting, Belli and Marcucci agreed to suspend tearing down the old building for another couple of days in order that Peterson be given some time to raise the \$300 necessary to preserve the structure. Peterson approached the California Landmarks League and the Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons for help. Sadly his efforts failed, and the adobe was destroyed.^{56, 57}

During its heyday as a Mexican-era *rancho*, the adobe functioned to house the Guerrero family during *rodeo* and *matanza* times, when they expected to be entertained by *vaqueros*.⁵⁸ Land use at *Rancho Corral de Tierra* changed little from the mission to the *rancho* period. Longhorns still roamed over the open range. The grazing conditions of the coast remained ideal for cattle raising, and while the actual number of livestock owned by Guerrero is lost in history, it is recorded that, with their neighbors, the family staged festive round ups featuring sporting *vaqueros* who endeavored to prove their

superior horsemanship, in the midst of happy celebrations that included bountiful meals and plenty of music.

TIBURCIO VASQUEZ AND SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS (CONTEXTUAL)

Of course sharing *Rancho Corral de Tierra* to the south was Tiburcio Vasquez and his family. Vasquez's father, also Tiburcio, had come to California, like the Sanchez's, with the Anza party of 1776. His son served as a soldier during Spanish times and, as mentioned, he also worked at the Mission as a *major-domo*, supervising the cattle belonging to the Franciscans. In that capacity he learned much about the landscape and became familiar with the trail systems leading to the coast.

He applied for the southern half of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* in December 1838, about the same time Guerrero made his petition. On October 5, 1839, Vasquez received word that he had been awarded his 4,436 acre grant.⁵⁹ It extended from Pilarcitos Creek north to Medio Creek and from the ocean into the hills. Although, Vasquez was an absentee owner during Mexican times, it is said that Vasquez possessed 2,100 head of cattle and 200 horses at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, just to start with. The festive *rodeos* staged on his property are said to have lasted for days. At Pilarcitos Creek he built a wooden house to provide living quarters for his *vaqueros*. Indicative of the bartering economy of the Peninsula *rancheros* in those days, a glimpse at the ledgers kept by José Sanchez shows us that he owed Vasquez 21 calves.⁶⁰

With troubles commencing with the Bear Flag Revolt, Vasquez built a five room adobe house on his *rancho*, just across Pilarcitos Creek from the Miramontes *rancho*. It stood on the north bank of the stream at today's City of Half Moon Bay, about 100 feet away from the road to San Mateo. The 30' by 100' structure housed Vasquez, his wife and their 11 children.⁶¹

At the age of 50, writing about something that had occurred 46 years before, Pablo Vasquez told Stanford professor Mrs. Earl Barnes that a group of Indians, brought in from Tulare by Francisco Berrelleza, erected the adobe houses for the original families on the central coast. According to Vasquez: "They were a kind of slaves" and made adobe bricks by trampling dirt, water and chopped grass with their bare feet in pits dug out of the earth. They then mixed this concoction with straw and poured the mass into moulds. The sun dried the adobe into bricks.

He told Barnes that the door and window sills were made by an American the locals called "*Jorge Loco*" (crazy George). He remembered that a long porch ran in front of the house, as did Guerreros'. The five rooms included a dining room that served the entire family at one sitting and a bedroom for his mother and father.

Vasquez wrote to Barnes that in the early days of his father's occupation of the *rancho*,

there really were no roads to the coast; just old Indian trails. The only kinds of vehicles used were two-wheeled ox-carts, the wheels being made from solid pieces of timber connected with a wooden axle. The bed of the cart was made with two boards; stakes formed the sides, and cowhides covered the top.

Just on the other side of Pilarcitos Creek resided the Miramontes family. Candelario Miramontes received his 6,657 acres *Rancho San Benito* in January of 1841. As had both his northern neighbors, Guerrero and Vasquez, he had served in the military, in fact, he saw duty during both Spanish and Mexican times.

In review, we list the *ranchos* of the San Mateo County Coast. *San Benito* went to Miramontes in 1841. Francisco Sanchez at *San Pedro* and Guerrero and Vasquez of *Corral de Tierra* all received their grants in 1839. South of them, Governor Juan B. Alvarado granted 4,439 acre *San Gregorio* to Salvador Castro in that year, 1839, as well. In between *San Gregorio* and *San Benito*, Governor Alvarado gave José Antonio Alviso his lands, 8,905 acre *Cañada Verde y Arroyo de la Purissima*, the year before. Concluding the land grant picture, Governor Jose Figueroa awarded 3,282 acre *El Pescadero* in 1833 to Juan Gonzales, Governor Alvarado bestowed 3,025 acre *Butano* to Manuel Rodriguez in 1838, and Alvarado issued 17,763 *Punta del Año Nuevo* to Simon Castro in 1842.

AMERICAN TAKEOVER, FRANCISCO GUERREROY PALOMARES AND THE SAN MATEO COAST

For absentee land grant owners Guerrero,⁶² Vasquez and Miramontes, it was the Bear Flag Revolt and the following tensions between the Americans and the citizens of Mexico that convinced them to leave Yerba Buena/San Francisco and take up permanent residence on their Coastside *ranchos*. All three knew each other. In fact, Guerrero in January of 1846 complained bitterly about the job performance of Vasquez as *major-domo* of the mission's properties. He wrote that though Vasquez was receiving \$20 a month for his services, all he really did was sell brandy, while allowing his cattle to roam where they wanted.⁶³ However, the three shared much in common. They had participated in the process of secularization of mission property, had served in the Mexican regime's military and were regarded as substantially important individuals on the San Francisco Peninsula.⁶⁴

The three also were witness to the coming of American sea captains and merchants to California. The *Californios* in general welcomed the newcomers and the mutually beneficial trade established between them. American men married into *Californio* families which helped them start businesses and secure land titles.

No one was more accommodating to the Americans than Francisco Guerrero. As noted above, he entertained his friends from the United States lavishly. As sub-prefect

of Yerba Buena in November of 1845, he promised passports to Americans who were threatened by expulsion by other Mexican authorities.

In the early months of 1846, Guerrero's job as sub-prefect grew harder to perform. Quarrels among the foreigners, deserting sailors, building war clouds and the presence of John C. Fremont in California all added pressure. Guerrero had no assistant; he had not even an official office.

The murder of the de Haro twins during the spring Bear Flag Revolt must have hit him hard. Within the small *Californio* community at Yerba Buena, the shock of such a heinous act had to have had a stunning effect. Moreover, Francisco and Ramon de Haro were not only nephews of Francisco Sanchez, but, by marriage, were nephews of Guerrero as well.

Like Francisco Sanchez, Guerrero was more or less relieved when United States naval forces formally took California as an action of the Mexican-American War. The three week old Bear Flag Revolt was thankfully over. Naval Captain John Montgomery landed at Yerba Buena with 70 men and took possession of the village (soon renamed San Francisco by the Americans) on July 9, 1846. The stars and stripes were raised in front of the custom house complete with 21 gun salute. The foreign residents cheered. The Mexican officials were not present. Guerrero himself left with his family for *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. After the hysteria calmed down, he went up to San Francisco and delivered the papers of his office. He was not detained but was paroled. The *rancheros* hoped that peaceful, prosperous days lie ahead. Guerrero and Sanchez had predicted and even hoped for an American takeover; now they had it.

During the fall, San Francisco seemed quiet enough. In September, Lieutenant Washington Bartlett was elected *alcalde*, and Guerrero served as elections inspector.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, as we know from the story of Francisco Sanchez in the section of this study about Sweeney Ridge, by winter, the *Californios* endured a variety of insults plus the seizing of their livestock that led some into rebellion, like Sanchez, and others into hiding at their remote *ranchos* on the Coastside, like Guerrero, Vasquez and Miramontes.

Evidently, of the three, Tiburcio Vasquez had the most trouble with Captain Montgomery. According to him there existed constant friction between the two with threats to this *Californio* that he'd soon be locked in irons.⁶⁶ Vasquez knew the remote Indian and Spanish trails to the coast better than anyone, and he and his two neighbors felt fairly confident that they and their families could live out on the isolated Coastside and not be bothered by the Americans.

At Pilarcitos Creek the Miramontes family, that included 13 children,⁶⁷ built their adobe home just across from the adobe of the Vasquez family. The Vasquez and Miramontes' invited other Californian families to join them. By the end of the decade about 70 people lived in the vicinity.

Clearly, of the three mid-coast *rancheros*, Guerrero had the least problem with the Americans. United States authorities recognized his abilities and trusted him enough in the early months of the occupation to help them sort out difficult legal problems involving the land grants of the Mexican regime. With the Gold Rush that came in 1849, Guerrero's expertise became even more important. Tens of thousands of new immigrants flooded into California with little respect for the people that came before them. Many who did not get rich as quickly as they had hoped, settled for picking up occupations they had in their previous lives, including farming. Some decided to squat on the lands of the *rancheros*, forcing tangled legal disagreements. Francisco Guerrero's reputation as an informed *Californio*, but sympathetic to the new American authorities, gave him an important niche as he testified on the validity of certain claims.

Meanwhile, back at Pilarcitos Creek, Miramontes and Vasquez became the founding fathers of what locals have called San Mateo County's first town. Actually the cluster of adobe houses on the north and south side of Pilarcitos Creek can hardly be called a town; since it had no commercial center, it more resembled a Spanish-Mexican style *pueblo*.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, they called their community *San Benito*, after the title of the Miramontes land grant. On the other side of the hill, the people spoke of it as Spanishtown, because everyone there seemed to speak Spanish. Over the years it became known as Half Moon Bay.

At least in the beginning, the Vasquez, the Miramontes and their friends could feel secure in the isolation of the Coastside. A traveler in 1849 who attempted traveling from San Francisco to Santa Cruz on horseback chose the coast route and reported the going quite difficult. Much of the ride had to be accomplished when the tide was low. Meanwhile, according to Pablo Vasquez, the trail to San Mateo was possible by foot or horseback, but access by four-wheeled wagons was nearly impossible.

As had Francisco Sanchez, the owners of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* successfully confirmed the title to their land grants in American courts. Guerrero petitioned for his property in 1850. Interestingly, he referred to old trails already existing on his *ranchos*, probably Spanish *vaquero* or even Indian pathways. His widow finally received the patent from the United States Surveyor General's Office in 1866. Vasquez filed for his land in 1853, and had it confirmed by the Land Commission a year later and by the District Court in April of 1859. An appeal against his claim was dismissed in June of 1859. The patent for his land grant was not received until 1873.

With Miramontes joining Sanchez, Guerrero and Vasquez in receiving their confirmations, squatters were either driven off their properties or forced to purchase them. During the 1850s, the three more southern families did sell to many small investors. Unlike other areas in California which came to be owned by just a few landholders, the mid-San Mateo County Coastside became available to many, encouraging small farms and other rural ventures.⁶⁹

The last part of the story about the original owners of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* is sad and full of mystery, as both Guerrero and Vasquez were murdered.

In the summer of 1851, San Francisco was suffering through a crime wave. Reacting to this, the merchant classes of the city organized a vigilance committee. In the midst of this, Francisco Guerrero continued in his capacity of helping the authorities determine the validity of some of the old Mexican land grants and spent much time in town. On Saturday afternoon July 12, Guerrero was leading a horse belonging to acquaintance Robert Ridley to the Mission District, when at First and Mission he met up with another man, later identified as François LeBras, a French immigrant. Witnesses said that Guerrero allowed LeBras to mount and ride the horse. At about today's 11th or 12th Streets, Anne Greene (wife of Alderman William Green) saw Guerrero and a man riding horses as if in a race. They also seemed to be whipping each other's horses while engaging in "sort of a scuffle."⁷⁰ She then saw Guerrero fall from his horse nearly at the foot of her house. According to the *Alta California* of July 14, his skull was broken and he was "perfectly senseless." He died the next day, July 13.

Judge Harvey Brown called together a coroner's inquest at the Mansion House Saloon near the old mission. The Vigilance Committee, meanwhile, began conducting its own investigation. The Judge allowed the Vigilantes to take LeBras away after witness Charles Maysfield said he saw the race, named LeBras as in the race with Guerrero and observed Guerrero's fall. Another witness, Peter Van Winkle, testified that he was at the scene just after Guerrero's spill and said blood on the road appeared six yards in front of where the victim landed, indicating that Guerrero fell because he was hit. Dr. Peter Smith then rendered his opinion that Guerrero had sustained several head wounds (five actually) that could have been delivered by a club or a slung shot (a kind of black jack). Another doctor, Charles Hitchcock, agreed with these findings.⁷¹

San Francisco newspapers were divided in their coverage. The July 14 edition of the *Alta California* called the episode a "horrible murder" and "...one of the most terrible and cold-blooded... we have ever been called upon to record..." However, the *San Francisco Herald* felt the testimony and evidence too thin. Moreover most people in San Francisco who knew LeBras felt him to be unbalanced, but without the physical ability or mental capacity to pull-off the crime.

The Vigilantes agreed that the case against LeBras was meager and turned him back over to the legal authorities. The trial took place on November 15, with Judge Delos Lake presiding. Some testimonies were restated with more witnesses corroborating the stories, plus one that saw LeBras trying to sell Robert Ridley's horse downtown. For some reason Mrs. Greene was not asked to come to the stand. This was a Friday, and the prosecuting attorney asked the Judge for an adjournment until Monday so that he could produce Doctors Smith and Hitchcock. Judge Lake refused the request, and the prosecution quickly backed off and concluded its case. The jury never left its box for deliberation. They immediately found LeBras "not guilty."⁷²

The real perpetrator(s), whether they used LeBras or not, were never caught. Even for rough and tumble San Francisco, the whole trial seemed more than just suspicious. Someone had gotten away with this terrible crime, and, because of Guerrero's expertise on land grants, speculation rested on someone or some party that may have had much to win with Guerrero's departure.

Contemporary observers, such as William Heath Davis, wrote of one particular case, involving the "Santillan claim," as a possible motive for killing Guerrero. Back in 1848 the last Mexican governor of California, Pio Pico, issued a passel of land grants. At least some proved fraudulent because they were issued after February when the treaty ending the Mexican American War, which awarded California and other territories to the United States, was signed.

The land grant in question was said to have been given by Pico in 1846 to Prudencio Santillan, pastor at the mission church. It awarded him three square leagues of San Francisco, which comprised most of the present day City. Various individuals and firms had material reasons to claim it legal - - others a fraud. It was in constant litigation until finally, in 1860, the claim was proven to be a fake before the United States Supreme Court. The speculation of local historians is that had Guerrero been alive, he would have more quickly aided the law in uncovering the sleazy affair, hence someone who would benefit from the lie did away with him.⁷³

Locals also can't help but wonder what might have happened in San Mateo County. All the land grants down the Peninsula were proven legitimate, but only after costly legal proceedings. Many *rancheros* could not afford the attorneys' fees and had to sell off their property or take out loans against their real estate holdings. Had Guerrero lived, with his respected reputation as an expert in this field, undoubtedly he could have made life much easier for his fellow *Californios*. As the July 15, 1851, *Alta California* put it: "It is well known that Guerrero was most intimately acquainted with land titles in this portion of California and many parties were interested in having him out of the way..." His body lies at the mission cemetery in San Francisco.

In 1853, widow Josefa remarried a veteran of the Mexican-American War, James G. Denniston. Now *Rancho Corral de Tierra*'s northern portion belonged to an American. Denniston continued raising cattle for beef on the property but also planted fields of hay, oats, barley and potatoes. Denniston went to Washington D.C. to have the Guerrero land grant confirmed in 1866. Three years later, he died of kidney disease. Josefa survived her second husband. Denniston also left behind two daughters he had with Josefa.⁷⁴

A decade later, on February 15, 1879, the Half Moon Bay Colony Company was organized in San Francisco with the purpose of purchasing some 2,000 acres of "Denniston Ranch" property north of Half Moon Bay with the intention of selling lots as homesteads. For many years, locals referred to this subdivision as "the Colony."⁷⁵ Northwestern portions of "the Colony" are on today's GGNRA.⁷⁶

Two years after that purchase, in 1881, German immigrant Jurgen Wienke bought a large section of the *rancho* that would become known as Moss Beach. He was born in Schleswig and as a boy worked on the Hamburg Ferry. He came to America at the age of 25 hoping to become engaged in farming and mining. The land on the San Mateo County Coastside he purchased had belonged to Francisco Guerrero's son, Victoriano. The property had been mortgaged in San Francisco at the Clay Street Bank which desired its sale. Local legend has it that when Wienke first saw the beach and the moss growing on the reef, he felt the place could be home to a world class resort. He read of rumors about the creation of a railroad down the Coast and then made the decision to buy up the property.⁷⁷

That same year he married Mets Paulson, a cousin of Claus Spreckels. They spent their honeymoon at Moss Beach. Wienke built a resort establishment and planted thousands of cypress trees, arranged in various designs, that are still present today. The railroad he hoped for did not materialize until 24 years later, but Wienke remained at Moss Beach and became a prominent member of the Coastside's community, serving for 25 years as clerk of the Board of Trustees for the Denniston Grammar School District.⁷⁸

Locals have blamed "the downfall" of the original owners of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* on their own shortcomings alleging that they "mortgaged great sections of the rancho simply for good of drinking and gambling, as was the pattern of a great many of the early Spanish." This ethnocentric comment plus the illusion that "the Guerrero men fell as easy prey for the wiley Americans," can be refuted by the life and times of the knowledgeable Francisco Guerrero himself. Even as late as 1928, his son Victoriano still held parts of the *rancho*. He died at the age of 84 that year. According to the August 31 edition of the *San Francisco Examiner* he "lived the life of a Spanish gentle-

man” and spent most of his last days away from the family house at 16th and Dolores Streets in San Francisco and instead at his ranch “near Half Moon Bay” where:

...he indulged in his lifetime hobby, the raising of race horses. Many of his horses won fame on California tracks and were the toast of the sporting element a score of years ago.

Services for this old-time *Californio* were held at the Mission church in San Francisco.

TIBURCIO VASQUEZ AND FAMILY IN THE NEW ERA (CONTEXTUAL)

The life history of Tiburcio Vasquez, who was awarded the southern portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* (not GGNRA land), should not be confused with that of his infamous nephew of the same name. The other Tiburcio Vasquez was a notorious bandit. The Bear Flag Revolt and the Mexican-American War had brought in the new regime. Some *Californios* resented the prejudices that many of the new immigrants from the United States brought with them.

Hard feelings and suspicions were only exacerbated by the Gold Rush that brought multitudes of young men, seeking to make it rich in this new place and then return home with their wealth. It is said that Vasquez’s nephew was irritated with the way these exploiters treated the *Californios* as inferiors and was particularly angered at how they would then make advances toward the *Californio* women.

Thus he became a hero to some (a sort of Mexican Robin Hood) and a scoundrel to others (roaming the countryside stealing horses and robbing stagecoaches). Because of the remote nature of the Half Moon Bay community, outlaw Vasquez showed up at certain special occasions without fear of being arrested. His appearance shocked those more accepting of the new order.⁷⁹ He was caught in 1874, and executed in San José the next year.

His uncle, meanwhile, became benefactor to the small Half Moon Bay community. Recognizing that the mission in San Francisco was far away and in more hostile surroundings, Vasquez gifted land for a cemetery. After 1850, this Pilarcitos Cemetery (still existent on California State Highway 92 just east of Half Moon Bay) became the resting place for many of the original *Californios*. With his help, in 1856, a Catholic church was built in the middle of the cemetery. It represented the second house of worship erected in San Mateo County, the first being another Catholic Church constructed by Dennis Martin over the hill. For some years it was the only Catholic Church on the coast. Visiting priests from Santa Clara conducted services there. A fire destroyed it in 1876, and it was replaced by another establishment in town southwest of the cemetery.⁸⁰

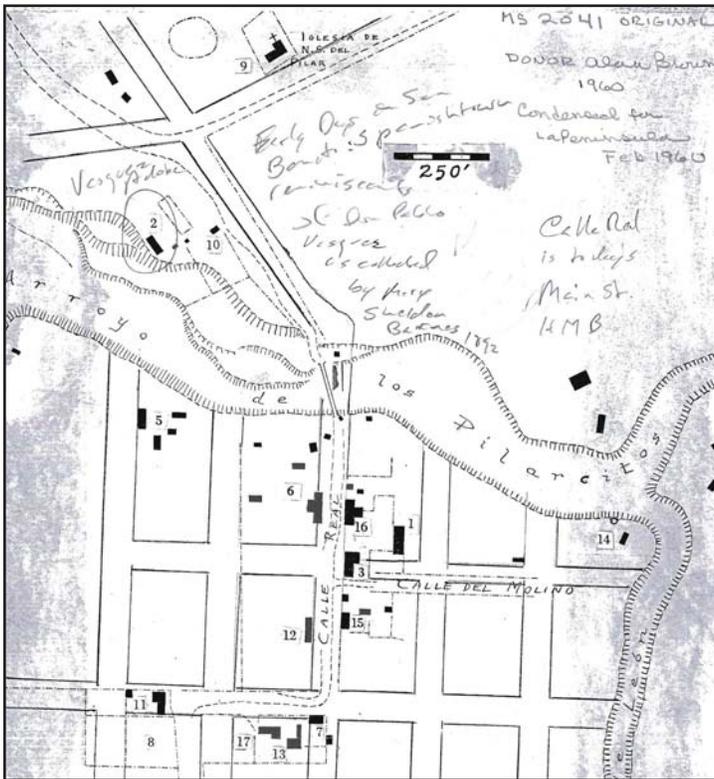


Fig. 3.1: Map of Half Moon Bay with Tiburcio Vasquez's adobe house circled in pencil in the upper left.

During the 1850s, the small economy of Half Moon Bay was based on a few agricultural enterprises. The people lived in isolation and naturally intermarried; families deeply depended upon one another. It was still a place known as a *Californio* community. However, in the 1860s, Americans began setting up businesses. They first opened a harness shop, then a blacksmith shop, a general store and a grist mill. Henry Bidwell established Half Moon Bay's first tavern, and later became postmaster.

On April 12, 1863, as he sat at a window in a Half Moon Bay saloon, an assailant from the street hit Tiburcio Vasquez with a volley of gunfire. He was declared dead at the scene. The unknown murderer got away, and an extensive manhunt failed to find him.⁸¹ Locals speculated about a possible conspiracy. Vasquez's neighbor, Francisco

Guerrero, had been a witness in the Santillan land fraud case, and he had been murdered. Now Vasquez, who had also been a witness in that case, was killed.⁸² Vasquez was buried beneath the floor of the church at Pilarcitos Cemetery.

The Vasquez family continued to be a prominent force in the Half Moon Bay area. For example, they are given credit for planting the first eucalyptus trees on the Coastsides in 1868.⁸³ However, like the descendants of Francisco Guerrero, through the years they sold off most of their real estate.

The original adobe house built by Tiburcio stood until 1906. The great San Francisco Earthquake that April destroyed it and killed three people living there, the only loss of life in San Mateo County during that disaster.⁸⁴

Pablo Vasquez, Tiburcio's son, became one of the well-known characters of the Coast. His frame house still stands at Half Moon Bay. He was born in 1842, and was christened at the mission at San Francisco. He spent much of his childhood at the mission. He married Amelia Conner in 1872. He lived a long and happy life at Half Moon Bay.

Locals regarded him with celebrity status. He was an expert horseback rider and also a great billiards player, who gained further notoriety for walking around town with his distinctive collapsible cue stick. He is buried at the cemetery his father donated to the community.

AGRICULTURE

JAMES G. DENNISTON'S RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA

With the Gold Rush and the coming of so many hungry immigrants, food production became an important business in California. In 1849, a single head of cattle could bring as much as \$500. While inflated prices fell as the months wore on, in 1851 one animal could still cost \$150,⁸⁵ far exceeding values established anywhere else.

Conditions on the San Mateo County Coastside for cattle grazing were perfect. According to an 1860s edition of the *San Mateo County Gazette*, the Bayside of the County and even the “high lands are in summer parched and dry.” However, over the hill, the Coastside had “no excessive heat. . . owing to the fogs, which immediately upon the opening of spring, take the place of the winter rains. . .” Consequently, “the ground is continually supplied with moisture; . . .the verdure is. . . prolonged during the entire year over the whole western slope, and grazing for cattle is therefore abundant.”

San Mateo County’s Coastside was still a wild place however. The April 7, 1860 edition of the *Gazette* included an account of four adventurers “at Mr. Denniston’s” who participated in “a wild-cat hunt” (probably a bobcat hunt):

The day was somewhat wet, but notwithstanding, the ardent hunters. . . sallied forth, following the baying pack, among which were seven fine foxhounds. Our course lay up a deep canyon, the trail skirting a thicket of willow and undergrowth of several hundred yards. . . , through which meandered a stream whose continuous flow rendered the ground marshy and the vegetation thick. . . On either side rose majestic hills. . . In a short time the deep baying of the hounds indicated their scent of the track. . . They have him! resounded from the foremost hunter. And after a gallop of a short distance, sure enough, there he was, a wild cat in a treetop. . . Hazardous as the undertaking appeared, the party were resolved to secure the cat alive. Accordingly, a. . . noose was placed about his neck and after much struggling. . . he was safely bagged in a gunny-sack. . . and carried in triumph to the ranch.

Half Moon Bay was a very small community, still. In 1852, it is doubtful that 85 people lived there.⁸⁶ The isolation of the place can be determined from the writings of a traveler who described the road over Montara Mountain in 1856. Edward McGowan wrote how he and James Denniston “. . .had to traverse a rugged mountain road, bad enough in the day-time, but at night, except on the surest-footed beasts, almost impassable.”⁸⁷

The Coastside was predominately *Californio* in the 1850s. Those who weren't, like Denniston, usually married into an old family to get property. Candelario Miramontes sold a portion of *Rancho San Benito*, just south of Half Moon Bay, to American James Johnston. His having a Mexican wife, Petra de Hara, certainly helped Johnston, who established one of the first dairy ranches in California on his 1,162 acres.⁸⁸

It was Americans like Johnston and Denniston who thought of food production beyond simply raising cattle for meat.

Two important Coastside Americans arrived in California at the same time. At the end of the Mexican-American War, in October of 1848, Denniston and Josiah P. Ames were mustered out of Company B of the famous Stevenson Regiment of New York Volunteers at Monterey.⁸⁹ They had been recruited with the promise that at the end of the war, they would be discharged somewhere in the new territories acquired as a result of the war. Both tried their hand at gold mining, but ended up on the San Mateo County coast. The reader will recall that Denniston married the beautiful Josefa, the widow of the murdered Francisco Guerrero. Their wedding took place on February 12, 1853, and he and his wife were soon living in the original adobe house at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.⁹⁰ They would have three children, two daughters and one son. Daughters Amelia and Josefa lived to adulthood. Denniston continued to raise beef cattle there, but recognized the fertile valleys as having excellent potential for growing crops and raising other kinds of animals as well.

Within half a dozen years, the *San Mateo County Gazette* (April 7, 1860 edition) declared Denniston's *rancho* “one of the most productive ranchos of its kind, namely, for grain and stock-raising, in California.” The newspaper explained that: “Cattle of all descriptions in excellent condition are grazing upon the immense pastures.” About crop production, it gushed: “Some accounts of the yield of grain and produce, were we to give them, would cause our eastern farmers to stare with astonishment. . .”

Denniston's biggest problem was transporting his products to market in San Francisco. In 1858, on the southeast side of Pillar Point, he built the first wharf on Half Moon Bay. It became known as Denniston's Landing or sometimes as Potato Wharf because of the quantity of that product loaded onto waiting ships. Denniston built roads from his adobe and grain fields down to the landing. Tenant farmers throughout the Half

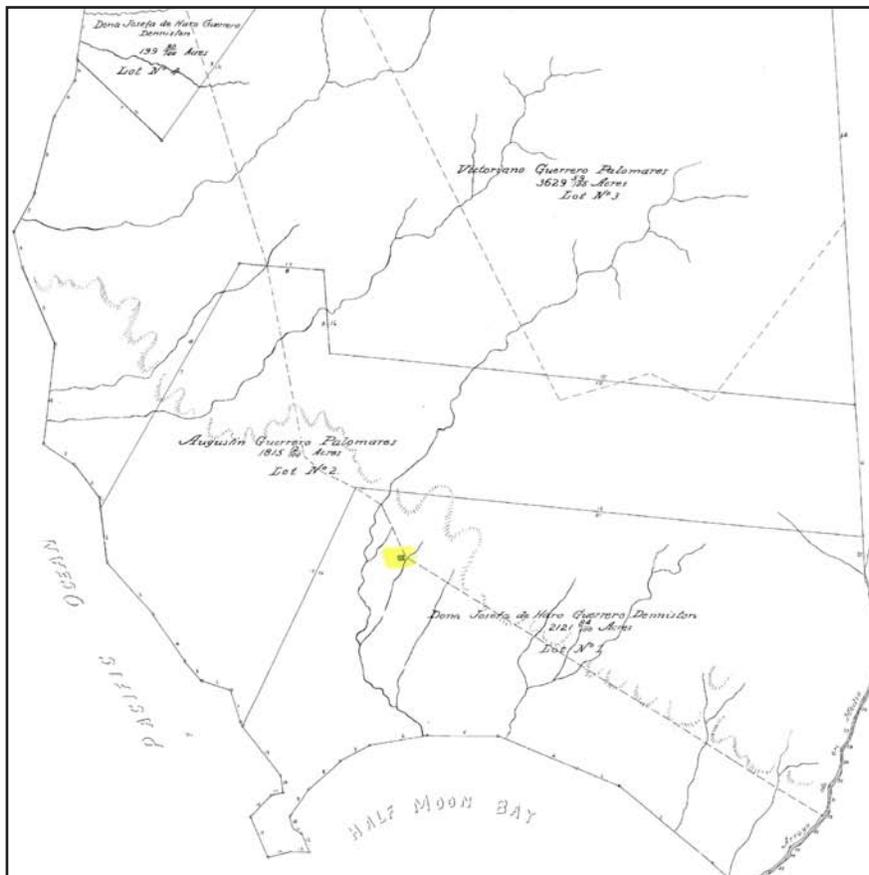
Moon Bay area also came to use the wharf.⁹¹ By the fall of 1859, San Mateo County assessed the value of Denniston's property holdings at \$37,469, making him the second richest man in the County.⁹²

This wealth allowed Denniston to dabble in other opportunities. He bought stock in the San Francisco-San Jose Railroad. When completed in 1864, it was the first commuter railroad west of the Mississippi. Closer to home he became part-owner of the flour mill in Half Moon Bay, and he invested in other local businesses.

Denniston also became involved in California politics. In 1860 and 1862, he ran successfully for the state legislature and gained a powerful reputation in Sacramento. Those were the days of the American Civil War (1861-1865). He called himself a Union Democrat, and identified strongly with the North against the South. He felt himself a *Californio*, at least by marriage, and listed his occupation as *ranchero* on the legislature roster.

Fig. 3.2: Map of Rancho Corral de Tierra showing how the land was divided two years before James Denniston's death.

Denniston died of kidney disease, still a young man, in 1869. However, as a physical reminder of this accomplished pioneer, the pilings of his landing remained visible for decades, in fact clear into the 1940s.



Two years before Denniston's demise, *Rancho Corral de Tierra* was divided between Josefa and two of her sons by her first marriage. Roughly speaking, except for a smaller piece of property in the far northwest corner given to his mother, Victoriano Guerrero received the northern properties in the vicinity of today's Montara. Augustine Guerrero obtained title to the central portion. Josefa Guerrero-Denniston took possession of the southern section, around today's El Granada.⁹³ Over the years, the three sold off the greater part of the old *rancho*.⁹⁴

DENNISTON'S NEIGHBORS (CONTEXTUAL)

Just south of the Guerrero-Denniston *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, Denniston's old friend Josiah P. Ames built his wharf, which also became a lasting reminder of an old pioneer, at Miramar where Medio Creek flows into the ocean.

Ames was born in England in 1829. His family immigrated to the United States when he was but six months old. They lived in New York City at first and then in other locations. As stated, with Denniston, he came to California after serving in the Army during the Mexican-American War. He was discharged in September of 1848, when hysteria about gold in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada was growing in intensity. He worked the mines at Mokelumne Hill and other places until deciding to commit to a more traditional life on the San Mateo County Coast.⁹⁵

In 1855, he bought 82 acres of land in the Half Moon Bay area. He became a farmer, saloon keeper and even entered into the laundry business. He had success. In 1865, San Francisco newspapers heralded his agricultural accomplishments with stories about a record breaking head of lettuce from his farm, measuring five feet, eight inches around and weighing in at 41 pounds.

In 1868, he built his 1,000 foot wharf. Despite problems with climatic and tidal conditions, it quickly eclipsed Denniston's wharf (which became known as Old Landing) in importance and developed into the most popular point for transporting produce to San Francisco from farms as far south as San Gregorio. A community formed around the embarcadero that came to be known as Amesport (now Miramar). Wagons of potatoes, hay and grain were unloaded onto mule driven rail cars and then put aboard cargo vessels.⁹⁶ Locals claimed as many as three ships could dock at the pier when the weather was right. One account tells of the ship *Santa Cruz* stopping at Amesport for 6,000 sacks of grain on a Saturday night and continuing down the coast to Pigeon Point to take on several hundred barrels of oil from the whaling station there.⁹⁷

At the same time that Ames enjoyed his successes as an entrepreneur, he also engaged in politics. In 1859, he was elected to the County's court system and for forever after was known as "Judge Ames."⁹⁸ As was his neighbor and friend Denniston to the north, Ames was an "Anti-Le Compton Democrat," in other words, he was against the expansion of slavery.⁹⁹ He was elected to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in 1860, and served steadily in that capacity until 1881, except during a term in the state legislature (1877-1878). As a County Supervisor, he was much appreciated by Coast-side residents for the attention he gave to issues that most affected them, especially the building of roads and bridges. In 1881, he moved from the County when Republican California Governor George C. Perkins appointed him warden of San Quentin Prison. Ames died in 1903.

Besides large land holdings belonging to Denniston, Ames and Johnston, smaller farms were established by such individuals as F.R. Burden, B.F. Webb and Amstead Goadley, who collectively settled south of Johnston at Cañada Verde in 1853.¹⁰⁰ The chief difference between the Coastside's American style farm and a Mexican-era rancho stemmed from the purpose of the former. The American farm produced surplus food for profit, while the *rancho* was more concerned with sustenance. The American farm was not self-sufficient. Instead it depended upon goods and services at places like Half Moon Bay.¹⁰¹

Of course the level lands were used up first -- but the hillsides were fertile too. Blacksmith, newspaper publisher, politician and inventor, R.I. Knapp had the answer. He hailed from New York and came to California by sailing to the Isthmus of Panama, crossing it via covered wagon and boarding a ship to San Francisco, arriving in 1863. He first lived in Sonoma County, but by 1871 found his way to Half Moon Bay. He watched his neighbors struggle, trying to plow the hillsides. The Kilgore Plow they used had a beveled blade that was fine for cutting into the earth, but it was heavy and clumsy. As a blacksmith Knapp repaired dozens of Kilgores and decided he could make a better tool. In 1873, the first "Knapp Sidehill Plow" appeared. This lighter, sturdier instrument included a simple locking device that kept the plow in place while allowing for easier adjustment of the blade. With hillside farming, reversing the blade was necessary after completing each furrow. A farmer could now, for the first time, reverse the blade without having to let go of the plow and thus the animal harnessed to it. The invention was a success. At first, Knapp handmade each plow with sledge and anvil. However, by 1878, he was manufacturing hundreds of these plows from a plant in Half Moon Bay for shipment all over California, Oregon and even the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁰²

Half Moon Bay, itself, had changed by the 1870s. In 1872, a stagecoach traveler stopped there and estimated the population to be about 400, making it, after Redwood City, the largest community in the County. He claimed what he saw most was "whiskey and blacksmiths, with the former in the lead."¹⁰³ He remarked that potatoes seemed to be the main crop of the surrounding farms, with sugar beets and chicory close behind.

Despite the changes, perhaps because of its isolation, the San Mateo County Coastside avoided the trend of most other places in California, of large absentee landlords profiting from the toil of migrant laborers. Instead small-scale farms using a stable local labor force gave the Coastside a unique character.

Also of note was the mixed ethnic heritage of the farmers and their workers. Along with the *Californios* and Americans were increasing numbers of Irish, Chinese and Portuguese.

Since the Gold Rush days, Irish immigrants had joined with Americans to farm on the San Francisco Peninsula. Many became prominent in San Mateo County. For example John Kyne came as a farmer to *Rancho Corral de Tierra* land. He was born in 1847 in County Mayo, Ireland. At age 18, in 1865 he arrived at San Francisco and worked as a contractor for his uncle. He tried dairy ranching on Twin Peaks in the City, but in 1884, decided to go into partnership with Peter Burke to create a farm at Moss Beach. A recognized leader of the community, he served as trustee of the local grammar school for 30 years, until elected to the High School Board in 1918. He lived all the rest of his life at Moss Beach.¹⁰⁴ Kyne died in 1938 and is buried in the Catholic cemetery at Half Moon Bay.¹⁰⁵

Also coming here with the Gold Rush were the Chinese. They provided inexpensive gang labor throughout California, and farmers on the Coastside made use of them. By 1880, at least 600 were present in San Mateo County (whose total population was about 8,200).¹⁰⁶

During those early years, Portuguese immigrants became farm laborers. Many engaged in coastal whaling and worked on farms during the off-season. Our 1872 stagecoach visitor to Half Moon Bay mentions that many Portuguese had, by that time, actually purchased their own farms in the area in parcels of 30 to 40 acres for \$60 to \$100 an acre.¹⁰⁷

The Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882 had a huge effect on the labor market in California and, consequently, the San Mateo County coast. People from a variety of other places filled the void, including immigrants from Japan and Italy.

Japanese farm workers became ubiquitous throughout the Peninsula. As other immigrants did, they worked the lands of others until they had the resources to lease or buy properties of their own.¹⁰⁸

JAPANESE AT RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA

As Japanese farmers prospered in California using their traditional techniques for maximizing production on small plots of land, other farmers came to fear the competition. In 1913, California passed the Heney-Webb Alien Land Law. Although carefully worded so as not to bring international offence by specifically mentioning the Japanese, this was the group that was targeted. The law provided that no alien ineligible for naturalization could own land.

Initially, the law was mitigated to an extent, by having land purchased in the name of American born children with the alien parents as guardians. Later laws closed this loophole, however, relegating many Japanese to becoming sharecroppers. Meanwhile,

the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, in effect, halted Japanese immigration until after 1945.¹⁰⁹

Before World War II, two Japanese families came to cultivate lands now a part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Takahashis and the Satos. Both their stories have historical importance. The first one is about a pioneer horticulturalist and leader of his community. The second is about the struggles of a farm family faced with internment and ruin.



Fig. 3.3: A 1940 photograph of Y. Takahashi.

San Mateo County Coastside Japanese American families always referred to him as Mr. Takahashi. Various sources list him as I. Takahashi,¹¹⁰ E. Takahashi or Y. Takahashi.¹¹¹ The United States Census of 1920 shows Yunosuke Takahashi living in Township 4, within the Denniston Precinct. While this is certainly our man, one should not trust the spelling of that first name. The 1939 Montara Phone Book shows a Y. Takahashi on Sunshine Valley Road. One source has him arriving about 1900.¹¹² Another says, definitively, it was 1914.¹¹³ The Census says 1900. One source describes his flower growing enterprise just east of Montara as “a tiny nursery”¹¹⁴ that launched the strawflower industry in San

Mateo County. Another proclaims it “a large Japanese garden of flower terraces and fish ponds...that...is credited with starting the strawflower industry in the United States.”¹¹⁵ A photograph taken by the San Francisco Flower Market in 1940 shows Takahashi and his wife in front of a large hedge in front of his land saying “Welcome”.

The 1920 Census reports Takahashi’s wife, Kiku, as being 32 years old, and having immigrated from Japan in 1911. Takahashi is listed as 43. The Census indicates that both could speak English. It tells us that Takahashi owned his house outright - - that is he paid no mortgage. However, we still have not determined under whose name his property was held. His occupation is listed as farmer in the nursery industry. Both husband and wife could speak English according to this record and although no children were reported for them, a Tsnokio Murakomi (spelling uncertain) lived with the couple and was listed as a floral worker. In part his property existed on the eastside of Sunshine Valley Road where horse stables for Renegade Ranch are today, on the Golden Gate National Recreation Area’s portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Structures that may have belonged to Takahashi (including his house and a water tower) exist on adjacent properties.¹¹⁶

It is reported that he was a former professor of horticulture from the University of Tokyo, that he introduced the first dehydration chamber at Montara in 1911, and that he began the practice of inserting wire into stems in his work. He started out by selling

flowers on the San Francisco market, using the Ocean Shore Railroad to transport his products.¹¹⁷

At this point the exact importance of Takahashi's business is not completely understood. In fact Yoshi Mizono (of the Sato family) remembers that by the time she was living on the San Mateo coast in the 1930s, Mr. Takahashi was in the cut flower business, no longer growing straw flowers at all. However, Coastside Japanese families remember this Issei and his Issei wife as kind and respected, but childless.¹¹⁸ Coastside old timer, David Hovice, recalls that his grandmother, Jenny Wagner, taught Takahashi how to speak English. For years Takahashi was noted for inviting students from Japan to study his gardens.

One of the professor's initiatives, at least as far back as the 1930s, was to bring orphaned teenage boys from San Francisco and other places to his farm where they worked until they finished school at Half Moon Bay High. One of these boys, Hero Ogo, became a farmer in the area himself, on a parcel of land where Half Moon Bay Airport is today.¹¹⁹

By 1942, when the Japanese of the Coastside were evacuated because of the start of World War II, Takahashi was in his 60s. At the Assembly Center at Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno, Mizono tells how the Japanese people from the *Corral de Tierra* area, from Frenchman's Creek up to his property, kept close to him. When a family problem for her came up, 19 year old Mizono went to the professor for help.

After the War, Takahashi was one of the few to regain his land. He took in other, less fortunate, former internees until they could get back on their feet. Local residents of Montara used to speak of Takahashi "as a short, little man taking his daily walks up and down Sunshine Valley Road."¹²⁰ Mrs. Takahashi died after the War. Mr. Takahashi outlived her and moved to San Francisco.¹²¹ He expired sometime in the 1950s or 1960s.¹²²

Just after World War II, Seiro Sato and his son Hamm came to live up Denniston Creek on land on the eastern portion of Cabrillo Farms of today's National Park's *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Seiro was born in 1872 at Kochi, a ken or prefecture in Japan. He was the oldest son in his family and decided to come to the United States in 1890. At first he settled on lands near Stockton, California and did well as a farmer. More than a dozen years later, he decided to return to Kochi to find a wife. He met Masao Hara, who became impressed with Sato's success in America. They were married as Christians. Masao became pregnant, and Seiro decided to return to California, alone, in 1906. Masao followed later.¹²³ The couple eventually had two sons, Hamm and Sam, and daughters Sue (now Sue Okamura) and Yoshi (now Yoshi Mizono).

After Masao died of cancer, Seiro moved the family to San Mateo in 1928. Here he worked as a gardener but longed to be a farmer again. By 1932, he had his family in motion once more. They leased property over the hill at Frenchman's Creek, north of Half Moon Bay, where Seiro decided to get into the flower growing business.¹²⁴

He grew marguerites¹²⁵ (chrysanthemums) and straw flowers. Close by were other Japanese families. The Katos lived at Miramar, east of the highway, and the Ogos, as mentioned above, lived at the present site of Half Moon Bay Airport.¹²⁶ Further north were the Takahashis.

According to daughter Sue Okamura, the home they lived in was a comfortable two story farmhouse that, by the beginning of World War II, was fully equipped with modern utilities. A photograph, taken in 1940, by the San Francisco Flower Market, shows a happy and proud Seiro, with two sons and two daughters.



Fig. 3.4: A 1940 photograph of Seiro Sato with two sons and two daughters.

In the weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, negative feelings manifested themselves on the Coastside. Mizono remembered how the son of a prominent Half Moon Bay family planted nails in the driveways of people of Japanese ancestry of the town.¹²⁷ When the evacuation order came, some of the Japanese families on the coast gathered at the Satos' as a sort of staging area.¹²⁸ On eviction day, the Satos joined other Japanese of the County at the Masonic Hall in San Mateo. Mizono recalled how "kind ladies from the Congregational

Church" served the people coffee and cookies.¹²⁹ Buses then took them to the Assembly Center at Tanforan. After some months there, it was on to Camp Topaz in Utah. Mizono remembered upon arriving there "...it was so desolate. I was never so depressed in my whole life."¹³⁰

In 1943, the Sato brothers were presented with a questionnaire from the federal government. Two key questions (numbers 27 and 28) asked if they would be willing to sign up for the armed forces and if they were ready to disclaim loyalty to the Emperor of Japan and instead proclaim allegiance to the United States.¹³¹ Sam had bad knees and a hurt back. As a "4-F," his determination to say "yes" had no real impact.¹³² However, Hamm said "no" to both and told an FBI agent: "I'm putting no-no, because you look up in the dictionary and see what al-

legiance means. Allegiance means. . .swearing allegiance to a country that's going to protect you.”¹³³

Yoshi Mizono found some relief from the hardships of camp in religion. She attended Bible class once a week. She asked her father and older sister if she had ever been baptized. They could not remember; so on Easter Sunday, 1943, she was baptized with others on a platform, during a sunrise service.¹³⁴ That same year, the 21 year old left Topaz to attend nursing school in Pennsylvania.¹³⁵ Her older sister, Sue, was married that year to a Nisei serving in the Army. For some months she lived away from Topaz, but when he was discharged in 1945, the couple returned to camp.¹³⁶

When the War ended, the family was finally allowed to go back to San Mateo County. Sam Sato remembered coming through Vallejo and seeing the fog: “It sure reminded me of the coastside. Something that I felt really good about inside - - coming back to the coast after four years.”¹³⁷ Of course the Satos had no idea what they were coming home to. Sam recalled that Coastside artist Galen Wolfe kept the family's personal belongings in his barn. Wolfe reportedly had to protect these possessions from his brother, who wanted to burn them. Wolfe threatened his sibling with his shotgun, and that saved the Satos' things. Later, when one of Sam's sisters gave birth, she named the boy Galen after this friend.¹³⁸

In the Spring of 1947, Seiro and Hamm decided to get back into farming and leased acreage from an Italian family.¹³⁹ The property was at Denniston Creek, on the National Park's Corral de Tierra, today. The land they occupied is east of the present Cabrillo Farms buildings, beyond the Denniston Reservoir at the base of the hills.

Their “house” was nothing like the old farmhouse at Frenchman's Creek. The two men built what was really a one or two room shack. They had no money, built no green house or hardly any other improvements. There were no utilities. Fresh water came from the Creek. They cleared the land and grew flowers and some vegetables. Sue Okamura remembered it as “a real something.”¹⁴⁰

Later, they built a second place, further up the canyon from the first. This was a nicer affair. It had plumbing - - even a toilet. The two lived here as bachelors until about 1960.¹⁴¹

The men were known to the community around then. Being so close to Half Moon Bay Airport, Hamm took flying lessons from Frank Sylvestri.¹⁴² Seiro died in 1968, at the age of 96. Some years ago a fire destroyed what was left of the Satos' place. The ruins remaining in the canyon are said to be theirs.¹⁴³

ITALIANS, ARTICHOKE AND THE COASTSIDE

Recognizing the success of Professor Takahashi, Italian farmers down the road near Half Moon Bay began to realize that growing a variety of flowers could net more cash than food crops. After 1900, using irrigation and immigrant labor (largely their own people), they helped launch one of San Mateo County's most lucrative industries of the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁴

Indeed, by this time, Italians had become the most numerous group on the coast, and they became intensely involved with farming. They came poor and uneducated from the northern part of Italy - - places like Lucca and Genoa. Because of the agricultural experience they brought with them from the old country, to the "Mediterranean" type climate and topography of the San Mateo County Coastside, Italians did well. They understood the changing nature of agribusiness in California. They turned away from the traditional endeavors - - grain, potatoes and dairy products - - and used irrigation techniques and immigrant labor, as they were applying them to the flower business, for new crops such as Brussels sprouts and especially, artichokes.

Although the artichoke had been introduced to the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by the end of the 1800s, it still was not a very well known food product in this country. The first planting of artichokes for commercial purposes in California is said to have been accomplished by Italian farmer Dante Dianda in the 1890s, at today's El Granada, either within or just adjacent to National Park Service land at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.¹⁴⁵ Further down the coast at Half Moon Bay, John L. Debenedetti earned immortal fame as the "Artichoke King."¹⁴⁶ He was the son of Joseph Debenedetti, the Pescadero merchant who became the County's first Italian member of the Board of Supervisors. John received his title for his work encouraging Italian immigrants to come to the Coastside and engage in artichoke growing. By 1906, 1,500 acres of artichokes had been planted in the Half Moon Bay area. At the same time an advertising campaign was initiated to educate the public about the food's nutritious nature and good taste.

The building of the Ocean Shore Railroad helped as well. Transportation by rail became a huge bonanza for the Coastside's farmers. In 1911, 250 boxcar loads of artichokes were shipped up to San Francisco.¹⁴⁷ By the time the Railroad went out of business in 1920, Coastside Boulevard, serviceable over Montara Mountain for trucking by 1915, allowed for moving the artichokes to market.

While Prohibition (1920-1933) and artichoke growing may not, on the surface, have much to do with one another, on the San Mateo County Coastside, especially upon *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, they did have a direct relationship. According to old time Coastside farmer Ed Lea, who was born on what is now National Park land, Italian im-

migrants, such as his parents, who wanted to lease property for farming, had to agree to grow artichokes and sell them through a “boss” named John Patroni.

Patroni was a well-known bootlegger who operated a large roadhouse/speakeasy at Princeton called the Patroni House. He built a wharf close to his establishment that served smugglers bringing in their illegal “hootch”. In one of the many stories told about Patroni and his pier, a Coast Guard Cutter surprised some of the rumrunners one night as they were unloading a shipment of whiskey. The cutter’s crew employed their one pound gun and blew a gaping hole in the wharf as they captured a few of the bootleggers.¹⁴⁸

Among Patroni’s activities was leasing land held by himself and the Cowell Estate to tenant farmers. Lea remembers that about all of the *Rancho Corral de Tierra* property now held by the Park Service, plus land west of it, across the highway, including today’s Half Moon Bay Airport, was comprised of tenant farms, occupied by Italian immigrants who were growing artichokes.

By this time, artichokes had become a valuable commodity, especially back east where there were few of these vegetables on the market, but many immigrants who desired them. “Boss” Patroni had his farmers pack their artichokes into large crates, the locals called “caskets.”¹⁴⁹ Sometimes booze bottles were hidden in the “caskets” to enhance revenues. Back east, and especially in New York City, when one mentioned “Half Moon Bay artichokes” it meant property of organized crime syndicates.

The San Mateo County Coastside had become a central point for raising artichokes. The fields near Castroville and other parts of California had not as yet assumed the same kind of importance. In fact, it is reported that in 1920, 95% of the artichokes grown in the United States came from the Coastal Strip between Pacifica and Santa Cruz.¹⁵⁰ For a boss like John Patroni, who pulled the strings, this represented a great opportunity. He chose just Italians to lease to, helping him control things. For the tenant farmers, with limited ability to read and write in English, much less speak the language, this situation manifested into a repressive environment. Only “Boss” Patroni had the authority to give a plot of land to a farmer, and he could take away the privilege as well.

Patroni was joined by other mobster types on the Coastside. Down at Kelly Beach, south of Half Moon Bay, Lea says Al Capone’s sister’s husband also ran a notorious roadhouse. Lea showed the interviewer for this study one place on *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, within the National Park Services property, where gangsters left the remains of a person killed in a “hit”.

While artichoke growing dominated the landscape of the mid-San Mateo County

Coast, the Ocean Shore Railroad attempted to break the isolation of the Coastside (and assist farmers) by making it a rail suburb of San Francisco. Thus, the railroad was organized in 1905 for the dual purpose of transportation and, because transportation would enhance land values, real estate sales. The railroad succeeded laying track as far as Moss Beach by 1907, and by 1908, real estate salesmen were greeting trainloads of prospective buys at the station, while busily subdividing farms close to the tracks.

A miniature boom seemed to have started at Moss Beach. Several small businesses began operations. A mill and box factory employed ten men. A newspaper, *The Coastside Comet*, started up in 1910, with George Dunn as publisher. Telephone service came online in 1914. However, the boom went bust as actual construction of suburban homes on the lots that were sold did not materialize. Realtors began suing one another. Wienke's old resort hotel burned to the ground in 1911 and was never replaced. The mill and box factory shutdown in 1914. The Comet lasted until 1920, the year the railroad stopped service (George Dunn went on to become publisher of the still existing *Half Moon Bay Review*).¹⁵¹

And so, agriculture continued to be the major story of the mid-coast, at least until World War II. By 1940, San Mateo County farmers had 2,356 acres devoted to artichoke fields. Other crops were catching up. Brussel sprouts were being grown on 2,071 acres, lettuce on 1,430 and cabbage on 1,038.¹⁵²

Although pumpkins have been grown in the Half Moon Bay area since the era before the Bear Flag Revolt, it has only been in recent years that it has become a significant farm product for the area. In recent times, around Halloween, tourist throng to the San Mateo County coast to buy pumpkins in order to turn them into traditional jack-o'-lanterns. Capitalizing on this, promoter Terry Pinsleur organized the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival in the 1970s. Held every October, it has become the County's largest annual festival.

THE MYSTERIOUS BARN AT EMBER RIDGE¹⁵³

The large barn at the *Ember Ridge Equestrian Center* on GGNRA property has long been a historical mystery. Who built it, when and why? This study's team has visited the structure. Its size (quite large) and 19th century construction (with square head nails, etc.) make it the most interesting historic resource on the National Park's *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

On June 8, 2010, project author Mitch Postel visited with the current proprietor of *Ember Ridge*, Robin Camozzi, and its manager, Carl Hoffman, at Half Moon Bay to try to get some clues to the barn's past. Postel asked about two carvings on the back of the barn. One says "John Tradharo, 1908" the other, which looks a little newer, spells out "Pesky Aug." Camozzi and Hoffman knew nothing of either of these characters.

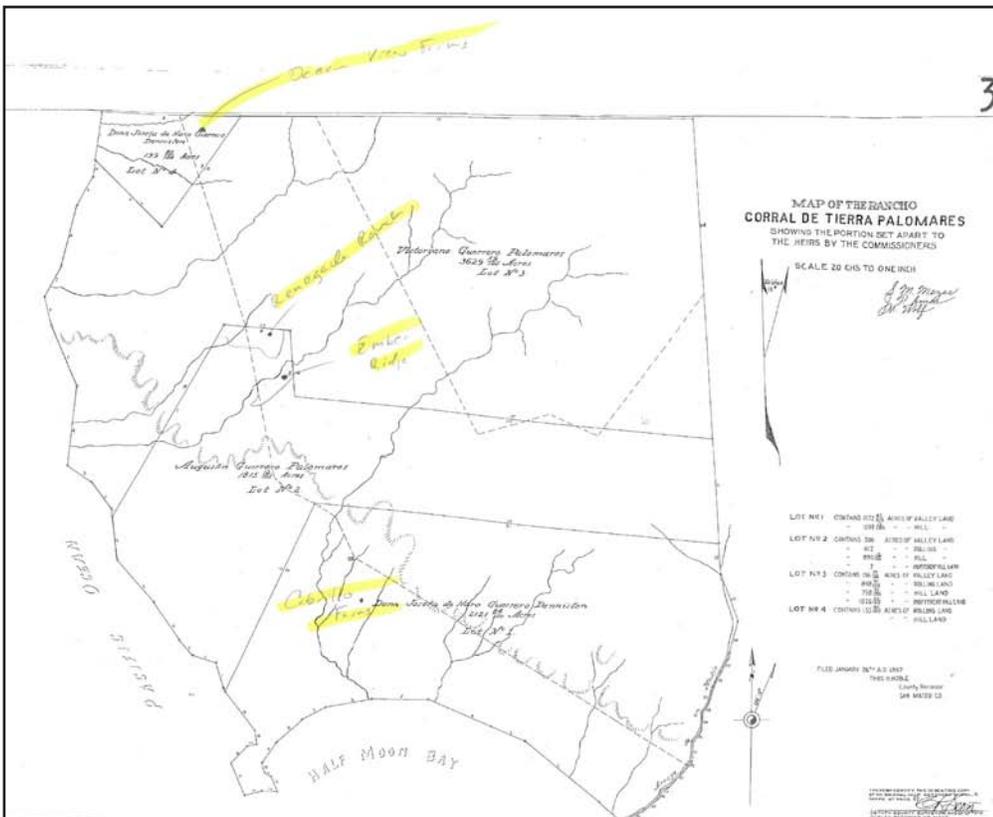
Camozzi said that she had grown-up at Moss Beach. Her father was a mechanic for United Airlines. She had understood that *Ember Ridge* had been a dude ranch back in the 1940s. Hoffman has worked on the property for thirty years or so. He understood that Joe Battles boarded horses on the property in the 1940s, and the use of the land and improvements has not changed since. He said that horses have been housed in the big barn for as long as he could remember. He said that the barn could easily hold 200 to 300 tons of hay.

Subsequent to the visit, project researcher Joan Levy searched for information on John Tradharo, Pesky Aug and John Battles. She went to the following sources:

- Death notices and obituaries of the San Mateo County County Genealogical Society
- Historical files at the San Francisco Public Library
- Google
- The San Mateo County Great Register (various years)
- Indexes of the principle San Mateo County history books
- The card file at the San Mateo County History Museum
- The United States census for 1900 and 1910
- Phone books for Half Moon Bay, 1900-1940
- The Redwood City Tribune’s index file

Fig. 3.5: Map of Rancho Corral de Tierra showing how the land was divided. Written in pencil are the four present-day clusters of buildings. San Mateo County.

Nothing was found on any of the three names.



Researchers Joan Levy and Therese Smith then undertook a partial title search using *Ember Ridge’s* parcel number (037-320-280). As previously stated, the property originally was Guerrero’s and then Denniston’s. Two years before Denniston died, the property was divided between his wife Josefa de Haro Guerrero Dennis-

ton and her two sons from her first marriage, Victoriano Guerrero and Augustin Guerrero. The map below shows again how these divisions were made. We have added the present locations of the four principle clusters of buildings now on the National Park's *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Note Ocean View Farms would have existed on the property of Mrs. Denniston (Lot No. 4). Both Renegade Ranch and the *Ember Ridge Equestrian Center* would have been on Augustin Guerrero's (Lot No. 2). Cabrillo Farms would have existed on Mrs. Denniston's second parcel (Lot No. 1). The small box on Lot No. 1 shows the only structure at *Rancho Corral de Tierra* at the time. It is the original Guerrero adobe house and, possibly, support improvements.

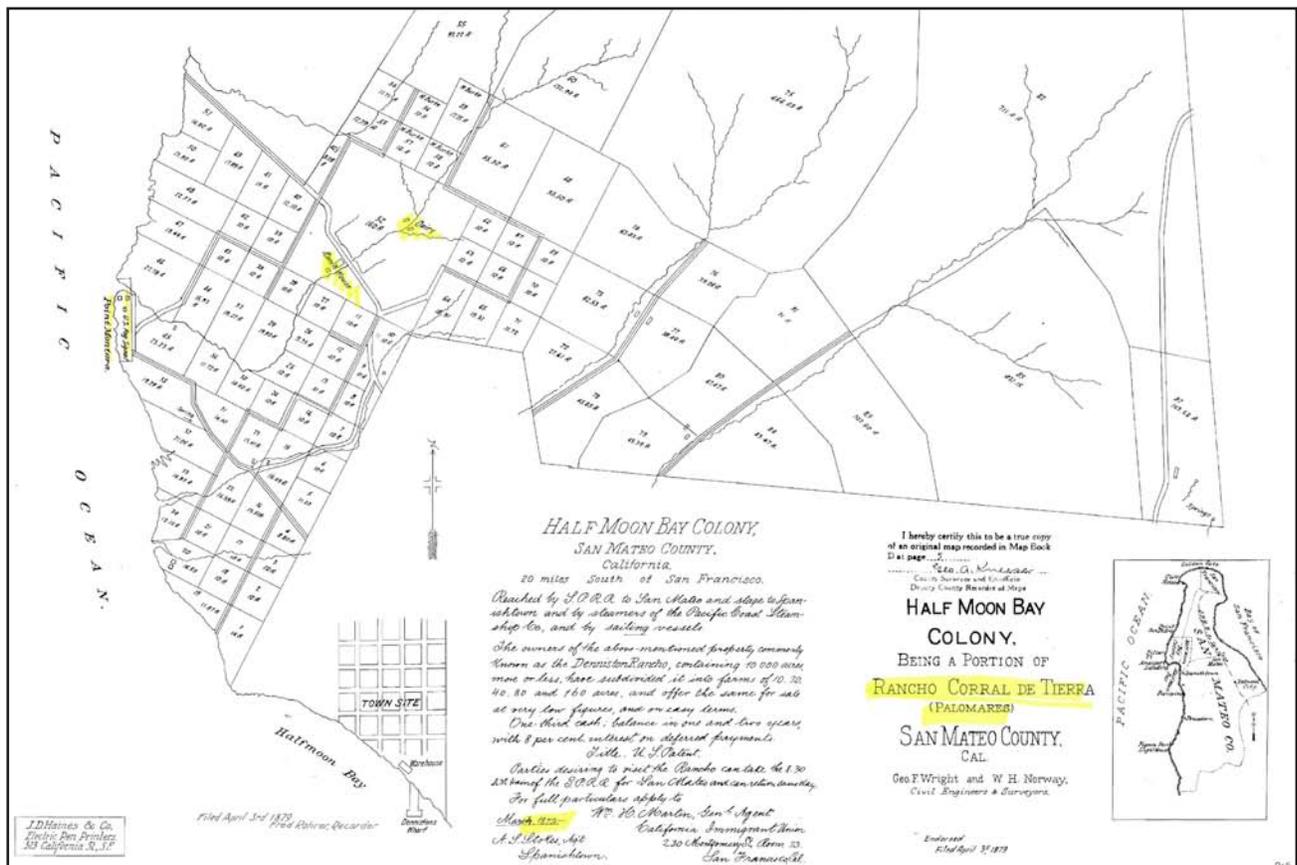


Fig. 3.6: An 1879 map of the Half Moon Bay Colony. San Mateo County.

The next map, from 1879, reveals that lots 3 and 4 have been obtained by the Half Moon Bay Colony (as previously mentioned) whose purpose was to subdivide and sell the property. *Renegade Ranch* and *Ember Ridge* were not part of the Colony. However, the third map indicates that in 1880, most of lot 2 was now in the hands of Henry Cowell. Cowell acquired this property in three new lots. His Lot 1 consisted of 638 acres and would contain today's *Renegade Ranch* (eventually portions of Takahashi's place) and *Ember Ridge* (site of the old barn). San Mateo County property tax records for 1880 show that Cowell possessed the mortgage on this land. The next year, the tax record indicates that Cowell owned outright all three lots. Lot 1, of 638 acres, was

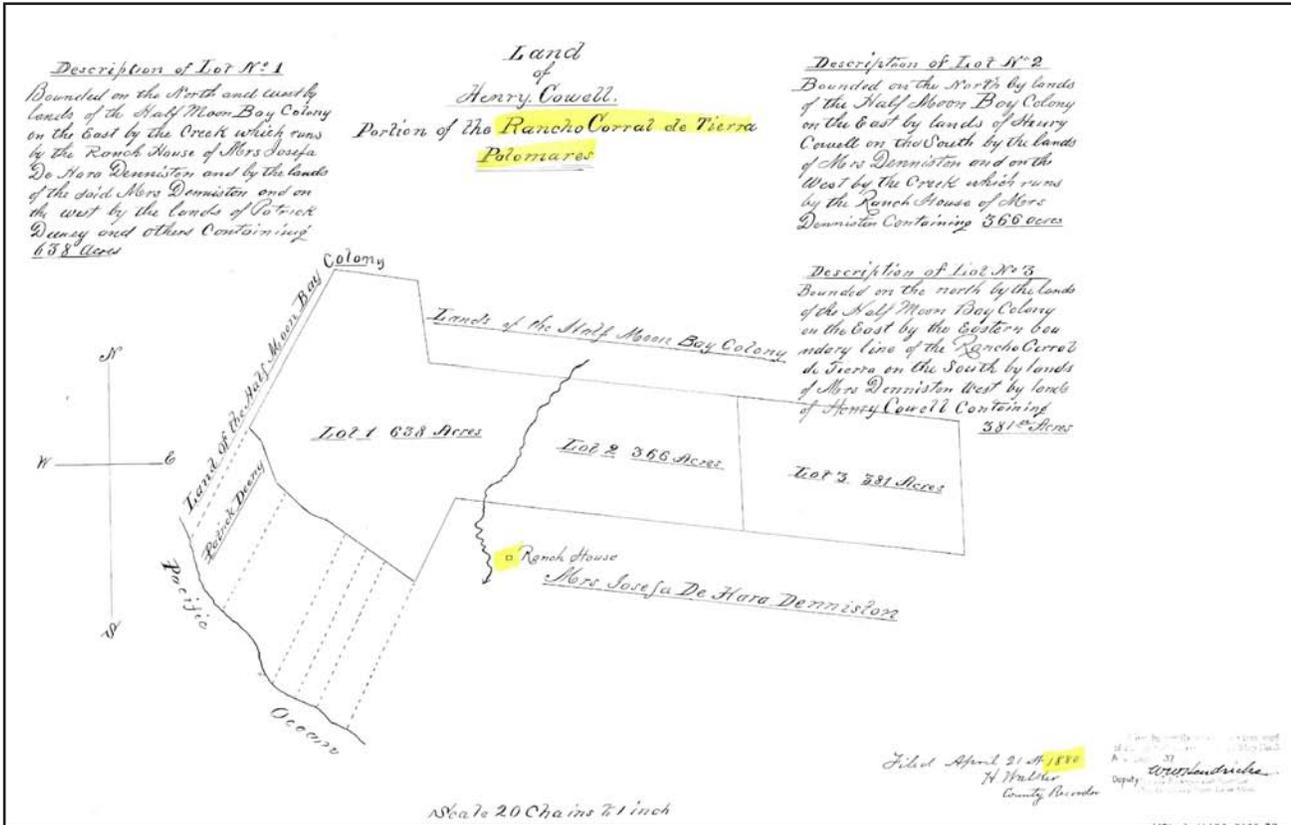


Fig. 3.7: An 1880 map showing the land owned by Henry Cowell.

valued at \$11,485 with \$1,000 of improvements. As a comparison, Lot 2 was valued at \$2,550 with \$50 of improvements and Lot 3 at \$5,050 with just \$50 of improvements as well. Does this indicate that the barn (as an improvement) was already present? The 1882 tax record shows the Lot 1 still valued at \$11,485, but improvements are now listed at only \$200 (did the barn burn down?). In 1883, the land value, again, did not increase, but now the improvements were \$500. Was the present barn built that year by Cowell? In 1884, the value of Lot 1 was still \$11,483, but now the improvements were listed at \$1,000. Also listed for the first time is a variety of livestock: 158 “milk cows,” valued at \$3,950; 22 “steak cattle” at \$330; 5 bulls at \$200; and 65 calves at \$490. It’s the supposition of the study team that Henry Cowell built the barn between 1883 and 1884 for the primary purpose of establishing a dairy ranch. In 1885, the value of this real estate increased to \$12,760, but the value of the improvements stayed at \$1,000. In 1890, the property was now valued at \$15,000. The improvements were still listed at \$1,000.

The historical importance of the barn increases because of the prominence of its builder. Henry Cowell was born in 1819 at Wrentham, Massachusetts (close to Boston). By 1850, he and his older brother John were merchants in San Francisco (according to the San Francisco Directory for that year). In 1854, he returned to Massachusetts and married Harriett Carpenter. They settled at San Francisco and in 12



Fig. 3.8: A 2006 photograph of the mysterious barn. Lee Davis photograph, San Francisco State University.

years had six children. In the middle of the 1860s, Henry Cowell moved his family to Santa Cruz with the purpose of entering the lime business. He purchased a large ranch there, which is today the campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz. While successfully quarrying lime rock, he also entered the lumber business, established a cooperage and continued to maintain business interests in San Francisco and throughout the state. He bought up tremendous tracks of land along the California coast, including property within and

adjacent to today's National Park's *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. At age 84, Henry Cowell became involved in a real estate dispute with D. Leigh Ingalsbe. Ingalsbe shot Cowell in the shoulder. Cowell died from the wound a few months later, in August of 1903, at Santa Cruz. Into the 20th century, the Cowell family continued to own its properties at *Rancho Corral de Tierra* (as discussed in the Italians, Artichokes and the Coastside section of this study). Henry's son S.H. Cowell became the family's leading figure. When he died at age 93 in 1955, he was the last member of his family. Long before he made a number of bequests benefiting cultural and environmental causes. He also endowed the S.H. Cowell Foundation which has distributed numerous grants to a wide range of social service institutions.¹⁵⁴

Any thought that John Tradharo was owner of the barn in 1908 is defeated by the fact that according to San Mateo County tax records, the Cowells still possessed the property. Could he have been its builder? In 1907, Lot 1 was valued at \$30,000 with \$1,600 worth of improvements. In 1908, the property still had a value of \$30,000 with improvements still listed at \$1,600. Thus, no major improvements occurred here through the years 1907-1908. Therefore, John Tradharo was not the barn's builder in 1908.

SHORE WHALING AT PILLAR POINT AND THE PORTUGUESE OF THE MID-COAST (CONTEXTUAL)

Hardly can California shore whaling be mentioned without including the story of the Portuguese, who were the original whalers. A whaling station existed at Pillar Point on the old *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, west of National Park land.

When one speaks of Portuguese immigration and whaling, the people really being referred to are Azoreans. Most Portuguese, when they made the decision to leave Portugal, preferred emigrating to a Portuguese colony in Africa, South America or Asia. Azoreans seemed to have had fewer options. The Azores themselves, about 900 miles west of Portugal, were first occupied by the Portuguese in 1432. The families that settled there engaged in farming, fishing and whaling.

As the years went by, these islanders experienced increasing alienation from the leadership of the mainland. They felt ignored by the government, and resented the policy of mandatory military service for all males once 15 years old.

Meanwhile the Azores were becoming more crowded -- by 1864 something on the order of 398 persons per square mile, with only 40% of the land usable for agriculture or other purposes. Custom held that the oldest son of a family would inherit the family lands. For younger sons on the farm, this meant finding other opportunities on the islands or moving to a new place.

No wonder that when American whalers visited the Azores during supply stops, that young native men took the opportunity to go along with the ships. It was illegal for these Azoreans to do so. American captains had to look the other way when allowing a recruit to stowaway. However, the Azoreans proved hard-working, quiet and not hard to please. And so, the whalers engaged in this "stealing the Portuguese" to augment crews.¹⁵⁵

Strengthening the push on Azoreans toward emigration was a potato rot that affected crops in the 1830s, and then a grape fungus in 1853 that did likewise. Periodic droughts also made life difficult.

The pull to California came after 1848 when the world learned of the gold strike. An 18-page promotional booklet published in Portugal revealed the gold find and other attractions of California. In 1849 alone, three Portuguese ships docked at San Francisco. Moreover numerous Portuguese sailors were serving on board the many vessels coming to California. Like all the other sailors, when a Portuguese young man had the chance, he jumped ship for the Gold Country. Portuguese miners could be found throughout the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, seeking precious metal along with everyone else. By 1860, the Portuguese population in the state was about 1,560.¹⁵⁶ They first came as miners, but after experiencing the mines, because of the competition and resentment exhibited against foreigners, many, especially the Azoreans, ended up on the central coast establishing the first Portuguese settlements as whaling stations.

Like most other gold seekers that grew tired of mining, they desired to go back to a traditional occupation in this non-traditional place. They had practiced shore whal-

ing in the Azores. They had a great seafaring heritage. Many had worked as crewmen onboard New England whalers who hunted the huge animals from Cape Horn to the Arctic.¹⁵⁷ Most importantly, there were large numbers of whales that migrated down the California coast allowing shore whaling to be profitable.¹⁵⁸

One observer of whalers and whales reported in 1873 (after nearly 20 years of shore-whaling activity) counting at least 15 whale spouts at intervals off the San Mateo County coast. This was most likely a pod of gray whales. Instinctively, the grays follow the coast on their annual migratory search for food. Shore whalers could render an average of 30 barrels of oil from such an animal. Also hunted in quantity were humpbacks that could render 50 barrels.¹⁵⁹ From time to time blue, finback, sei, sharp-head finner, right and sperm-whales were taken as well. Even killer whales and large porpoises might be harpooned. When times were slow the *San Mateo County Gazette* reported seals killed for their oil in the 1860s.

Captain Charles M. Scammon estimated that by 1887, after about 30 years of shore whaling, that something on the order of 2,100 California grays and 800 humpbacks and other species had been taken by the stations on the California coast. He added that as many as 600 of the creatures had escaped capture but had been so injured in the hunting process that they later died. Scammon wrote that each station took an average of at least 180 whales every year.¹⁶⁰

This was, of course, only a small part of a larger story. About 1810, New England whalers had begun to ply the Pacific for game. By 1854, as shore whaling in California was only starting, there were 650 American ships engaging 15,000 men in the industry. That year, the Pacific whaling center of Honolulu shipped 1,306,567 gallons of whale oil.

The oil was valued as a fuel and for lubrication purposes. At times it also was used to make soap and candles. Baleen from the whales was employed in the manufacture of springs, whips, fishing poles, skirt hoops and umbrellas. Earnings for the whalers were divided by barrels. Sometimes they were divided by job performed. At one station, one of every 35 barrels went to the boat steerers and coopers, while one of 50 went to the oarsmen and blubber carriers. The rest went to the boat owners. At other stations the company's earnings were divided equally among the crew with the captain and mate receiving bonuses.

Typically a whaling station's crew consisted of the captain and mate, a cooper (barrel maker) two boatsteerers, and 11 men. This number allowed for the operation of two whale or longboats with six men crews. The four men on shore served as lookouts and attended the try pots where the blubber was boiled down to oil.

These stations might serve for a length of time and then be deserted. Some would be reused after awhile. Others would not. They tended to include white-washed cabins for the men and their families (if they had them with them in California). A whaler might have a pig, sheep, goat or even a cow at the station. Some kept a small garden for corn and pumpkins. These barnyard-like amenities must have seemed a luxury to these sailors who had access to no such resources when on a long voyage. Not far away, probably down on the beach, were the great try pots (four or five feet in circumference¹⁶¹) used for rendering the oil from the dead whales.

Most times, these companies situated their stations on prominent points along the coast, some in quite scenic locations.

For example, in San Mateo County, at various times, three existed -- at Año Nuevo, Pigeon Point and, of course, Pillar Point¹⁶² (the Pillar Point station moved to Denniston's wharf from time to time). Altogether, researchers have documented that 17 stations operated between Crescent City and San Diego, all manned by Azorean crews.¹⁶³

There may have been earlier activity off the San Mateo Coast, but no real evidence exists of a whaling station until about 1860 at Pillar Point. Interestingly, its existence follows the building of Denniston's wharf by just two years. What arrangements were made by the whalers to occupy *Rancho Corral de Tierra* property is not known.

The obvious characteristic of California shore whaling is that it involved no ship. Thus off the rugged San Mateo County Coastline, no safe harbor was necessary for operations.

Usually whales were spotted from the bluff and then the boats would be launched. However, often times too, the boats would go in search of prey. Sometimes they would row back and forth, other times they might anchor near a kelp bed and wait.¹⁶⁴ If spouts were seen from the station a look out would dip a flag as indication. If the boat crew was in doubt about what direction to proceed, they would dip the top of their sail, then further signaling from shore would give them a better idea of the location of the whale.

Boats nearly always hunted in pairs; otherwise, the men might refuse to go out, because this could be "dangerous sport."¹⁶⁵ California gray whales were nicknamed "devil fish"¹⁶⁶ by the whalers. Threatened mothers of calves could become particularly troublesome. They might use their tail to smash a boat and then strike individual crew members. Into the cold ocean waters the men would go if overturned. Some of them could swim, some maybe not. Fast work by the second boat was crucial.¹⁶⁷

In the early years of shore whaling the activity was more dangerous. Close work was

required in harpooning. The crew member assigned to the task for throwing the weapon needed the boat to be close by the whale. Once struck, a toggled tip would catch hold within the whale and hold it “fast,” as the harpoon was attached by rope to the boat. The whale would then be forced to tow the boat until tired enough for the second approach. This time the crew would employ a long bladed killing lance to stab the beast to death. In later years, the hand held toggle harpoon was replaced by the Greener’s Gun, a swivel gun mounted at the bow of the boat, that allowed for that first strike to be made more safely, at a greater distance. Bomb lances replaced killing lances. A bomb lance resembled a toggle harpoon except it included an explosive device that would go off after entering the whale. In its final years, shore whalers used a bomb gun that, again, allowed the crews to do their work further away from the struggling, and unpredictable animals.

Once the kill was made, the whalers would row back to the station with the dead animal in tow. It might be taken directly to the beach or secured to a buoy until wanted. At Pillar Point, the whales were dragged up the rocky slope of the reef, and then the flensing (stripping off the blubber) could begin.

This process was more difficult in shore whaling than on a ship because at sea the flensing could be achieved while the dead whale lay alongside the ship, and it could be rolled and variously maneuvered more easily. On the beach, the blubber had to be cut off in smaller pieces. Capstans were used to help move the creature’s remains. Crews employed knives, cutting spades, lades, bailers, skimmers, pikes and gaffs to remove the blubber, which was melted down in the try pots. Captain Scammon described “the shapeless and half-putrid mass of mutilated whale, together with the men shouting and heaving on the capstans, the screaming of gulls and other seafowl, mingled with the noise of the surf about the shores. . . a picture of the general life at a California coast-whaling station.” Another observer, Colonel Albert S. Evans described the scene at Pigeon Point:

*. . .we found a party of men busy extracting the oil from heaps of blubber cut up from the huge humpback whale. . . They were dripping and fairly saturated with oil, and everything around was in the same condition. The stinking fluid had run down the face of the bluff to the water’s edge, and the whole place was redolent of the perfume.*¹⁶⁸

Anyone living on the coast would know when the whalers had success. Besides the “perfume,” thick black smoke from the fires under try pots of boiling oil could be recognized for miles around.

Structures at the stations, besides the living quarters, typically included a building with

wash room, drying room and store room, a cooper's shop, davits for hanging the boats and/or quays for boat storage.

The original station at Pillar Point was short-lived. About two years after operating there, the company moved to Pigeon Point. This station by the 1870s included a dozen white-washed cottages that housed the crews and their families. The 1870 census tells us that 18 whalers lived in the Pescadero neighborhood, six of whom had wives. There were 16 children, from ages six months to seven years old, 15 of which belonged to the married men. One infant had no parents and apparently was being raised by the community. Early records also reveal that by this time some Portuguese men listed farming as their occupation.¹⁶⁹

The whaling station at Pillar Point seems to have had a less stable population, although there was activity here, off and on, for nearly 40 years. After the original company moved to Pigeon Point, evidence suggests that within months another took its place. From 1865, there exist reports of a terrible accident. Whalers Willard Buzzell, Jack Lott and William Devers had their boat swamped by a whale and were all killed. It was said that Buzzell was proprietor of the Purissima House, south of Half Moon Bay, and had come to California in 1838.

The 1870 Federal Census listed no whalers living at Half Moon Bay. However, on February 3, 1872, the *San Mateo County Times Gazette* reported the Pillar Point whaling station consisting of 17 crew members, twelve on the boats, two on shore for the flensing and rendering of oil, two firemen and one cook. It named Captain Frank White as "head manager" and John Francis as his assistant. Three whales had been brought in, the report tells us, each rendering between 30 and 63 barrels of oil. The report also included information about how this company was supplying rock cod to Half Moon Bay customers. It can be surmised that the whalers were fishing from their boats as they waited for whales near kelp beds. "With the exception of a short-lived Chinese firm," Half Moon Bayers had to get their fresh fish from Pescadero previously.

The *San Mateo County Gazette* of December 28 continued its survey of the progress at Pillar Point: "the men who comprise the company are old whalers, men that have been at almost all of the whaling stations of California, and they report that whales are as numerous around Half Moon Bay as at any other station on the coast." Interestingly, the article also spoke about a second whaling camp located about "eight miles from Half Moon Bay" that with three boats had taken 16 whales and averaged 60 barrels of oil per animal. The article noted that in San Francisco the oil bought 45¢ a gallon, allowing these whalers quite a profit. According to Captain Scammon, the Pillar Point Station was still operational in 1874.¹⁷⁰

However, on November 17, 1877, the San Mateo County Times Gazette reported:

The whalers and their families have removed from their former homes at the Point, to the old landing at Half Moon Bay [Denniston's]. They are erecting cabins, etc. and will make this their future business resort.

In 1880, another account told of Captain White returning to the Old Landing from Monterey. He had constructed new buildings and planned for having a crew of 21. According to an extensive survey from 1881: "About one mile along the coast to the north-westward [of Half Moon Bay] is a small boat harbor. . ." [still Old Landing?], that ". . .in the autumn months. . .is used as a whaling station."¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, by 1889, the station seems to be back at Pillar Point. In the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey for that year, George Davidson describes the location as: ". . . known as Whaleman's Harbor. . . directly under the highest part of the mesa ridge just northwest of Pillar Point."¹⁷² He tells us that at this site, the whalers have a channel for launching their boats. When they returned with whales in tow, they were shielded, in part, by a kelp breakwater. An opening in the reef conveniently allowed for bringing the animals in for flensing. Davidson wrote that the station was active "in the autumn months."¹⁷³

In August of 1891, the *Times Gazette* indicated the station had been revived again: "The entire outfit belonging to Captain Lampert's whaling station at Monterey such as whale boats, harpoons, trying out kettles, etc. will be removed to Half Moon Bay." Whether the writer was referring to Old Landing or Pillar Point is up for conjecture.

A major reason for the seeming inconsistency of the occupation of Pillar Point by the whalers had much to do with the industry's seasonal nature. The California grays passed by California beginning in April on their way to the Arctic. During the winter months, the Pacific became too rough for shore whaling when the grays returned. Therefore the men at the stations engaged in a variety of off-season enterprises including chopping wood, shearing sheep and farming for grain and potatoes.¹⁷⁴ For some, whaling actually was an extra income job. Earnings might be used to buy land or send for family still in the Azores. Although, in 1860, only 25% of the Portuguese in California worked in agriculture, by 1880, more than 60% were thus engaged. After all, although a seafaring people, these immigrants had also long been farmers back in Azores.¹⁷⁵ As the whaling industry died away, it became quite natural for the Portuguese to work on farms of others, then lease properties to farm on their own and ultimately buy property when they were ready.

Shore whaling never had the economic nor environmental impact that whaling on-board ships generated. The ships harvested far more of the creatures and were more

responsible for nearly hunting the California grays to extinction. The end for both kinds of whaling, however, was anticipated as early as the 1860s. Because petroleum oil increasingly rose in usage, whale oil prices began to fall. In his report of 1865-1867, the California Surveyor General already used the phrase “gradually diminishing”¹⁷⁶ when describing California shore whaling. The August 1, 1874, *Monterey Weekly Herald* declared the industry “. . .likely to become a thing of the past as whales are becoming scarce.”

As oil prices continued to fall in the 1880s, shore whaling certainly was fading from existence. Captain Scammon explained in 1887: “. . .this . . .branch of whaling is rapidly dying out, owing to the scarcity of the animals which visit the coast; and even these have become exceedingly difficult to approach.” Goode’s *Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States* published that same year, found that only 63 whales had been taken by just 101 men working at the California stations.¹⁷⁷ On the San Mateo County coast, the whalers augmented their incomes during the season by fishing for crab, salmon, tuna and sardines.

The 1888 Great Register for San Mateo County listed only three whalers at Half Moon Bay. They were all Portuguese (from the Azores), and all had become United States citizens. Frank White, age 45, was known to be the captain of the operation. The other two were Jose Silva, age 30, and John Terry (no age given).

Most historical accounts agree that California shore whaling ended in the 1890s. However, in 1941, San Mateo Junior College student, Roy Rose, interviewed old “Boss” John Patroni for a research paper. Patroni said that he had come to the Half Moon Bay area about 1900. He remembered the station at Pillar Point still active -- that five men worked there until “. . .one fateful day, when three of the five men drowned. . .,”¹⁷⁸ and the station was then abandoned permanently.

By 1937, the California gray whale was thought to be extinct. Happily, as the hunting ceased, the animals made a comeback. The commercial whaling industry in the United States ended on December 31, 1971. In 1994, the grays were taken off the federal list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

The Portuguese of the San Mateo County Coast prospered without shore whaling. Increasingly they turned to farming. After the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, more Portuguese were drawn to California for opportunities in a variety of low-paying occupations. For those that came to San Mateo County, they usually ended up out on the coast working on farms. The 1890 census revealed San Mateo County as one of six counties with the largest population of Portuguese in California.¹⁷⁹

As with other immigrant groups, young men came first, became established and then

sent for their relatives. Some married into local families, others waited for girls coming with the next group of immigrants. As was also typical of the general immigrant experience, many of those that came to the communities of the coast, came in groups from the same villages back home. Another wave of immigration occurred after 1908, when a treaty between Portugal and the United States encouraged these folks to come here. After 1920, federal laws restricted people from all over the world from emigrating to the United States. However, in the 1950s, Portuguese American families renewed the process by sponsoring relatives who wanted to make the move.

The Azoreans coming to the Coastside were all Roman Catholic and stuck to their religion after settling down. In fact, they had success in keeping much of their culture intact. Husbands were the heads of families. Education was not viewed as having material value for a life of whaling, fishing and farming.

As with virtually all the immigrant groups that came to California in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mutual benefit societies were important to the Portuguese. They functioned to provide aid to the newly arrived and also acted as a safety net within the community when the head of a household might be killed in a whaling accident or hurt on the farm. They also served as social institutions. The Portuguese around Half Moon Bay established the *Irmandado do Espiritu Santo* (I.D.E.S.) which has helped to keep their community and cultural relevant to the descendents of immigrants to this day.¹⁸⁰

Some accounts contend that the Portuguese of California assimilated less quickly than those on the East Coast because of the rural and isolated lives they had here as compared with people in the mills of New England.¹⁸¹ However, on the San Mateo County Coastside the process was easier than in other California locations. For one thing, many were like them -- Catholic. The original *Californios*, the Irish, and, later on, the Italians had that in common with the Portuguese.¹⁸²

It is also said that the Portuguese did not take rapidly to citizenship and political involvement in California. Again, in San Mateo County this does not seem to be correct. By the 1890s, 125 Portuguese men had become citizens and voters. Some 80% of these lived on the coast. Indicating economic progress as well, of those 125, 110 said they were farmers or dairymen while just 15 listed themselves as common laborers.¹⁸³ Inter-marriage, very common on the coast, also assisted in assimilation.

Everywhere they went in America, the Portuguese seemed to fool people about where they were from by changing their names to more Anglo sounding ones. An example is Frank White, the Azorian captain of the whaling station at Half Moon Bay. The Portuguese culture honors family values, but is not particularly tied to last names as rever-

ent. Anglicization occurred readily among the first generation. The process made life easier on the job and was encouraged in the public schools.

In its 1956 *Official Souvenir Book* for San Mateo County's centennial celebration, the County Planning Commission declared the Coastside:

*Humanly speaking. . . one of America's most interesting melting pots. There Spanish, Anglo-American, Irish-American, Portuguese, and Italian, plus sprinklings of other nationalities, have mingled through the years to the point of becoming almost indistinguishable.*¹⁸⁴

Although seemingly contradictory, symbolic to both the preservation of culture and assimilation within the American "melting pot" is the staging of the annual Holy Ghost *Festa* at Half Moon Bay. Throughout California these *festas* have become the most visible cultural evidence of Portuguese life in their communities. In 2008, more than 90 celebrations occurred in the state.¹⁸⁵

The Holy Ghost *Festa's* history can be traced back to Portugal in the Middle Ages as a holiday honoring the poor that included a day of dancing and free food. Some compare it to the American Thanksgiving. While it diminished in importance on the mainland, for people of the Azores, the *Festa* has had enduring significance. It is no surprise that the celebrations began to be seen in California as early as the 1850s as the original Azoreans began settling on the coast.

In 1878, Mrs. Rufus Hatch of Half Moon Bay wrote in her diary about foreigners organizing an observance of some kind. She was referring to the *Festa*. In 1871, it seems that the oldest documented *Divino Espiritu Santo*, or *Festa*, took place at Half Moon Bay. Mrs. Rosa Pedra Joaquina, later known as Rosa Brown, staged the event in her home north of town at Frenchman's Creek, on *Rancho Corral de Tierra* once belonging to the Vasquez family. She was born in 1841 on the island of Corvo and came to the United States in 1865.

That original *Festa* included a parade, featuring a Holy Ghost crown that Rosa had brought with her from the Azores. The procession went from her home to the town's Catholic Church, where a mass took place. After the service, a second parade went back to her home at which point all who attended were treated to a free barbecue.

From that point forward, there was, more or less, an annual event, featuring a free meal for the entire community and visitors. In 1895 the I.D.E.S. was formally organized and celebrated its first *Festa* the next year. Because the day includes an Azorean dance called *Chamarrita*, locals came to refer to it as the *Chamarrita* Festival. Within its first year of existence the I.D.E.S. built its hall on land where their buildings are still

today, on Main Street.¹⁸⁶ The *Festa*, or *Chamarrita*, is the oldest continuing community festival in San Mateo County.

SHIPWRECKS AND THE MONTARA LIGHTHOUSE STATION

The San Mateo County coastline has been treacherous to oceangoing navigators for all its recorded history. Because of the San Francisco Bay's importance to maritime history, this aspect of the Peninsula's experience takes on significance. On *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, land once owned by Francisco Guerrero and now a National Park holding, is the Montara Lighthouse Station whose saga is intermeshed with the Coastside's part in this larger story.

Ships have been sailing past the San Mateo County coast since the time of Cabrillo (in 1542). Explorers, the annual Manila treasure ship and others had passed on by until 1775, when the sailors aboard the *San Carlos* proved the Golden Gate was navigable and thus the Bay accessible as the greatest port on the western slope of North America. The settlement at San Francisco was initiated the next year and was visited thereafter by naval and supply ships of Spain and an occasional visitor like Englishman George Vancouver in the 1790s. When Mexico achieved its independence, California was allowed to trade freely with merchant ships from around the world.

However it was not until the discovery of gold, in 1848, that very many ships came to call at San Francisco. The Gold Rush brought hundreds of ships, and between 1848 and 1869, more than 500,000 people were carried to the City by just the steamers from Panama.¹⁸⁷ Many more came from the east "around the horn" aboard sailing ships. Almost immediately, because of the need for timber to help build burgeoning San Francisco, wooden schooners began plying the waters between the Bay and the lumber mills of the north coast. As time went on steel replaced wood and steam power replaced the wind, but the trade remained strong for decades. In the 1850s, commerce of all kinds was initiated throughout the Pacific. Thousands of Chinese and immigrants from other far-off places arrived in San Francisco via ocean going vessels. Smaller craft from Chinese junks to Italian feluccas fished the Pacific and brought catches back to San Francisco. Later "Monterey" type fishing boats and trawlers became frequent sights in the Bay and on the coast. Technology allowed for new kinds of metal, screw-driven fleets to carry oil, gasoline and kerosene by the 1920s. Today the Bay is still visited by supertankers, container ships, luxury liners, warships and an infinite variety of smaller craft.

With all this traffic, there is little wonder that the dangerous waters off the coast of San Mateo County became littered with the graves of sunken ships. Experiencing the horror of the loss of a ship is difficult to write about. Author Mike Quinn put it this way in 1940:

*A ship sinks with the agony of a dying thing. Her great hulk heaves and groans, her stern lifts, . . . then with a loud bubbling like a horrible death rattle, she lunges slowly into those dark abysmal depths . . . you don't sink a ship -- you kill it. You murder a living and beautiful thing.*¹⁸⁸

Despite the terror, despite the terrible loss of life and property, the ships kept coming.

At the beginning, there was little help for navigators as they came up the coast. Richard Henry Dana, who served aboard a sailing ship to California in 1835, commented how the charts used “were made up from old and disconnected surveys by British, Russian, and Mexican voyagers. . .” Still worse “. . .on the whole coast of California there was not a lighthouse, a beacon or a buoy. . .”¹⁸⁹

For the residents of the San Mateo County Coastside, the rough and perilous seas added to their frustrations, because of the lack of ground transportation. While the Peninsula was still part of San Francisco County, a road was built between Half Moon Bay and San Mateo (1855). However, it was poorly constructed and not until 1866 was a privately owned toll road over the hill thought to be adequate.¹⁹⁰ As late as the 1870s, the road connecting the coast to San Francisco over Montara Mountain was still merely a trail. Petitions from Coastsiders spurred the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to act by abandoning the old trail in favor of constructing a road in 1879. Unfortunately, the new Half Moon Bay - Colma Road proved almost unusable. Parts of it were extremely steep, with an average grade of 18%. At the most difficult portion there existed a 24% grade (for 100 feet of road there occurred a 24 foot increase in elevation!). The Coastsiders fumed again in 1897:

*The San Pedro Road connecting Half Moon Bay to Colma is in a most deplorable and dangerous condition. . . The road as built and maintained to present day is an abomination and merely an apology for a road. . .*¹⁹¹

The answer to breaking the isolation of the Coast through land transportation did not manifest itself until the advent of the Ocean Shore Railroad in 1905. In the meantime, a variety of piers, crane systems and shoots operated off the coast with the primary purpose of getting farm products to market in San Francisco via seagoing vessels. For these ships, and all the rest that made passage between Point Año Nuevo and the Golden Gate, a difficult excursion might be the case under less than ideal conditions. Rocky shores, hidden reefs, fog and unpredictable storms have all played parts in disaster.

How many ships have met their end off San Mateo County? The answer may never really be known. During Spanish times, because trade was illegal for ships from other countries, wrecks of foreign vessels were never recorded. Local lore has it that por-

tions of Francisco Sanchez's adobe house in the San Pedro Valley were constructed with timbers taken from nearby wreckage of an unidentified ship.

The first documented shipwreck off San Mateo County occurred with the grounding of the bark, *J. Sarkie* in 1851.¹⁹² Through the years another 59 have been recorded. They included four ships bringing passengers during the Gold Rush, six servicing the coastal trade between 1848 and 1939, four coastal passenger vessels, the last of which was the *San Juan* in 1929, 16 engaged in general commerce, four tankers between 1932 and 1985, two pilot or aid craft, four naval ships, two pleasure vessels, and 18 others, of various type.

These are the recorded ones. Locals declare that the real number is far higher. Pillar Point Harbormaster Dan Tenko told researchers for this project that just between 1981 and 2005, two to three vessels were lost each year, most of which were small craft whose loss cannot be found in any readily available database. The same researchers found a clipping in the files of the San Mateo County History Museum about the wreck of the *Lake Sunapee*; information on it could not be found on any of the authoritative lists.

The first recorded ship to breakup at Half Moon Bay was the 350 ton *Isabelita Hyne*, on January 8, 1856. This clipper bark was built in Philadelphia in 1846. It was washed up on the beach belonging to James Denniston at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Reports indicate that the disaster was most likely the result of a mutiny.¹⁹³ The *Daily California Chronicle* of January 14, 1856, received a tip from an "intelligent seafaring man who had communication with persons from the wreck" that the ship had been grounded onto the reef intentionally to cover up the mutiny. Accounts about how Captain Rueben Calhoun's body was found lashed to some rigging with head cut off, seemed to confirm this. One other body was found. Meanwhile the rest of the crew, their gear, the ship's papers, charts and compasses all disappeared, along with a good portion of the cargo of Chinese sugar, tea and rice. Denniston offered the help of his workers to assist the wrecked vessel, but it was considered a total loss.¹⁹⁴ Two weeks after its grounding, the ocean swallowed *Isabelita Hyne* up, never to return.

In January of 1862, the Peruvian Schooner *Elfina Kniper* hit rocks while in fog at Pillar Point. It had 337,000 pounds of sugar on board. There was no loss of life.

On November 9, 1868, the side-wheeler *Colorado* grounded on a reef at Point Montara with United States mail and hundreds of passengers on board. The passengers and mail were rescued and wreckers salvaged the ship. In recognition of the event, the reef was renamed from "Uncle Sam Reef" to "Colorado Reef."

While the mid-coast was certainly getting its share of activity, the south San Mateo

County coast received attention from the federal government first. In 1866, Congress appropriated \$70,000 to construct a lighthouse at Pigeon Point.¹⁹⁵ The Point had been named after the 1853 wreck of clipper ship *Carrier Pigeon*.¹⁹⁶ Another clipper ship hit the rocks at the Point during a storm in January of 1865. Thirteen drowned.¹⁹⁷

Construction of the lighthouse began in 1871, and it was completed a year later. The 115-foot high structure is one of the tallest ever built in America. It featured a five wick lard oil lamp and a first-order 8,000 pound Fresnel lens, manufactured in France. The lens contains 1,008 prisms and is itself 16 feet tall and six feet wide. The Lighthouse Service fabricated the lantern room at its depot in New York. It was then shipped around the Horn. Later on, in 1890, in order to augment the assistance rendered at Pigeon Point, a fog horn and light were installed south of the Point, on Año Nuevo Island.¹⁹⁸

In the meantime, maritime traffic was increasing on the mid-coast. In fact a variety of steam ships frequently passed by. The August 21, 1875, *San Mateo County Gazette* reported vessels operated by Goodall, Nelson and Perkins were stopping at Amesport three times a week.¹⁹⁹ They carried passengers, cargo and the mail. This company expanded its services the next year and renamed itself “Pacific Coast Steamship Company.”²⁰⁰ About the same time, mariners had estimated that something on the order of 90 ships had struck rocks just in the vicinity of Pillar and Montara Points.

One of them was the British sailing ship *Aculeo*. On October 17, 1872, while groping its way through dense fog over a period of three days, it crashed into rocks at Colorado Reef at Montara Point, cracked open and filled with water. It was bound for San Francisco from Liverpool with a load of steel wire and coal.²⁰¹ All 21 onboard escaped on lifeboats. Salvaging dragged on for two years, but a large work force eventually retrieved tons of iron.

Finally in March of 1873, Congress authorized \$15,000 for installation of a fog whistle at Montara Point. The first assignment was made to surveyor E.J. Molera²⁰² to map Point Montara that year (see map as Appendix XIV). The station was then sited at today’s 16th Street and Highway 1 in Montara. Five other lighthouses in the Bay Area were started as fog signal stations.²⁰³ On March 1, 1875, the 12-inch steam whistle became operational. Its five second blast could be heard 15 miles away, hopefully to warn away any ship approaching the coast. Depending upon how many foggy days there were in a particular year, the whistle required between 150,000 and 200,000 pounds of coal each year. Water for operations came from Montara Creek just north of the station. A hydraulic ram was installed to force the water to a 2,000 gallon reservoir.

Unfortunately, the whistle was not enough. Only a year and a half after its installa-

tion, on October 17, 1876, the *Rydal Hall*, on a foggy evening, smashed onto Frenchmen's Reef at Pillar Point. This three masted Welsh sailing ship had been on her way to San Francisco with a cargo of coal. On impact, the crew panicked. Four sailors took possession of the captain's gig and lowered themselves into the rough waters. They were swallowed up by the ocean and never seen again. Another eight sailors got on to the life boat, but they were swamped as well. Three of them swam to shore and lived. Nine, in total were lost. Perhaps if these nine had stayed with their captain they may have lived, because help was on its way. The Portuguese whalers at Pillar Point station rallied to the emergency and rowed out to the *Rydal Hall* saving the captain and the remaining 17 members of the crew. While most of the cargo of coal seemed lost, as a sort of reward for their brave rescue, the whalers were able to salvage colored thread from the ship, which they dried on bushes up on the bluff. In August of the following summer some salvage work was attempted on the *Rydal Hall*, but all that was recovered was some chain and an anchor.²⁰⁴

The *Rydal Hall* was left undisturbed in its underwater grave for nearly 100 years when in 1972, commercial abalone diver John Köepf discovered the wreck. He recovered a bell which he kept, an anchor that ended up in front of a local restaurant and a small cannon or Lyle gun which is now in the collection of the San Mateo County History Museum. Köepf later recalled that the cargo of coal had coalesced into one large mass. The anchor had been sticking out of it. In the process of removing the anchor with an inflatable air sack, a piece of the coal broke away. He then saw something twinkling at him, which turned out to be the bell. The cannon was resting nearby.

In 1880, the fog signal building was enlarged and a double horn system was installed. Nevertheless, almost exactly four years after the *Rydal Hall* disaster, on October 27, 1880, the two masted schooner *Ada May*, with a load of lumber from Bowen's Landing destined for San Francisco, hit the rocks at Montara Point. Its Captain Johnson thought he had heard the fog signal at Point Bonita far to the north. He turned as if entering the San Francisco Bay; however he had actually heard the fog signal at Montara Point and steered right into the rocks. The ship was a total loss;²⁰⁵ happily, there was no loss of life.

Another ten years elapsed before the next recorded wreck in the area. In November of 1890, the schooner *Argonaut* was caught in the breakers between Pillar and Montara points and wound up on the rocks. The vessel was loaded with lumber and had a crew of two mates and five seamen. According to the *Coast Advocate*, locals found the sailors on the bluff above the beach drying their clothes. Captain George C. Loudel sent dispatches up to San Francisco requesting the assistance of a tug to pull *Argonaut* off the rocks. In the meantime, he spent time enjoying the hospitality of the local community. The *Coast Advocate* reported: "...while feasting on yellow-legged chicken at the Methodist ladies election supper, [Captain Loudel] facetiously remarked that he

had been shipwrecked six times, but never before had he been cast up among so many kind people, such pretty women, and so much good grub.”²⁰⁶ After a few days the tug arrived, but was unsuccessful in pulling the *Argonaut* off the rocks. On November 22, the *Coast Advocate* reported that more than 100,000 feet of lumber had been saved along with five large spars. Wreckers intended to bring the wood to Amesport.²⁰⁷ Further salvage work was to commence at the beginning of 1891, according to the *San Francisco Examiner* of January 1.

About a year later, on October 8, 1891, a near calamity aboard the dependable little steamship *Gipsy* received much attention. At noon that day, *Gipsy* had just left the wharf at Amesport with a cargo of grain. Also in her hold were 900 barrels of lime from Santa Cruz County. The small vessel encountered rough seas just outside the reef and began rolling and pitching. The *Coast Advocate* described what happened next:

*Water that came through one of the lee ports reached the lime which slacked and caught fire. The flames were soon communicated to the wood work. Captain Jepson immediately put the steamer about and ran for the lee of the reef up near the Old Landing and then played two streams of water on the fire from the pumps. The main hatch was opened, and where possible the barrels of lime were got out and thrown overboard. After . . . 100 barrels had been jettisoned the fire was got under control and put out.*²⁰⁸

The Pacific Coast Steamship Company suffered the loss that came to about \$250. The firm recognized the commendable way in which the crew handled the situation, but proved unhappy about the incident and threatened to stop landing at Amesport, while continuing to serve Pigeon Point. The *Coast Advocate* editorialized that “. . . time has come . . . when it is absolutely necessary to have safe, regular and economic transportation to San Francisco . . .” After all, the “. . . future prosperity of our people depends on it.” The *Advocate* called for the building of an improved wharf or having the people of the Half Moon Bay area charter their own ship in order to continue service to the mid-coast. In another editorial, the newspaper commented that a railroad would be “a blessing,”²⁰⁹ a remark made as hope for the future. Although the Pacific Coast Steamship Company had made this threat, it actually continued service at Amesport until 1917,²¹⁰ long after the construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad.

In the meantime the accidents continued. In November of 1896, the lumber schooner *Oceania* sank off Pillar Point in 250 feet of water, with no loss of life reported.

On March 13, 1898, it was time for the *New York*. Originally christened the *T.F. Oakes*, crewmen had judged this three masted iron sided sailing ship, to be unreliable. Hoping a name change might help shake the jinx, the now *New York* was back at sea and

had endured a series of storms while crossing the Pacific before finally making the California coast. Off of Half Moon Bay, one witness -- the captain's stepdaughter -- described a "shiver and shake," as she lie in her bunk and then "pounding and grating."²¹¹ She ran up the companion way with her mother and opened a door. Now, "...the surf seemed to be right upon us" when "a gigantic wave rolled over the ship, and she lurched wildly..."²¹² Her father, Captain Peabody, ordered the women below. Later, he explained to them that they were "...aground on the sands of Half Moon Bay." All on board were safely rowed to the beach under early morning moon light. By sunup, the ship had settled 23 feet.

The wreck generated tremendous excitement on shore. The *New York* carried a rich cargo of opium, silks, wine, tea and jute from Asia. Four customs inspectors set up an office and worked around the clock supervising the unloading of the vessel. The *San Francisco Chronicle* of March 26, 1898, reported this necessary because the beach had become "infested with thieves, who prowl in the night as well as day." Much of the merchandise was sold right on the beach.²¹³ Half Moon Bay residents participated in gathering souvenirs including firecrackers and ginger candy. The ship's bell ended up in the possession of a Coastside family who used it to signal mealtime for workers on their ranch. Meanwhile the Peabodys were made comfortable at Half Moon Bay in the home of newspaper editor George Schaeffer. Years later Schaeffer remembered how he and the Captain had salvaged a keg of rum from the *New York*, and enjoyed making sure the ocean water had not spoiled it.²¹⁴ The *New York*, itself, eventually disappeared beneath the surf.

By 1900, there existed no doubt that the fog whistle at Montara Point was not enough. Meanwhile in the vicinity of the Point that year, the schooner *Bonita* struck a whale and sank off of today's Pacifica. The British *City of Florence* sailed into reefs at Half Moon Bay. The captain thought he was near the Farallones and was fooled by a haze on the water. The two masted schooner *Neptune* was wrecked on the beach just south of the San Francisco County line. While these wrecks may or may not have been avoided by the presence of a lighthouse, anyone could see that the coastal shores around Montara were littered with the debris of broken ships and the coal, lumber and railroad iron that had been their cargos.

And so, that very same year (1900), a kerosene lantern was placed on a post near the fog whistle. Its red beam could be seen 12 miles out to sea. Remembering the wreck of the *Ada May*, it was red so as not to be confused with the white light at Point Bonita, some 15 miles north. This was a step forward, but locals, and especially the *San Mateo County Gazette*, continued advocating for the building of a proper lighthouse. On October 31, 1901, the newspaper reported that work had begun on a new fog signal at Montara. This work was completed the next year. The new one and one half story rectangular woodframe building with flanking one story wings is the structure still

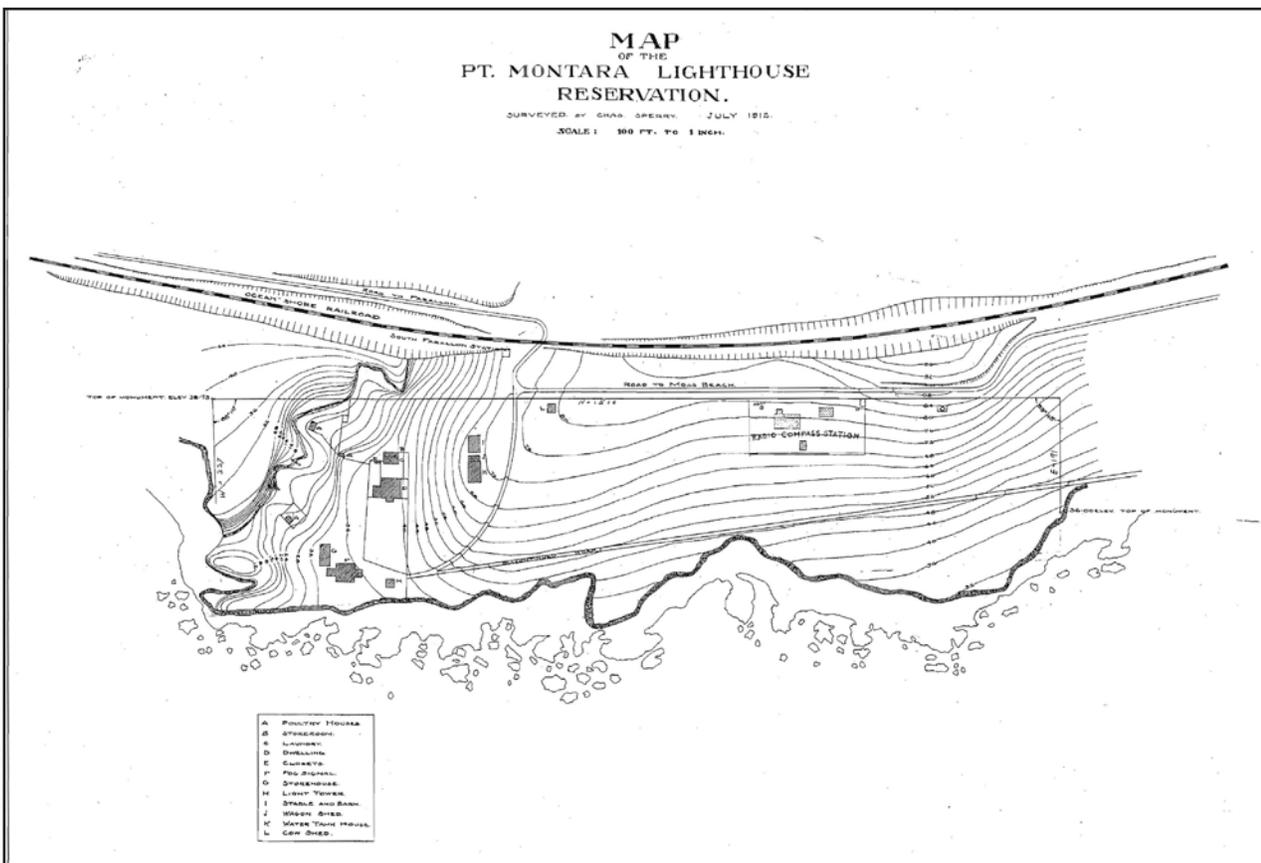
standing today. It appeared similar to other fog signal buildings in California. It featured two horns with their mechanical equipment housed between them. One of the wings served as the water room and the other as the tack room.²¹⁵ A diagram of how this building appeared in 1945 is included in this study as Appendix XV. The coal shed building that stands just north of the fog signal building was also constructed at this time. This one-story rectangular building with a gable roof served to provide a ready supply of coal for fueling the operation of the fog signals.²¹⁶ During the year 1904 alone, the duplicate 12” whistles required 13 tons of coal and 101 cords of wood.

Sadly, even with the improvements, the toll continued to climb. In 1908, the *Roma* wrecked near Montara Point.

In 1912, the federal government upgraded the Montara station by building a wooden tower, equipped with a fourth-order, French-made, Fresnel lens, to act as a lighthouse.²¹⁷ The accompanied map tells us that by this time the station included not only the light tower, fog signal building and coal storage room, but ten dwelling quarters, a stable and barn, wagon shed, water tank house, laundry, and indicative of the desire to make the lighthouse self-sufficient, three chicken coops and a cow shed.

In 1919, the light was substantially increased from 1,700 to 25,000 candlepower. Still the wrecks continued. During 1921, in nearby waters -- two more accidents are

Fig. 3.9: A 1912 map of the Montara Point lighthouse station. United State Coast Guard.



recorded. On December 1, the USS destroyer *DeLong* beached a mile south of Half Moon Bay. It had been thrown off course by heavy swells and was later declared a total loss. Just eleven days later the Paprococo ran aground at Brighton Beach. Closer by, in 1922, the 659 ton *Gray's Harbor* was wrecked near Montara Point.

Finally, in 1928, the present Point Montara lighthouse was constructed. The metal portion of the structure was sent from Massachusetts in pieces to Yerba Buena Island and then bolted together on site. See the next section of this study, "Historic Importance of the Montara Lighthouse Station" for more details about this construction. This lighthouse only reaches up to a height of 30 feet in order that its beam can be seen beneath the fog.

During World War II further improvements included the installation of a radio direction finder station near the lighthouse.²¹⁸ Also buoys had been placed to mark nearby dangerous reefs.

Despite all of the efforts, into the modern era, the San Mateo County Coast, especially in locations near National Park property, remains, at times, a dangerous place. On October 12, 1966, the obsolete World War II era destroyer escort *U.S.S. George Johnson* was under tow from the mothball fleet in the Suisun Bay for scrapping at San Pedro. In rough waters the tow line parted and the ship ended up landing a bit north of Mori Point. The Navy attempted to pull *Johnson* off the beach but failed and was forced to scrap it, on site. The spectacle became popular with school children and tourists.²¹⁹

As recently as 2004 there were two recorded episodes. Out of Pillar Point Harbor the 72-foot, steel fishing vessel, *Relentless* disappeared at sea. A Coast Guard helicopter found only debris on an empty life raft. The *Vaya Con Dios*, a purse seine vessel, was fishing for anchovies near Pedro Point, when surfers reported seeing it capsize a quarter mile from shore. She was later found in waters 25 feet deep with an eight foot gash in her hull. The four fishermen onboard died.

Because of the development of the Pillar Point Harbor over the last 50 years, accidents involving small craft have increased, making safety issues still relevant topics when considering the San Mateo County Coast.

In its final upgrade in 1970, the Pt. Montara Lighthouse was equipped with an automated beacon, replacing the Fresnel lens, and the fog horns were supplanted by an off-shore buoy.

HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF THE MONTARA LIGHTHOUSE STATION

The purpose of the light station at Point Montara has been to make safer a portion of the Pacific Coast for oceangoing ships by warning them of the dangerous shoreline and to further assist them by indicating their proximity to San Francisco Bay. The station is symbolic of the United States government's dedication to aiding shipping on its coastlines, the reef-strewn Montara Point being amongst its most dangerous stretches. For the state of California, federal lighthouses have helped its maritime transportation network develop. As they are located at key coastal and estuary sites, they are visual reminders of the importance of navigation to the history of the state. Of the 42 lighthouses that California once had, 16 are no longer present, giving motivation to somehow preserve the remainder.²²⁰ Jack Bookwalter, writing to nominate the Point Montara Light Station to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, explained that "...it stands as an excellent example of a late 19th century/early 20th century lighthouse and fog signal station." Helping to convey a sense of history is that all the most culturally valuable buildings are "grouped together at the edge of the point."²²¹

Certainly the most prominent structure on the 4.53 acre site is the 1928 light tower. It is of conical shape and built primarily of steel. At its top is a cupola shaped lantern room that once contained its Fresnel lens.

The tower has an interesting history of its own. It was constructed in 1881 for the light station at Mayo Beach on Cape Cod at Wellfleet, Massachusetts. It served there until 1922 when it was disassembled and sent to Yerba Buena Island in the San Francisco Bay. It was finally moved and rebuilt at the Point Montara Light Station in 1928. Its unique construction allowed for it to be mobile. Its sides are made of steel panels and are bolted together to form the shaft. Only three lighthouse towers in California were constructed in this way, Cape Mendocino (1868) and Point Reyes (1870) are the other two, but they were fabricated from iron plates, while only Point Montara, in California, used steel plates.²²²

The Fresnel lens (first mentioned as part of the wooden tower of 1912) has yet another interesting story. The first Fresnel lens was invented by Frenchman Augustine Fresnel in 1822. Thereafter most Fresnel lens were created in France. They were made from highly polished crystal, with each light having its own unique signal and color.²²³ Sizes varied from the largest first order lens, down to the smallest sixth order variety. The Fresnel lens at Point Montara was of the 4th order. The light revolved once every 10 seconds and flashed every 2 ½ seconds. It was described as an oil vapor lamp, and its central drum measured 19 ¾".²²⁴ Today, the San Mateo County History Museum maintains it within its collection.

The lighthouse keeper's quarters is still present on the site, largely unchanged from its

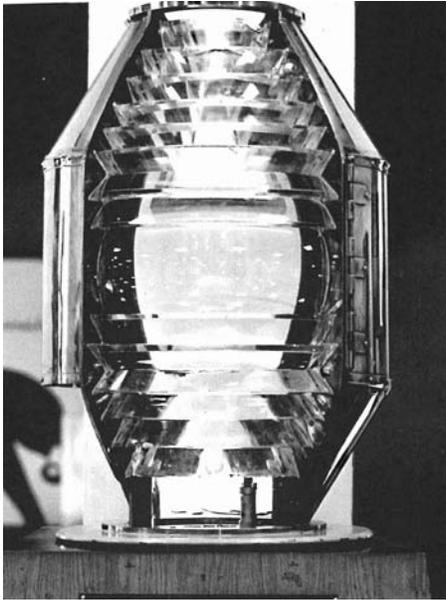


Fig. 3.10: The lens from the Montara Lighthouse Station is now at the San Mateo County Historical Association.

appearance when built as a duplex in 1875. The residence is of a two story Victorian Gothic design, constructed of wood, primarily, with a brick foundation. Twelve of California's Light Stations had Victorian Gothic or similar Stick/Eastlake dwellings.²²⁵ Only two remain today - - the one at Yerba Buena Island and Point Montara's.

Also present on site is the fog signal building and the coal shed which are close to original in appearance.

Structures that appear on the map of July 1912, that no longer exist, include the three chicken coops, the laundry, the stable and barn, the wagon shed, the water tank house and the cow shed.

More modern eras are represented by some World War II concrete bunkers and two living quarters buildings, constructed in 1961.

The National Registers nomination list these buildings as "non contributing"²²⁶ to the historic values of the station.

In 1970, the Fresnel lens was replaced by an automatic system and an offshore horn buoy supplemented the fog horn at the station. The Coast Guard's staffing requirements therefore became minimal. In 1975, a plan to transform five California lighthouses into youth hostels was introduced, and in 1978, the California legislature approved \$1.9 million for some work toward that end. The Coast Guard became anxious to dispose of the Point Montara property and entered into an agreement with the GGNRA to transfer the old station. American Youth Hostels Inc. first occupied the site in 1980. Some of the old buildings were then converted into living quarters.²²⁷

In 1991, Point Montara Lighthouse Station was added to the National Register of Historic Places (No. 91001094).

EL GRANADA (CONTEXTUAL)

Adjacent to National Park Property at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, to the west and southwest, is the unincorporated town of El Granada. A visitor to this place has to wonder why the wide spacious avenues are present for such a small community. Indeed the streets are divided by islands with great stands of eucalyptus trees dividing traffic. They might also wonder about the unique layout of these thoroughfares, sort of arranged as a half of a wagon wheel, in a manner reminiscent of Paris, France.

The unique design comes out of its past. El Granada was part of the real estate scheme of the Ocean Shore Railroad. In fact the company reserved its greatest plans for this

stretch of the coastside. They saw its future as the “Coney Island of the West” and saved space for resort hotels. The original owners of the Railroad subdivided the lots at El Granada themselves in anticipation of the creation of a “beautiful city,” but it never materialized, and the railroad failed. The appearance of the place lasts as a legacy to the robust ambitions of the time.

In 1905, the Ocean Shore Land Company (the subsidiary of the railroad) purchased 1,271 acres for the future showplace (at first called Balboa, then Granada, and now El Granada), and hired internationally renowned architect Daniel H. Burnham to design the projected city. Known as the “Father of the City Beautiful Movement,” Burnham visualized a huge opportunity. He wrote: “Nowhere on earth is the ocean availed of by men as it should be. Perhaps we can set the pace and inoculate the men of the Pacific Coast with the right ideas.”²²⁸ Burnham allowed for 640 acres of open space within the development. This included a 14-acre scenic ocean view corridor that has come to be known as “the Burnham Strip.” He employed his unique concept of “park chains” as can be seen in those great tree-planted mediums within the avenues that radiate outward from the strip. Interestingly, El Granada exists as Burnham’s only completed plan in the United States.

As El Granada was to become the great resort, it had to have the best railroad station. Its design was Mediterranean, including tile roof, stucco walls and arched openings. It was the largest and certainly the most elaborate of the Ocean Shore stations. On June 23, 1908, the rails reached the station with great fanfare. By mid-October, track had been laid all the way to Tunitas Creek.²²⁹ Although vastly altered through the years, the El Granada station still stands today at Alhambra and Granada. Most recently it served as a restaurant.

With the railroad came an extensive advertising campaign supported by scores of real estate salesmen who went into action to sell suburban lots at Montara, Moss Beach and El Granada. The largest effort went into promotion of El Granada. One advertisement declared:

Within 50 minutes ride from the center of San Francisco on the line of the Ocean Shore Railway is located the beautiful city of Granada. It is situated in a delightful ocean cove on the site of a quaint old Spanish settlement established in this place long before the gold excitement of '49'. Surrounded by high mountains on one side and the great Pacific Ocean on the other, it has long been a district well-nigh impregnable for railroad enterprise. Here slumbering peacefully on has nestled this little village happy and contented within itself. Resting at its feet and practically unknown has existed for ages a marvel of nature. One of the most sheltered and picturesque beaches in the world. . . its shore is carpeted with

*a compact mass of the cleanest and whitest of sea sand and washed by surf so gentle and safe that the most timid of bathers need not fear to venture into it.*²³⁰

Amazingly, 1727 lots were sold at El Granada.²³¹ However, as was the case with other properties sold by the Land Company, actual construction on the lots was rare. The real estate bubble burst, and many of the properties went back to the original Ocean Shore investors.

Only the farmers realized substantial benefit from the railroad. For them, the isolation of the coast had finally been broken. In 1911, 250 carloads of artichokes were hauled out of the Half Moon Bay area to San Francisco for market. The next year the volume of product transported this way doubled. Sadly for everyone involved, by 1920 the Land Company was bankrupt and the trains stopped running. The advent of gasoline powered trucks and improved roads saved the farmers, however.

Most the land reverted to growing crops or grazing cattle. Part of it became a quarry. The quarry supplied rock for the building of Highway 1 and the Half Moon Bay Airport, across the road.

In recent years a community has coalesced at El Granada. In 1977, the people there participated in creating a master plan with the County. A guiding principle for future land use paid homage to the original Burnham vision, setting aside the “strip” as an open space requirement. Later, in 1995, Coastsiders convinced the County government to purchase the 40-acre quarry for purposes of creating a community park. Today, non-profit Midcoast Park Lands leases and manages the property.

PILLAR POINT HARBOR AND PRINCETON (CONTEXTUAL)

West of El Granada and the properties of the National Park Service are Pillar Point Harbor and the community of Princeton. Visitors to *Rancho Corral de Tierra* will doubtlessly also experience these quaint places that are relics of the past. The history of the colorful characters that worked and lived in them are entwined in the history of National Park lands at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Both locations have their origins in maritime history but represent a significant shift in purpose. At first they were intended to serve as a hub for ocean going vessels who would break the isolation of the coast by moving farm products to San Francisco. Instead, they developed around the creation of commercial and recreational fishing enterprises.

In 1902, north of Amesport and east of the Old Landing, Santa Cruz cement manufacturer Henry Cowell (who owned a large portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* now possessed by the National Park Service) joined with local farmers and built a 1,000 foot wharf and warehouse for \$10,000. This wharf, like Amesport, serviced ships moving

produce to San Francisco. However, it experienced an important change. The Ocean Shore Railroad took this business away beginning about 1908. Afterwards Cowell's wharf, and Amesport too, functioned as commercial and recreational fishing spots. By 1940, Cowell's wharf had fallen into disrepair with only 500 feet still left standing.²³² Amesport remained a popular fishing location,²³³ at least in memory. Into the 1960s, pilings from the old structure were still visible.

Not ocean going ships but the Ocean Shore Railroad had broken the isolation of the coast, perhaps not as profitably as its owners had wished, but the Railroad changed the history of the Coastside forever. Although the original investors of the Railroad's subsidiary, the Ocean Shore Land Company, never saw their dreams of a resort community come about at El Granada, just west of the mouth of Denniston Creek, there occurred some activity. Here Frank Brophy initiated Princeton-at-the-Beach (later known as simply Princeton). In 1908, in the same year that the Railroad reached the area, he opened the Princeton Hotel as a house catering to tourists.

For the Princeton Hotel and any enterprises hoping for the success of the railroad, the Ocean Shore's stoppage of service in 1920 came as a blow. Locals looked to other opportunities. Prohibition became the law of the land for the United States in 1919, and by 1920, its effects were settling in on Coastiders who were giving up on legitimate tourism business and becoming involved in operating "clubs," or speakeasies, where illegal booze could be sold. They also worked to assist rumrunners: gangsters smuggling alcoholic beverages in from Canada. South of Princeton, at Miramar, the Beach Inn Café became a speakeasy with an upstairs bordello. North of Princeton, at Moss Beach and Montara, rumrunners found locals eager to cooperate with the new business, albeit an illegal one. The smugglers might dump crates of hooch overboard and allow onshore colleagues to collect them. At Seal Cove, Coastiders occasionally launched boats to meet the whiskey-laden ships. The lucrative "industry" continued all the way through to the repeal of Prohibition in 1932.

Locals remember that it was Thomas Murphy who first approached restaurant owner "Boss" John Patroni in 1921, about using his wharf at Princeton for use by the rumrunners. In the meantime the Princeton Hotel became a well-known bordello. In 1922, San Mateo County District Attorney Frank Swart engaged in a Peninsula-wide campaign against prostitution and closed the Hotel for violation of the Red Light Abatement Act.²³⁴ The closure proved temporary, and the Hotel continued to serve its guests. It was John Patroni, however, whose name is indelibly associated with the "roaring 20s" at Princeton.

Born Giovanni Patroni in 1878, at Genoa, Italy, he was the son of a farmer. He came to San Francisco with the large surge of Italian immigrants attracted to California at the beginning of the last century. Up in the City, he learned the hotel business and moved



Fig. 3.11: Photograph of a man, thought to be "Bass Patroni", in front of Patroni House.

over rent, but must have been resolved, as Patroni became manager of the Cowell estate's farm lands in later years. By April of 1913, the *Daly City Record* was reporting that Patroni had a wharf at Princeton under construction. By the 25th of the month, some 375 feet had been completed with another 125 feet to go. It was to be utilized by the infant commercial fishing industry beginning to grow there.²³⁵

Patroni had to learn the bootlegging game. Only months after allowing booze to be landed at his wharf, a tip led prohibition officers to his Patroni House. A \$60,000 delivery of whiskey from Vancouver had just arrived. Much of it was confiscated at the restaurant. Patroni was arrested and later confessed to helping smuggle this high-grade alcohol into Princeton. He received immunity but fingered Thomas Murphy. Murphy also confessed, was indicted, but never served time. He took on a new partner, Paul Pane, and worked as a bootlegger down in the Año Nuevo neighborhood.

Patroni learned that in order to receive warning of future interference, regular gifts ought to be made. Henceforth calls from the county courthouse in Redwood City alerted Patroni of rumblings of a raid. Sometimes he offered certain people, that could help him, great discounts at his restaurant and/or overnight accommodations. Between these special guests and regular customers, there for all the full-price entertainment, as many as 500 people might be on the short streets of Princeton on a single night.

A plate of mussels at the Patroni House became a famous dish. Other activities gained wide notoriety as well. Of course Patroni lorded over the prized artichoke fields which were the site of occasional gun battles,²³⁶ as competing racketeers attempted to steal the vegetables away from farmers under the protection of "Boss" Patroni.

After 1932 and the end of Prohibition, the activities of the bootleggers went away. It was a time of economic depression, and locals looked for new opportunities yet again.

to the coast just after 1900. Among the friends he made was Dante Diande, who introduced artichoke growing to California. Together they came to own about 400 acres of farm property west of and within today's National Park lands at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. He opened a restaurant at Princeton, the Patroni House, which became well-known for its good food. While it was his in that he constructed the building, it sat on Henry Cowell's land. A feud ignited

Some found work in the emerging fishing industry. Previous to this time, most of the fish-food products that originated from San Mateo County came from the oyster beds and Chinese shrimp camps on the Bayside.²³⁷

The 1870 census listed just one fisherman living at Half Moon Bay. Honesto Espinosa, a 48-year-old immigrant from Manila, claimed the occupation. The August 26, 1871, edition of the *San Mateo Times Gazette* took note of A.Y. Yeek, who was starting “a new fishing enterprise” at Half Moon Bay.

In 1880, David Starr Jordan conducted the first survey of fishing activities on the Pacific Coast for the United States Fish Commission. He found the San Mateo County Coast had “very inconsiderable” production. He remarked that the market was small in that the Coastside communities had little population, while ports for fishing vessels didn’t exist. Moreover, fishermen from Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Francisco offered competition. In those days, fishermen used a variety of sailboats. Because of their small size, these boats only ventured out during the best conditions. Their gear included peranzella-style nets, seines, gillnets and setlines.

On the San Mateo County Coastside, Jordan could find just 10 men who claimed to fish commercially, but only when they could “find nothing else to do”²³⁸ did they fish from shore (without boats). However, he also commented that “tourists from San Francisco” and Half Moon Bay residents fished for salmon in the creeks for recreation.

In 1889, the *Times Gazette* (of February 2) reported: “Seven Chinese fishermen have located a fishing station on the bluff back near Amesport Landing. . . They will fish, abalone, etc. to the San Francisco markets.” How long this operation lasted is not clear.

However when interviewed in 1941, John Patroni said that he did remember a “Chinese fishing camp” at Denniston’s wharf when he came to the area.²³⁹ Patroni may have seen Japanese abalone fishermen instead. In October of 1900, the *Times Gazette* began reporting on the activities of a group of Japanese gathering the shellfish. Indeed the Japanese dominated the abalone business through the 1930s, and even as late as 1941, half the dive crews in California were of Japanese heritage.²⁴⁰

It was also noted about this time (1901) that vacationers at Moss Beach and other places near Half Moon Bay began to gather the delectable mollusk.²⁴¹ For example on July 11, 1913, the *Daly City Record* described a Moss Beach outing:

Enrico Biggio and family of Daly City are occupying the Foley cottage. Mr. Biggio is an expert abalone diver and he never goes after them without returning with the limit of 15.

In 1914, during the season, it was estimated that 2,000 mostly vacationers between Princeton and Montara took home 15 abalones each. Dungeness crabs also came to the attention of visitors. A 1916 account glorified the Coastside for enormous quantities of “great big crabs that are not surpassed in flavor by any crab in the world.” This became a commercial business off Pillar Point of such success that by the late 1940s, the waters here had become one of the state’s main crab fishing areas.²⁴²

New technologies, meanwhile, made fishing off the San Mateo County Coast easier. Better curing methods and the advent of gasoline powered craft assisted the fishermen of Pillar Point to fish for salmon as early as 1914.²⁴³ They utilized small vessels that required them to leave in the early morning and come back the same afternoon or evening. All the work was performed by hand aboard these troll boats. By the 1920s, the vessels were 28 to 30 feet long. The fishermen employed as many as nine lines each, with four or more hooks, using land weights of up to 30 pounds.²⁴⁴ One of these boats, the *Irene*, was built in San Francisco for the Coastside’s Bettencourt family and is now being restored by a volunteer group at Pillar Point Harbor.

The 1910-1911 storm season resulted in significant damage of property, including destruction of some boats and even loss of life among the fishermen at Princeton. Locals organized a meeting at Patroni’s restaurant to talk about what could be done.²⁴⁵ For the first time at a public meeting, the idea of creating a breakwater was proposed. The plan called for building it out from the rocks at Pillar Point and extending it southward, in order to give the Coastside a truly safe harbor. Sadly for its proponents, this initial effort did not succeed. However, the idea never died. Into the 1930s “promotional dinners”²⁴⁶ took place to advance the cause, but World War II interrupted progress. Nevertheless the need to protect boats at Princeton continued to grow.

During the years leading up to World War II, gasoline powered trucks, that had replaced the Ocean Shore Railroad in helping the farmers of the Coastside, were also employed to run the catch of the commercial fishermen up to San Francisco. From Patroni’s and Cowell’s wharves, the trucks would load the fresh fish in an efficient enough way that by the beginning of the War, there was no longer any water-borne traffic from Pillar Point. All shipments were made by truck.²⁴⁷

The War had direct ramifications on the commercial and recreational fishing business at Princeton. On the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 8, 1941, San Mateo County Sheriff John J. McGrath shut down coastal fishing.²⁴⁸ Boats were held at the piers until cleared of any suspicions. There existed a fear that some fisherman might aid enemy submarines. Japanese and Italian fishermen were important ethnic groups represented at Princeton. Japan and Italy were now at war with the United States. Immediately all Japanese residents, whether citizens or not, could no longer

take a boat out and fish. Many Italians, who had not become naturalized, were also prohibited from participating.

As the War rolled on, the labor supply among the fishermen was further reduced by young men volunteering to serve in the armed forces or being drafted. In the meantime, there developed increased demand for fish. New fishermen came onto the scene -- a few without any previous experience. In some cases they had tired of the defense industry and bought boats to try their hands at a new career. In many cases, older, retired fishermen came back, for what some said was a sense of patriotic duty. Others were the sons of fishermen, stepping in to keep the family business alive.

Many of the difficulties that affected commercial fishermen also impacted the operators of pleasure boats. Some of these vessels were sold off to the new commercial fishermen.

Some markets decreased during the war; crab for example had little demand.²⁴⁹ Shark, however, became a favorite as a tasty food and for its reputation in providing "vitamin oil" from the livers of the creatures. At one point the Army paid \$9 a pound to Pillar Point fishermen for these livers. One could observe the beaches at Princeton littered with dead, liverless sharks while the contract lasted.²⁵⁰

By the end of the war, the commercial fishing industry at Princeton had made substantial progress. According to state of California *Fish Bulletins*, in 1941, the entire catch at Princeton was valued at \$28,700. In 1945 it was recorded to be \$98,000. An advantage possessed by Princeton was the availability of fuel and other services at the piers. These features attracted the landings of transient fishermen that helped augment the overall numbers. A big improvement over the prewar years was the size of the boats. They increased from an average of 25 feet to boats 32 to 45 feet long. This allowed for the crews to stay out of harbor overnight, as they had capacity for carrying ice to preserve the catches.²⁵¹

By war's end Princeton looked like a fishing village. This bustling place now had three working piers (Patroni's, Cowell's and one built by a cannery), two canneries and a refrigeration plant.²⁵² Many of the salmon boats had begun conversion to use of gurdies, instead of hand-pulling nets.

By the end of the 1940s, about 125 fishing boats were using Princeton's wharfs, the largest of which were 70 foot purse seine vessels. The fishermen landed shark, sardines, crab, salmon, rockfish, halibut, sole, albacore tuna and abalone. The last mentioned shellfish, so rare now, was harvested in great numbers. Local legend tells of individual fishermen gathering as many as 1,200 in just hours, weighing down boats so badly they could hardly float. Somehow the record keeping on abalone was disre-

garded. The value of the 1949 catch for Princeton was \$143,436 not counting abalone. During the village's banner year of 1950, 300,000 pounds of fish were landed with sardines in the most abundance, but, again, not counting abalone.

Meanwhile, the lucrative sports fishing industry rivaled its commercial counterpart in revenues. Charter boats like the *Miss Princeton* operated by John Teixeira allowed sportsmen the opportunity to experience deep-sea fishing. By the mid-1950s, local entrepreneurs employed four war surplus amphibious vehicles called DUKWs (Ducks) to haul out the increasing number of tourists on fishing excursions. Altogether 17 boats were used in this work. Locals complained that business was so brisk that there was nowhere in the village to park.²⁵³

By the beginning of the 1950s, two canneries also had become part of the economic vitality at Princeton. In 1940, Joe Romeo built a third pier here. His father, father-in-law and uncles had all been in the fishing business. In 1945, he augmented his dealings by establishing a cannery, Romeo Packing Company.

Just previous to Romeo's, Princeton Packers went into operation a little north of Patroni's pier close to the Princeton Hotel.²⁵⁴ Many local boys found their first jobs working in the plant and remembered how their clothes and hair smelled at the end of a shift. A significant decline in the sardine fishery forced Princeton to lay off 100 cannery workers after the war. It converted its packing operation to Brussel sprouts, a less lucrative trade.

Joe Romeo's cannery made history with its distinctive label. It featured a fish with glasses named "Charlie," after Joe's son. This branding image was eventually sold to Star-Kist, for its "Charlie the Tuna" advertising campaigns. By 1954, Romeo had survived the sardine crisis by converting its operations to the manufacture of liquid fertilizer.²⁵⁵ Romeo's pier still stands and acts as a fish-buying facility. It is known today as "Green's Pier." In the 1970s, Joe Romeo developed an automated process for making paper sleeves for packaging. Today (2010) the family continues to operate this business.

The activity at Princeton did not go unnoticed in Sacramento. When in 1946, local leaders lobbied for creating a safe harbor for Princeton, Governor Earl Warren allowed for the creation of a Half Moon Bay Harbor Association. He appointed Percy Shaw (chair), Richard D. Armstrong, Thomas Callen, Henry Clark and Nate Johnson as its first board. In the spring of that year, at the moment when surveyors from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began studies for the breakwater project, a huge earthquake (7.8 magnitude in the Aleutian Islands) generated a tsunami that rippled its way to Half Moon Bay. Two waves rolled through and caused the engineers to flee from their worksite at Romeo's Pier. The *Half Moon Bay Review* of April 4, reported quite

a bit of damage. At Princeton, boats were thrown 1,000 feet toward land. Fences had been uprooted. Automobiles, washed from parking spaces, sometimes were found 60 feet away, but there was no one hurt. One local remembered old “Boss” John Patroni coming out of his restaurant screaming, “Run for the hills, it’s a tidal wave.”

Nevertheless the effort to create a Half Moon Bay harbor persisted. Local newspapers exclaimed in 1949 that the project had finally made it past the dream stage, but progress was stalled again, this time because of the Korean War. The army engineers were not back to work at Half Moon Bay until 1956.²⁵⁶

Through the 1950s, without a proper harbor, the bulk of the boats at Princeton anchored on the lee side of Pillar Point where there was some slight protection from storms. The fishermen used dinghies in order to reach their vessels, keeping the small row boats tied up at Romeo’s Pier. Many fished for the commercial market during the winter months and took sportsmen out during the summer.²⁵⁷ The entire commercial catch of 1955 was valued at only \$81,973, a substantial decrease from the banner year of 1950.

At the end of 1956, the Army Corps of Engineers was back, reviewing preliminary plans for the building of a protected harbor at Pillar Point. The Corps authorized the creation of two breakwater projects. Construction began in 1959. By this time only two piers were usable at Princeton, Cowell’s wharf being considered “unsafe.”²⁵⁸

Progress was interrupted at 5:30 a.m. on May 22, 1960, when Princeton was hit by yet another tsunami. This time an 8.6 magnitude earthquake off Chile sent huge waves up the California coast. At Princeton two commercial salmon fishing boats were thrown onto the beach, one fifty feet from the water’s normal edge.²⁵⁹ About ten other vessels were damaged. While many people were scared, once again, there was no loss of life.

The harbor project called for first creating the two breakwaters. Then a new wharf of 267 feet with facilities for fueling boats and handling commercial catch would be installed along with a causeway of 579 feet. First step was to transport some 800,000 tons of rock to the site from the Granite Construction Company, 44 miles away. Additional rock and debris would later be employed as well. The Healy-Tibbs Construction Company was contracted to place the rock out in the Bay to create the breakwater. On June 29, 1961, the *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin* quipped “1/2 Half Moon Bay is now 3/4” in celebration of its new \$5 million breakwater.

By 1962, the L-shaped pier, with capability of providing water, gasoline, diesel oil and electricity for the boat owners was completed, and the Cowell and Patroni wharves were slated for removal.²⁶⁰

On April 1, 1963, yet another earthquake, this one at Prince William Sound in Alaska, caused a huge tsunami effect in the Pacific. In the Half Moon Bay area, 2,000 people were evacuated.²⁶¹ This particular tsunami was judged to be the worst yet, but the effects at the new Pillar Point Harbor were slight, with one boat sunk but easily repaired. Another was swept out to sea but was recovered. Two small crafts were forced onto the breakwater, but were pulled off with minimal damage. There were no injuries recorded.

By 1967, new improvements featured a harbormaster's building with a restaurant, a boat launch and parking area.²⁶² In 1969, the San Mateo County Harbor District began planning the next stage of development for Pillar Point. This included a 1,500-slip marina, but it was opposed by local environmental organizations. The project was scaled down, and in 1976, the California Coastal Commission approved the building of a marina of 440 slips.

During the 1970s, new boat launch ramps and other improvements, including the extension of the pier, enhanced operations for the commercial fishermen as they brought in salmon, crab and some 80 species of rockfish²⁶³ (with salmon and crab bringing in the most dollars).

However, difficulties were on the horizon. By the middle part of the decade, competition off the California coast became tense with the presence of as many as 60 factory fishing trawlers from the Soviet Union and Japan. These vessels of over 300 feet in size forced the Federal government to enact the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act to push these ships 200 miles off the Coast. The U.S. Pacific trawl fleet was expanded, with federal support, and trawl landings at Princeton peaked in 1990 with a four million pound catch.²⁶⁴

The California fishing industry was also affected in the mid-1970s by the influx of refugees from Southeast Asia. The end of the Vietnam War caused some 760,000 Vietnamese to come to the United States of which 40% took up residence in California. Many of these immigrants had been fishermen back home and wanted to resume their occupation in their new land. By the late 1980s, some 20 to 40 Vietnamese fishing boats were operating out of Pillar Point Harbor. Cultural differences between the old and new groups created tensions which were exasperated by the new types of fishing gear and style of operation of the Vietnamese as they were applied in competition with the old-timers. Local buyers at first refused to accept the fish of the newcomers. Violence did occur. Eventually environmentalists throughout the state objected to the immigrants' use of gill nets. The immigrants countered by forming the Vietnamese Gill-Netters Association, but in 1990, the California Legislature passed regulations ending the practice. Many of the Vietnamese were forced out of the industry.

Fishermen foresaw another threat in the 1980s, when the Port of Oakland announced plans to barge mud from their dredging projects and dump it just six miles from Pillar Point, off Montara. The Half Moon Bay fishing community protested loudly about how this might affect the local fisheries, which prompted San Mateo County to sue the Port.²⁶⁵ The County and fishermen won the fight.

Environmental law was not always on the side of the Pillar Point Harbor fishermen. In 1982, the federal government began limiting access to rockfish, a traditionally important catch for locals. Restrictions were also imposed on abalone gathering.

By the end of the 1950s, abalone diving included southern California touches such as use of wetsuits and masks. Further facilitating the divers' efforts during the 1970s were the introduction of faster boats, improved diving technology and expansion of traditional fishing grounds. Divers from Pillar Point Harbor worked as far south as Año Nuevo, west to the Farallon Islands and north to the San Francisco County line. It was recorded that a single diver could garner an average of 10 to 15 dozen of the mollusks a day. In 1977, the State of California imposed restrictions in the form of a limit program. By the 1990s, the decline in abalone forced the state to act again, this time imposing a moratorium on all commercial harvesting of the sea creature.²⁶⁶

Negative factors reducing the activities of commercial fishermen over the last 50 years have been mitigated to an extent by the rise in revenue from charter boat fishing. By 1981, these types of landings accounted for over 70% of the recreational catch at Pillar Point Harbor.²⁶⁷ In recent years, charter boat owners have upgraded the types of boats they use to more powerful and faster vessels. They have thus expanded their range, north 28 miles, to Duxbury Reef near Point Bolinas.

For the commercial business, significant decline has occurred in recent years. As late as 1989, there were still 300 permanently based fishing vessels at Pillar Point Harbor. Another 200 or so transient boats also used the harbor on a seasonal basis. This made the harbor home to a significant fleet. Through the early 1990s, an average of 8.4 million pounds of fish with revenues of about \$8 million a year represented the peak time for this local industry.

However, in 1995, the State of California enacted a limit program for crab harvesting. Meanwhile, competition was becoming increasingly stiff. By 2000, something like 1,200 commercial vessels were fishing along the San Mateo County Coast annually. They were seasonal boats from other ports for the most part. Thus, Pillar Point Harbor experienced a significant drop in the number of commercial fishing vessels, in fact 40% between 1980 and 2000.²⁶⁸

In 2002, bottom fishing was banned in California water to protect threatened spe-

cies. In 2003, feeling the pressure of competition from “farm-grown” fish, fishermen at Pillar Point Harbor gave away 200 wild salmon in protest, asking that consumers demand the “wild” variety at their grocery stores. The next year, the federal government initiated a buyout program with the aim of retiring 50% of the West Coast trawl vessels. That same year, the last of the boatyards closed at Princeton. By 2004, only 94 active commercial fishing vessels still called Pillar Point Harbor home. Merely a quarter of these actually engaged in fishing all year round. Just 90 families in the Princeton community claimed to be dependent on the fishing industry for their main source of revenue.

Today (2010), Pillar Point Harbor possesses 369 berths within its marina that can accommodate vessels of up to 65 feet in length. Fuel is available as is crushed ice from the old refrigeration plant. When not broken down, it can produce 50,000 pounds of ice in a day. On a busy day up to 400 boats can be launched at the six-lane ramp. Three wholesale fish buyers are present; some fishermen sell their catch directly to the public. Retail fish stores market fresh fish to growing numbers of curious visitors.²⁶⁹

A recent interview with Joanna Franklin, operator of a restaurant at the Harbor since the 1960s, revealed that when her place of business first opened, most of her customers were fishermen and locals. Now, the great majority of people she serves are tourists. This daughter of a fisherman laments: “there are fewer than 10 old-time commercial fishermen on the Coastside.”²⁷⁰

Indeed for National Park Service visitors to GGNRA lands within San Mateo County, a side excursion to Pillar Point Harbor would be well worth the trip. It exists now as a legacy of an industry soon to disappear, at least in the form it has been known in the past. Before it is lost, going there could be an experience with historical interest as absorbing as a hike up Sweeney Ridge or a visit to old lumber mills sites on the Phleger Estate.

WORLD WAR II AND RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA (CONTEXTUAL)

During World War II, *Rancho Corral de Tierra* lands experienced more human activity than at any time in its history. Patrols on the beaches, construction of an airport, anti-aircraft target practice, installation of radar stations and the furious sounds of soldiers training for war were all a part of the scene. The saddest change was the evacuation and then internment of Japanese American farmers in the area.

The attack at Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, immediately activated military installations in the Bay Area. While the idea of an invasion was not seriously envisioned, an air attack or submarine raid was. On December 11, the Bay Area was designated

a theater of military operations. This sprung provision of resources for improving coastal emplacements and the overall defense system in the region.²⁷¹

For those who doubted the necessity for vigilance on the coast, in March 1942, a surface gun battle between a Japanese submarine and a Standard Oil tanker just south and east of the Farallone Islands near Half Moon Bay, was sobering.

At Half Moon Bay, the “Horse Marines”²⁷² began patrolling the beaches 24 hours a day. Guardsmen with dogs became part of the operation as well.

Building projects got underway all up and down the mid-San Mateo County coast. Certainly the most permanent was the construction of the Half Moon Bay Airport.

Official records tell us that the California State Highway Department bought the 217.68 acres by sale or by condemnation from 11 landowners just after the war began.²⁷³ *Rancho Corral de Tierra* resident Ed Lea remembers it a little differently. According to him the Army simply told the farmers west of the Highway to “get off.” Certainly the state of emergency motivated quick action, and the construction of an airfield, which was closer to Hawaii and the Pacific Theater of War than any other in the continental United States, made this project a priority.

The actual construction was accomplished by the Highway Department for \$3 million. The project resulted in the creation of a single 5,200 foot, asphalt paved runway.²⁷⁴ After the Army acquired the airfield it added an operations building, shops and barracks. Altogether, 19 buildings were put up, all of them standard military types of the era. Roads and utilities were installed as well.

The airfield’s first mission was to act as a forward operating location for Hamilton Field. Taking off from Half Moon Bay, fighter planes, such as P-38s and P-40s, would intercept enemy aircraft, before they could reach inland targets.

As the months wore on, and it became apparent that attack was not imminent, the airfield was used for patrol aircraft and as a base for planes towing targets for anti-aircraft drills. Trainer planes, flown by women air corps personnel, pulled radio-controlled target sleeves over guns deployed at the Twelfth Naval District’s Anti Aircraft Training Center at Montara. Personnel could then blast away. When practices were scheduled, a red flag was flown from a concrete tower at Moss Beach to warn away other aircraft and commercial fishermen.

The Anti-aircraft Training Center was actually quite an establishment. It extended southward from the Montara Lighthouse along the coast through today’s Montara Sanitary District for nearly 6,000 feet, and it ran eastward from the ocean, across the

highway deep into a current residential area. From the map provided (see Appendix XIII) the reader can see that the center included about forty structures with more (in white) planned.

Those present by April 30, 1944 included an administration building, a range control tower, a fire control building, classrooms, a night lookout trainer building, three barracks buildings, officers quarters, three Polaroid training buildings, a theater, a carpenter shop, a pump house, a paint locker, latrines, a target director building, eight magazines, a visual education building, a powerhouse, a garage, a “subsistence building,” an incinerator and a water tower. By 1945, a library, three more barracks buildings and a hangar had been added.²⁷⁵

Weapons present on concrete gun platforms facing the ocean included 20mm mounts, 40mm guns in twin and quad mounts, plus large 3-inch and 5-inch naval guns.

Remaining on today’s Montara Lighthouse Station National Park land is (possibly) the old carpenter shop and pump house plus the foundations for one of the Polaroid training buildings, a classroom building and theater, all located at the northwest tip of the Center, which consisted of the southern portion of the Coast Guard property.²⁷⁶ Some structures still exist on the Sanitary District property. Across the highway, many of the old foundations can still be seen and are used by local youths as an unofficial skateboard park.

At Moss Beach, the Center’s concrete tower remains standing as a relic. Just before the War ended, the Army leased the aircraft field to the Navy (June 1, 1945). There seems to have been little that the Navy did with the property after the War. On August 1, 1946, the War Department advised local authorities that the airfield was surplus. San Mateo County indicated interest in converting it into a civil airport and leased the property on February 1, 1947.

Most of the original wooden buildings were utilized by the County until a fire destroyed them in 1954. Today, all that can be seen from the military days are the airstrip and some aircraft hardstands.

During the 50s, United Airlines operated a small terminal at Half Moon Bay Airport. Currently, the utility is an emergency runway site for San Francisco International Airport. Its main function is to serve general aviation. It also has community emergency duties. The airport is still run by the County.

The military presence on the bluff at Pillar Point is an enduring legacy of World War II. The Army purchased 13.7 acres and leased another 36 at the Point in October of 1940 to create fire control stations with radar capabilities and to install seacoast searchlights.

The purpose of the fire control stations was to direct defensive artillery fire in case of a naval attack on San Francisco. The radar system was of the SCR-296 surface search type that was also employed at Wildcat Ridge at Point Reyes, Hill 640 east of Stinson Beach, Bonita Ridge at the Marin Headlands and Devil's Slide in San Mateo County (see Milagra Ridge section of this study for more on the Devil's Slide fire control stations). The typical equipment of such stations included a tower, a concrete transmitter house and two power plants. There were also barracks, concrete bunkers, cyclone fences and an overhead and underground electrical system. The station was known as "Pillar Point Military Reservation," part of the "Harbor Defense of San Francisco." A recent study of the site revealed little left from the World War II period, except some concrete and steel pedestals, a concrete bunker and a cable vault.²⁷⁷

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, on November 30, 1949, the Army's lease on 34 of the acres ended. On June 30, another lease of one acre expired, and on September 4, 1959, the lease for the last one acre expired. In 1959, the Navy leased these 36 acres again for use as a radar station. During the early 1960s, the 13.7 acres that had been purchased by the Army were turned over to the U.S. Air Force to build a missile tracking installation. Today, Vanderberg Air Force Base still operates the radar units at Pillar Point. They are modern AN/FPQ-6 and AN/MPS-36 units that can track aircraft, missiles, space boosters and other orbiting objects.²⁷⁸

Other World War II activities of the military on or near *Rancho Corral de Tierra* included a plan for the establishment of a large Army post at El Granada, that never came about. The Army did build some improvements for a similar project at Miramar, but nothing remains of them now. At McNee Ranch, which is now California State Park property adjacent to National Park land, the Army acquired acreage for staging mock battles, allowing troops the use of live ammunition. Locals listened to the sounds of machine gun fire rattling away until the end of the war.

The only attack on any of the *Rancho Corral de Tierra* military sites occurred on February 3, 1975, when the radical New World Liberation Front bombed the Air Force's Pillar Point station. During a stormy night, members of the group entered the base through an opening in a fence and planted two, two-inch diameter pipe bombs under a diesel-fuel tank. The bombs were intended to ignite the tank but failed to do so. Instead, 400 gallons of diesel-fuel drained into the ground. Afterwards, the Air Force upgraded security of the installation.²⁷⁹

For more about World War II and defense preparations in San Mateo County, see the Milagra Ridge section of this study.

MAVERICK'S AT PILLAR POINT (CONTEXTUAL)

Today, Pillar Point has achieved international fame for the presence of the big wave phenomenon about a mile off shore called Maverick's. Giant swells, that originate as far away as the Aleutian Islands and even Japan, move down the California coast. Off Pillar Point exists a long underwater valley facing northwest, that, especially in the winter, set up big waves on the surface.²⁸⁰

In fact the waves are enormous. Under the right conditions they can average twenty feet from back to front with a 40-foot "face". Incredibly, human beings ride these waves on surf boards. When riding at the top of the "face", they are four stories above the churning, deadly waters below. Maverick's has become known as one of the most consistently challenging big wave surf spots in the world. Thus, it attracts surfers from around the world during its annual competition.

Obviously big wave surfing is differentiated from more conventional surfing by the size of waves, once thought to be "unrideable". Surfing historians record December 22, 1943, as the birth of big wave surfing. At North Shore, Hawaii, surfers Woody Brown and Dickie Cross found themselves stranded out to sea near Waimea Bay. Encountering 30-foot waves they attempted to body surf in. Cross was never found. Brown survived, but years passed before anyone tried the North Shore swell again.

However, improved equipment advanced the sport. In 1950, George Downing and Joe Quigg shaped the first balsacore fiberglass board and launched the modern-era surfboard industry.

In 1953, big wave surfing generated international attention when photographer "Scoop" Tsuzuki captured Woody Brown and two other surfers on a 15-foot wave at Makaha. The Associated Press purchased the photo which received attention everywhere, including California where surfing was becoming popular.

Off Pillar Point in 1961, surfer Alex Matienzo and friends were attempting to surf some waves, but found conditions unsafe for Matienzo's German Shepherd, Maverick. He took his dog to shore and tied him up to a car bumper. Although not successful in riding the waves, the surfers called the spot Maverick's, after the dog, and the name stuck.²⁸¹

While big wave surfing had not yet arrived at Pillar Point, it was advancing in Hawaii. In 1974, the first big-wave contest took place on Thanksgiving Day at Waimea.

The next year, in 1975, San Mateo County native and Half Moon Bay resident Jeff Clark decided to give Maverick's a try. He had learned of the wave from his Boy Scout

troop leader and spent years studying the big swells before feeling mentally and physically prepared.

For 15 years, Clark had Maverick's to himself. Finally, on January 12, 1990, he talked Santa Cruz friends Dave Schmidt and Tom Powers into surfing Maverick's. For three years a few select northern Californians knew about the wave, but in 1993 Hawaiian Ken Bradshaw discovered Maverick's, and now other Hawaiians had to attempt it as well. In December of 1994, *Surfing Magazine* caught an image of Peter Mel riding what appeared to be a perfect wave. He was "inside the tube," that is he was riding within the curl of the wave, as the photo was shot. The photograph made the cover of the magazine, and Maverick's gained international fame.

In December of that same year, the danger of this place was brought home when surfing sensation Mark Foo attempted to ride Maverick's. The popular Hawaiian big wave enthusiast drowned and further placed Maverick's in the spotlight.²⁸² Local surfers responded by establishing a "Water Patrol" to watch over Maverick's surfers during the winter season, when the waves are biggest, and most of the activity is occurring.

In February of 1999, Maverick's passed another milestone when Sarah Gerhardt became the first woman to take on the big wave. It was the same month that the first Maverick's surf contest took place.

Quicksilver, a sports apparel company,²⁸³ sponsored the competition, dubbing it "Men Who Ride Mountains." Santa Cruz's Darryl "Flea" Virostko won the \$15,000 first prize. That October, Maverick's watchers were amazed to see a wave build to a heart stopping 53-foot face. In 2000, the second contest was again won by Virostko.

In order to have big wave surfing contests, the waves have to be just right. Jeff Clark, in most years, made that call, and surfers from around the world would come. In some years, the contest has not taken place because conditions weren't good enough. However, most seasons see a competition.

In November of 2001, a wave with a 75-foot face, the largest recorded, broke at Maverick's and it was assumed the year would be a good one for the contest. However Quicksilver sponsored the Eddie Aikau contest in Hawaii in January, and six days later, when conditions at Maverick's were deemed ideal, Quicksilver was unable to organize the separate competition. Moreover, some of its sponsored surfers had gone on a surf expedition to Cortes Bank, a remote spot some 100 miles off the coast of California. The waiting period passed in 2001 without a contest being held, and by autumn, Quicksilver was out. It no longer made business sense to sponsor two events in the same season. No other corporation picked up the slack, and the winters of 2001-02 and 2002-03 passed without a Maverick's contest.

In autumn 2003, Jeff Clark decided to revive the Maverick's contest on a "shoestring budget,"²⁸⁴ and 24 of the world's best surfers competed without prize money. "Flea" received the first place prize for the third consecutive time.

In 2004, Clark teamed up with Keir Beadling, a Bay Area entrepreneur, to form Mavericks Surf Ventures, which sponsored the contest through the winter of 2009-10'.

In 2005, Anthony "Tazzy" Tashnick of Santa Cruz won the \$25,000 prize. In 2006 an estimated crowd of 50,000 spectators crowded the bluff at Pillar Point to watch South African Grant "Twiggy" Baker win the \$30,000 prize. Baker was the first non-Californian to win, bringing further international notoriety to Maverick's.

There was no contest in 2007, but in January of 2008, Greg Long won and split the award money with all his competitors in a show of sportsmanship and unity uncommon in professional sporting activities.²⁸⁵

For the historically minded, Pillar Point's metamorphosis from the western natural wall for *Rancho Corral de Tierra* during Spanish times, to a whaling station, to a military installation, to a place where 50,000 people witness a spectacular water sport is unique -- indeed. For visitors to National Park properties in San Mateo County, a side trip to Pillar Point, especially during the winter, may lead to seeing some incredible waves and some equally incredible surfers who ride them.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION EFFORTS ON THE SAN MATEO COUNTY COASTSIDE AND RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA

Scientific wonder about the rich environment encompassing *Rancho Corral de Tierra* can be said to have begun with Dr. Sol Light of the University of California at Berkeley, who initially investigated the reef at Moss Beach in 1916. He started bringing his biology students here in 1919. The college kids would drive all day to get to Moss Beach and spend the night sleeping on the floor at Nye's Restaurant. The next morning they would study the marine animal life at low tide. A number of previously unknown species were documented by the doctor and his students.

Light and company were not the only ones attracted to the Coastside. Although the Ocean Shore Railroad ceased to function in 1920, during the decade that followed, traffic to the Moss Beach Area actually increased, as people made more and more use of automobiles. Many came for the healthy outdoors and appreciated the natural marvels of Moss Beach and other coastal areas, once part of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

Of course others came to visit the speakeasies of the San Mateo County Coast, of which there were plenty. At Moss Beach, Frank Torres opened the Marina View Hotel

in 1927. It became known as a sort of top-end joint in that it attracted movie stars and politicians. The secluded cove down below it, served as a perfect drop for rumrunners. Cases of booze were hoisted to the bluff by rope. Today the old road house still serves as a restaurant -- the Moss Beach Distillery.

The Coastside had its tourists over the next 30 to 40 years, but ideas about major development for the coast did not materialize until the 1960s. Henry Doelger, builder of major portions of the Sunset District in San Francisco and Westlake in Daly City, announced his intention to create a new 8,000 acre subdivision for 30,000 people north of Half Moon Bay. His plans included 4,000 acres of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* owned by Westinghouse (or Half Moon Bay Properties).²⁸⁶ This vision for the coast included an improved highway over Montara Mountain, bypassing Devil's Slide and installation of a dump in the Green Valley of Montara Mountain. Locals rallied against the grandiose ideas. Only the Clipper Ridge neighborhood, north of El Granada, was ever actually built by Doelger.²⁸⁷

In the meantime, Alfred J. Wiebe bought a section of Devil's Slide as war surplus property. His idea was to create housing, a spa, a restaurant and radio station, but this scheme collapsed as well.²⁸⁸

Nothing stopped a sportsmen's club from leveling off a hill top on Montara Mountain. The club planted pampas grass and Monterey pines there to assist with erosion control. At the expense of native plants, the pampas grass spread all over the Mountain.²⁸⁹

South of El Granada builders managed to have projects completed during the 1970s. The developments allowed the more than doubling of the population around Half Moon Bay. Water, sewer and other infrastructural needs were stretched to their maximums and construction stopped.

About this time an environmental movement grew strong enough to begin challenging development plans. County residents were joined by people statewide concerned over the rapid nature of growth in California during the post-war years. California voters passed a coastal conservation initiative in 1972, which allowed for the creation of a Coastal Commission for four years. With the Coastal Act of 1976, they extended the Commission's authority indefinitely. San Mateo County organized a Local Coastal Program, the same year.

Perhaps the greatest boost for the local environmental community of the 1970s was the purchase of the 625-acre McNee Ranch from Westinghouse for \$1 million by the State of California for the purpose of creating a park. This parcel includes the acreage from Montara Mountain south to Martini Creek, just north of today's National Park property at *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. The park officially opened in 1984.²⁹⁰

The biggest challenge for environmentalists anxious about the San Mateo County Coast was the highway bypass first promoted by Doelger in the 1960s. Despite the pampas grass, Montara Mountain possessed plants and soils unique from any other place on the planet. In fact seven of its plants are on the California Native Plant Society's inventory of "particular concern". Five are federally listed.

The four to seven mile long (depending on which plan one looks at) four lane bypass, from Pacifica over the mountain, was attacked by environmentalists because of what it might do to the ecology of the Mountain and how it would help open the door to future Doelger type developments down the coast.

In 1971, as State Highway plans for the bypass surfaced, the Committee for Green Foothills, Sierra Club, other groups and individuals sued the State of California under the newly enacted National Environmental Protection Act.²⁹¹ They won. The project became delayed for years. Storms washed out Highway 1 at Devil's Slide from time to time, and pressure mounted on public officials to do something about permanently fixing Highway 1 in the Montara Mountain area.

In 1993, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors appointed a panel of geologists and engineers to render advice on what might be done. The experts suggested replacing the bypass proposal with a tunnel through Montara Mountain and McNee State Park. After some debate, the issue was placed before the voters of San Mateo County in 1996, who favored the tunnel project by a 74% majority. The environmental studies and engineering plans for the tunnel were approved in 2002. Funding assistance came from the federal government through the persuasive promotion of Congressman Tom Lantos. As of the writing of this study (2010), the tunnel is nearing completion.

Another victory for environmentalists involved the tide pools that drew Dr. Light to Moss Beach back in 1916. By the 1960s, the increasing numbers of people visiting this coastal tract threatened the habitat. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, led by its President, James V. Fitzgerald, passed a resolution to designate the Moss Beach tidal pool area as a reserve. Opposition from sports fishermen, scuba diving associations and others was overcome in Sacramento, when in 1969, the State of California declared it a "marine life refuge," and designated this tidal space as the James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, due to the tireless efforts of the local leader who worked to preserve the property. As a reserve, not only did protections come in place for the tidal pool wildlife, but also for the birds, fish, plants, seals, sea lions, whales, seaweed and otters who are present or visit the site.

The Reserve is much valued for its uniqueness. It differs from most of the California coastline which tends to consist of cliffs that plummet to the ocean. This extensive reef is drained twice a day, revealing teeming tide pools.

San Mateo County Parks and Recreation and the California Department of Fish and Game are the joint custodians of the Reserve. It extends three miles from Point Montara to Pillar Point and 1,000 feet out into the ocean. In total it is 402 acres in size, that includes the intertidal marine habits and coastal bluff. In the tide pools a visitor can find crabs, sponges, sea stars, mollusks, starfish and fish. There are 52 different species of shell-less sea snails alone. This intertidal zone is one of the most bio-diverse in California. Currently as many as 135,000 school children and other visitors explore Fitzgerald each year.

Researchers of geology, ecology, zoology, entomology, archeology, botany and geography study here. In fact 25 different species of plants and animals, brand new to science, have been discovered at Fitzgerald.²⁹² In 1970, an amateur geologist found a 4 million year old walrus bone, and, in 1996, an ancient whale fossil, maybe 5 million years old, was discovered.

The richness of the place draws people, hence there are problems. Researchers have recognized the large crowds have had a negative effect on the environment and consequently the wildlife. Before gaining reserve status, people could pick through the reefs and rocks and take what they wanted. A local restaurant owner bragged how he could go down to the reef at Moss Beach and gather that night's abalone dinners.²⁹³ Now there is protection. However, even with its reserve status in place, the mere numbers of people stepping on the rocks and reefs have significant impact.

In 1992, San Mateo County began studying the detrimental effects of public visitation at Fitzgerald. Limiting the numbers of people allowed onto the Reserve was recommended. Certain areas of it were put out of bounds for casual visitors. The County has also taken steps to have Fitzgerald declared an Ecological Preserve in Sacramento, which would place further limitations on usage, but opposition from fishing and other interests have thus far defeated these attempts.

On the positive side, in 1985, local residents formed Friends of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve whose mission is to protect and preserve the place, through education and planning. Additionally in 1992, the waters off Moss Beach, in fact off the entire San Mateo County coastline, became part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The federal government created the 276-mile sanctuary to protect, research, educate and provide public access to the coast.

The continued sophistication exhibited by the people of San Mateo County about such matters has been a plus to the environmental movement. In 1972, local voters created the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District whose mission it is to buy open space for recreation and preservation purposes. In 1977, the private, non-profit

land trust, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) came into existence and has had a great influence in San Mateo County.

Significantly for this study, POST purchased the 1,232 acre Phleger Estate in 1994 after raising \$21 million from private and federal sources. In 2001, POST began purchasing 4,700 acres of mid and north Coastside properties for just under \$30 million. This included 4,262 acres of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. In fact, between 2001 and 2005, POST expended \$200 million to preserve 20,000 acres of the San Mateo County Coastside. In 2003, POST completed its *Rancho Corral de Tierra* purchase.

Tenant farmers of POST's section of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* were happy with the philosophy of their new land lords. Previously these farmers had to operate with leases of only six months or a year, since the owners had development plans. Now long-term leases and the prospect of family ownership became possible. The Lea family of Cabrillo Farms, tenant farmers on the land for three generations (since the days of "Boss" Patroni), supported the POST purchase and the consequential transfer to the National Park Service. Four parcels of farmland are involved, three along Highway 1, and one tucked into the middle of current Golden Gate National Recreation Area property in Denniston Valley.

In 2004, POST turned its attention to Pillar Point. In April, it purchased a 119-acre parcel, just north of the Point itself, west of Half Moon Bay Airport and south of Seal Cove. The intertidal zone and area just off shore are adjacent to Fitzgerald Reserve, further protecting that valuable place. POST paid \$2.7 million for the acreage, well below the appraised value of \$3.8 million. The property's bluff top views lookout on tide pools and beaches to the west and farms and mountains to the east. A foundation from an old barn is on the site along with some dirt roads, legacies of the parcel's agricultural past. These properties may one day become a part of the GGNRA.

In 2003, Congress introduced the Rancho Corral de Tierra Golden Gate National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Act, calling for the appropriation of \$15 million to purchase the 4,262 acres from POST, and in 2005, Congress approved expansion of the GGNRA to include this section of the San Mateo County Coastside.

The move was made after the National Park Service became convinced of a variety of factors:

- From a historical perspective, Rancho Corral de Tierra existed as the largest privately held remnant of a Mexican-era land grant on the San Francisco Peninsula.
- Evident is this land's scenic value as an eastern backdrop for Highway 1 -- from Devil's Slide to Half Moon Bay -- featuring mountains and farmlands.

- The property has exceptional biodiversity, including plants not found anywhere else and endangered wildlife such as the peregrine falcon, San Bruno elfin butterfly, San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog.
- This portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* contains two complete watersheds (San Vicente and Denniston creeks) plus part of a third (Martini Creek).
- Miles of potential trail systems will render great views from *Rancho Corral de Tierra*, a recreational asset in close proximity to major population centers.
- Without preservation, this land would certainly be threatened by development.
- *Rancho Corral de Tierra* is adjacent to other parklands, providing opportunity for expanding preservation efforts and linking trail systems. The San Francisco Watershed exists to the east and borders the Golden Gate National Recreation Area's Sweeney Ridge. California's McNee Ranch State Park and San Mateo County's San Pedro Valley Park lie to the north. There exists enormous potential for joint initiatives to improve the environmental health of the region while allowing accessibility to these wondrous places for the public.

ENDNOTES

¹ See *diseño* for Guerrero's rancho and the American plat map of the same in Appendix XXIII.

² See *diseño* and plat map for Vásquez in Appendix XXIV.

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- ²⁸ Bancroft, *California*, p. 367.
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Fig. 4.1: Park map of Mori Point.