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Law Enforcement Problems of the 1920s & 1930s,
Bay Meadows Remembered and Daly City Centennial

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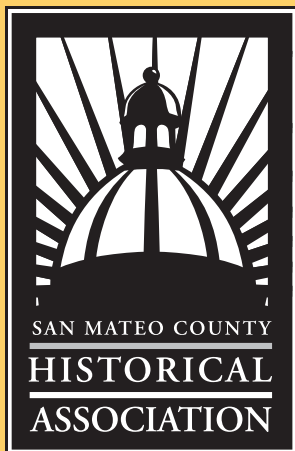
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preserving and
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Front Cover: Bill Kyne (left) and Joe DiMaggio (center) at Bay Meadows.

The Most Corrupt County:

The Era of Prohibition and Gambling

by Carmen J. Blair



"Boss" John Patroni made sure his speakeasy had plentiful liquor during Prohibition. Rum runners delivered Canadian whiskey to his wharf.

On the Lam: *Slang. Evading the police.*

"San Mateo County is the most corrupt county in the state."¹ This assertion from the Hillsborough mobster Sam Termini in the 1930s reflected years of Peninsula residents disregarding laws on alcohol and gambling.

The 18th Amendment made the manufacture and sale of liquor illegal. Enforcement was difficult in San Mateo County where large parts of the European immigrant population believed drinking was a right. Other residents viewed Prohibition as an opportunity to make money or have some fun. Women joined the men drinking, smoking and gambling in illegal speakeasies or bars. Rum runners used the foggy coast to smuggle Canadian whiskey from off-shore ships. Throughout the county, everyday folk made moonshine.

The National Prohibition Act, known as the Volstead Act, made the Bureau of Internal Revenue of the Treasury Department responsible for the enforcement of Prohibition. The Treasury Department's Prohibition Enforcement Unit had about 3,000 agents nationwide. They were known as "prohis." In San Mateo County these agents patrolled the beaches watching for rum runners and raiding stills.

The Prohibition Enforcement Act, known as the Wright Act, made California police officers responsible for enforcing Prohibition laws. Many local police departments were small and not prepared for the demands of Prohibition. For example, South San Francisco had only four officers to police a community of 3,000 people.² Despite numerous raids, the county was considered one of the "wettest" in the state.

Prohibition Laws

18th Amendment: A United States constitutional amendment prohibiting "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors." Ratified in 1919, it went into effect in 1920.

Volstead Act: Officially the National Prohibition Act, Congress passed this legislation to enforce the 18th Amendment. Passed in 1919, it went into effect in 1920.

Wright Act: Officially the Prohibition Enforcement Act, this 1922 California law enforced the 18th Amendment.

"Soft Drink" Ordinance: A 1926 San Mateo County law regulating soda fountain shops and outlawing slot machines.

21st Amendment: A 1933 United States constitutional amendment that repealed the 18th Amendment.



Menlo Park's James L. Flood stands in his wine cellar, c. 1920. Wealthy residents of the Peninsula filled their wine cellars before Prohibition went into effect.



Robbers targeted the whiskey at Frederick McNear's Menlo Park home. Courtesy of the Atherton Heritage Association Collection.

Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies

On February 17, 2011, the San Mateo County History Museum opened the exhibit *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies* that explores the corruption of the 1920s and 1930s. Curated by Dana Neitzel and Carmen J. Blair, the research and writing done for the exhibit is reflected in this article.

Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies is open through December 31, 2011.

The repeal of Prohibition did not solve the county's problems. After years of violating liquor laws, the general attitude toward crime had softened. Gangsters who had made fortunes as bootleggers turned their attention to gambling. Bookies prospered through illegal off-track betting and gambling dens.

Caper: *Slang.* A robbery or other criminal act.

While the 18th Amendment did prohibit the manufacture, sale and transportation of "intoxicating liquors," the ownership and home consumption of alcohol was still legal. Peninsula residents had the year between the ratification of the amendment and when it went into effect on January 16, 1920, to purchase a supply of alcohol to enjoy when the country went "dry." The millionaires of the area made sure the wine cellars of their Great Estates were fully stocked. A portion of W.M. Fitzhugh's Menlo Park cellar included 141 cases of imported whiskey and 68 cases of wine, brandy and champagne.³

When Prohibition started, thieves met the demand for alcohol by "capers" burglarizing the wealthy. In late February 1920, S.W. Morehead lost two cases of gin, two cases of whiskey and 10 gallons of wine from his Portola Valley home. Posing as laundry wagon drivers and gas meter readers, one gang stole \$20,000 worth of liquor in the first six weeks of Prohibition.⁴

In a famous caper, a gang of nine robbers held Julien Hart's Menlo Park household at gunpoint for several hours on March 2, 1922. They were after \$35,000 worth of whiskey in a concrete vault belonging to the mansion's owner, attorney Frederick McNear. One robber told a hostage, "We believe that this liquor should be put in general distribution, so that everybody gets a chance at it, and not let the rich have it all to themselves."⁵

As Prohibition continued, robbers targeted more than the wealthy. Hijackers stole alcohol seized by law enforcement agents and hooch smuggled by bootleggers. In December 1924, a Pescadero gang stole a \$20,000 cache of whiskey hidden by bootleggers. When the loss was discovered, the bootleggers invaded the town and roughed up the residents until the missing liquor was found.⁶

Moonshiner: *Slang.* One who makes homemade alcohol.

The 18th Amendment prohibited the manufacture of alcohol. All over the county, residents disregarded this law. Some European immigrants saw no need to discontinue making the beverages they were used to drinking. At a time when legitimate jobs paid 25 dollars a week, some found the money to made by moonshining to be appealing. An experienced moonshiner could make a gallon of whiskey for 70 cents and get a return of 50 dollars at a speakeasy. With a typical still making about 50 gallons of whiskey a day, creating moonshine became a lucrative business.⁷

Small distilleries flourished. Most were found in the basements of private homes. It was easy to get started as a moonshiner. Recipes could be found at local libraries. Ingredients such as grapes, hops, sugar, barley and yeast

could be purchased in stores. Local newspapers advertised where one could buy equipment such as steam boilers, condensers and copper pipe needed for a still. Stills were so prevalent that George Havice recalled he could hear them operating as he drove down the Montara streets. Even his church had a still.⁸

Larger stills were hidden on farms or in local businesses. During a 1924 raid on a San Bruno area ranch, the prohis discovered a wholesale moonshine plant that possessed 5,000 gallons of mash and a double distillery that produced 125 gallons a day.⁹ Some locals who did not own stills assisted in the activities through their regular jobs. George Havice hauled sugar for the stills in his flower truck while William Miramontes delivered gasoline to 19 active stills as he drove for Standard Oil Company.¹⁰ In 1931, authorities discovered that the J.R. Soda Works in South San Francisco operated one of the biggest distilleries in California. Owned by the South San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, a spur line to the Southern Pacific Railroad was built at the factory's loading ramp which allowed it to supply alcohol to most of the Western states.¹¹

Many moonshiners bottled the liquor they made. Some had simple hand-written labels such as "Wendall Double-Rum Alohol" (sic.). Perhaps reflecting the quality of the moonshine, others received labels proclaiming them "Lion Piss" or "Mule Piss."

Some moonshiners tried to make their brew sound more high-class. The practice of bottling counterfeit liquor included disguising the moonshine produced by mixing it with artificial flavors. In order to get a better price, Coastsider Tony Torres remembered moonshiners mixing grain alcohol with flavoring to taste like bourbon or gin.¹² This counterfeit liquor could then be placed in bottles with authentic-looking labels. According to San Mateo bootlegger G. William Puccinelli, the labels were produced back east under Al Capone's control.¹³

Some moonshiners were less skilled than others. Inexperience in production could lead to moonshine dangerous to one's health. In 1921, Harold Johnson brought suit against three Portola Valley moonshiners claiming their grappa had caused a temporary loss of eyesight.¹⁴ Moonshiners discovered that improperly run stills exploded. In 1928, a barn was destroyed when a 600-gallon still exploded in El Granada.¹⁵

Explosions such as the one in El Granada drew the attention of authorities, leading to the confiscation of liquor, mash and equipment. Other raids succeeded through ongoing police work. In South San Francisco, Chief Louis Belloni and his officers observed the construction of a still in 1928. When they made their move, they surprised the distiller and confiscated the still and 48 barrels of liquor.¹⁶ Raids did not always stop operations. When he received warnings of upcoming raids, one Coastsider moonshiner would hide his good still and put out a dilapidated still for the prohis to confiscate.¹⁷



Moonshiners equipment in *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies*.



Moonshine from the Prohibition era on exhibit in *Broads, Boodleggers and Bookies*.



Chief Louis Belloni (second from right) and officers at a 1928 raid. Courtesy of the South San Francisco Historical Society.

Bootlegger or Rum Runner?

A bootlegger is anyone who manufactures, sells or transports illegal liquor. A rum runner is a bootlegger. However, the term rum runner is often used to refer to those who transport liquor by sea, while bootlegger indicates those who transport liquor on land.



Rum runners unloading cargo in Half Moon Bay.



The U.S.C.G.S. Shawnee patrolled off the coast of San Mateo County during Prohibition. Courtesy of the United States Coast Guard.

Alcohol

During Prohibition, people called alcohol by a variety of names including: bootleg, hootch, hooch, sauce, brown, coffin varnish, John Barleycorn, rot gut, stuff, donkey piss, bathtub gin and jiggle soup.

Rum runner: *Slang.* A person bringing prohibited alcohol across borders.

With American wineries and distilleries officially closed, people saw a chance to make a fortune by smuggling alcohol. Rum runners filled their ships with whatever alcohol was in demand, especially Canadian whiskey. Many of the rum runners that anchored along the San Mateo County Coastside came from British Columbia.

United States jurisdiction extended three miles, later twelve miles, from shore. Large ships with illegal whiskey would anchor just outside the jurisdiction area on both the Atlantic and Pacific Coast forming Rum Rows. From the Rum Row off San Mateo County, the alcohol was unloaded into coastal boats. In 1925, the *Ardenza* spent some weeks on Rum Row unloading 25,000 cases of scotch.¹⁸

Some Coastside residents incorporated rum running in their daily job. Fisherman Henry Bettencourt remembered taking his boat out in the afternoon to meet a small freighter that could carry 100 cases of alcohol from Canada. Bettencourt could order a load of whatever he wanted – vodka, gin, scotch, bourbon or Old Crow. He would be back to El Granada with his load in three hours.¹⁹

Often, the coastal boats landed in secluded coves. Bootleggers paid Coastside boys \$100 to unload boats and load the bootleg onto trucks.²⁰ While some of the liquor went directly to Coastside speakeasies, much more of it went to San Francisco. A single shipload of 20,000 gallons could fetch a quarter million dollars when retailed in San Francisco.²¹

Many female bootleggers, known as ladyleggers, had great success. One ladylegger made trips from the Coast to San Francisco for four years. She drove a Studebaker outfitted with overload springs and shipments of bootleg, to the business college she attended in San Francisco. She parked her car, with the alcohol, in the business college garage. The liquor would be gone when she got back to her car.²²

The Coast Guard was responsible for catching rum runners by sea. With a small fleet, only two Coast Guard cutters were stationed near the San Mateo County Coast. Often, the fast, well-armed ships of the rum runners evaded and outran the Coast Guard ships.²³ If pressed, rum runners threw their cargo overboard for Coastside residents to scavenge when it washed to shore. Princeton resident Silvia Belli Dianda recalled hearing about boxes of liquor being dumped from one ship. When she went to the beach, she found one case of whiskey. She dug a hole in the sand to hide the case until a family member could retrieve it.²⁴

The Coast Guard did have some victories. After a running fight that lasted over an hour, the *Gaviota* was captured off the coast of Half Moon Bay and a \$100,000 cargo was seized. Captured, the *Gaviota* was later used in the fight against bootleggers.²⁵

On shore, prohis and local police became responsible for law enforcement. There were ongoing stories of law enforcement

cooperation with bootleggers. In 1926, bootleggers landed 74,000 cases of whiskey in Half Moon Bay after being told agents were planning a large raid many miles away. Allegedly, the bootleggers paid \$3,000 for the information that the landing area and the road to San Francisco was clear.²⁶

The lack of proper vehicles made it more difficult for officers to catch the bootleggers on their trips to San Francisco. In 1922, the South San Francisco Police Department had one vehicle, a 1917 Harley Davidson.²⁷ As law enforcement officials gained more vehicles, there were numerous high speed pursuits. Local records report at least 164 pursuits between 1920 and 1926.²⁸

Some of the confrontations between law enforcement and bootleggers fit the wildest images of Prohibition violence. In 1923, federal agent W.R. Paget led a raid against an operation at Ano Nuevo Island. Armed with sawed-off shotguns, the agents fought a gun battle until the bootleggers ran out of ammunition.²⁹

Even when law enforcement managed to chase down bootleggers, judges gave light sentences. In South San Francisco, Officer Augustine Terragno pulled over a car for running a stop light. He discovered 25 gallon containers of alcohol. Terragno reported "all the judge did was fine him for running the light...worse, I was told to haul all the booze back to the Buick!" After that, he did not bother to stop bootleggers.³⁰



South San Francisco Police Officer Vincent Bianchini, Sr., riding his 1927 Harley Davidson. Courtesy of Charles DeSoto, South San Francisco Police Department Historian Collection.

Law Enforcement Terms

Prohi: Prohibition agent.

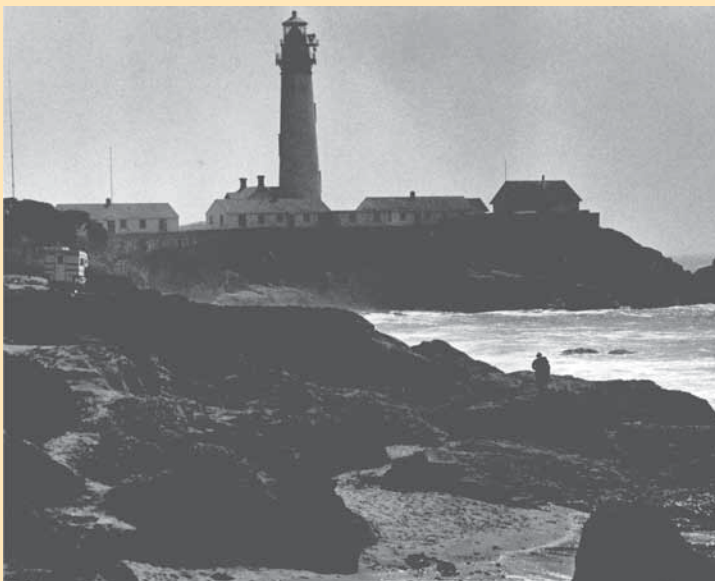
Flatfoot, Fuzz, or Shamus: A policeman.

Bull, Dick, or Gumshoe: A detective.

On the Lam: Evading police.

Pinch: To arrest.

Rum Runners at Pigeon Point Lighthouse



Pigeon Point Lighthouse guided the rum runners to shore. Photo by Norbert Von Der Goreben.

Rum runners used the lighthouses along the San Mateo County coast to guide them to shore. On shore, they used equipment belonging to the lighthouse. Jessie Mygrants Davis, daughter of Pigeon Point's Assistant Keeper Jesse Mygrants, recalled, "They were quite ruthless men. We'd watch for them. They always came on moonlight nights, so we could see them clearly. They sailed in on the south side of the tower and were audacious enough to use the lighthouse derrick to unload their ships. Once, one of the dories hit the rocks and the cargo was lost. There were a lot of divers in the area after that."

Certainly, the rum runners could be dangerous. One night, Assistant Keeper Mygrants stumbled upon a group of rum runners. Taken at gunpoint, he was forced to drive them eight miles down the coast.

From, JoAnn Semones, *Shipwrecks, Scalawags, and Scavengers: The Storied Waters of Pigeon Point* (Palo Alto, CA: Glencannon Presa, 2007), 72.

Broad: Slang. A woman or a girl.



"Broads" at the speakeasy in *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies*.

Flappers became a symbol of the Roaring Twenties. Trendy girls in their teens and early twenties shocked the establishment with their short skirts, bobbed hair and heavy make-up. Seen as brash, flappers showed disdain for what was considered moral behavior.

While not adopting the extremes of a flapper, most females throughout the nation did become more independent. Higher hemlines, smoking and drinking became everyday occurrences.

Slang Terms for Women

Whisper Sister: Speakeasy owner.
Ladylegger: A female bootlegger.
Dish or Doll: An attractive female.
Dame or Skirt: Any female.
Vamp: An aggressive female flirt.
Toots: Female equivalent of pal.
Moll: A gangster's sweetheart.
Crumb: An unpopular girl.



The Moris operated the Hotel San Pedro at the Sanchez Adobe as a speakeasy.

Speakeasy: Slang. An undercover bar; an illegal drinking establishment.

Speakeasies on the Peninsula numbered by the hundreds. High-class speakeasies in hotels and restaurants provided fine food and entertainment, along with moonshine and bootleg whiskey. Located in barber shops, grocery stores, cigar stores and soft drink parlors, many of the "speaks" were much smaller. A password granted access to a small back room with a bar and perhaps some card tables and slot machines. Customers paid 50 cents a shot for moonshine and up to two dollars for whiskey.³¹

While women rarely entered bars before Prohibition, everyday "dames" frequented the speakeasies. Females throughout the nation became more independent in the 1920s. Higher hemlines, smoking and drinking became everyday occurrences. In addition to being regulars at the speakeasies, there were "whisper sisters," such as Maria Mori who helped her husband operate a speakeasy at the Sanchez Adobe.³²

Speakeasy owners obtained their alcohol from several sources. Some proprietors, such as Manual Bernardo at the Beach Inn near Half Moon Bay, had their own still.³³ Also on the Coastside, both "Boss" John Patroni at Princeton and Jack Mori at Mori's Point had private wharves near their speakeasies for the delivery of whiskey. Mori had a marine telephone system for communications and warning lights installed. An engine on Mori's Pacifica wharf operated a cable system that pulled smaller boats back and forth from a larger freighter.³⁴

While law enforcement agents did raid speakeasies, the raids were often unsuccessful. As members of the local community, the police officers often had good relations with speakeasy proprietors. Some law enforcement agents were known to have a drink at local speakeasies,

and sometimes notify owners of upcoming raids. In 1920, Charles Steele, a member of the county traffic squad, was suspended for 60 days for warning a roadhouse of a raid.³⁵ In South San Francisco, a friend of Police Chief Louis Belloni noted that the chief used to warn his friends to lay low when prohibition agents came to town.³⁶

Proprietors had various hiding places for their bootleg alcohol. When police raided Maymie Cowley's Coastside establishment, they toured the entire hotel without finding any alcohol. Not until an officer disturbed a hen in the barn was alcohol discovered hidden in the hen's nest.³⁷ Undeterred by the fines she received, Cowley later operated a speakeasy built with revolving cupboards and other ingenious hiding places.³⁸

If a raid was successful, the usual sentence for the proprietor was a few months in county jail and fines up to \$500.³⁹ The raids did not close most speakeasies. Some employers arranged for their employees to serve the jail sentence. "Frenchie," his cook, did Manual Bernardo's jail time after a raid at the Beach Inn.⁴⁰ Small fines did little to discourage people from repeatedly breaking the law. In Redwood City, one hotel owner resumed selling bootleg after each of his three convictions and fines.⁴¹

Some speakeasies were also bordellos. At the San Pedro Hotel located at the Sanchez Adobe, "secretaries" from San Francisco came down for interviews with "employers."⁴² The Ocean Beach Tavern near Half Moon Bay had a ten-room bordello upstairs connected to the kitchen with an alarm system.⁴³ While prostitution was not illegal, District Attorney Frank Swart did close bordellos, such as the Princeton Inn, as a public nuisance under the Red Light Abatement Act.⁴⁴

Repeal: The end of Prohibition.

Herbert Hoover called Prohibition "a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose."⁴⁵ However, instead of reducing crime, Prohibition increased it. In their selling of alcohol, gangsters set-up nationwide networks. There was a general disrespect for the law, even among previously law-abiding citizens.

During the 1930s, it became clear that Prohibition had failed to stop alcohol consumption. Additionally, as the Great Depression progressed, officials saw economic reasons to end Prohibition. A legal flow of liquor could be taxed. As he campaigned to be President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that it was "time to correct the 'stupendous blunder' that was Prohibition."⁴⁶

Repealing the 18th Amendment, the 21st Amendment was ratified on November 7, 1933, and Prohibition officially ended on December 5, 1933. Legal production of alcohol quickly resumed. Americans celebrated the end of the "Noble Experiment." Locally, the repeal of Prohibition was marked by parties including the Drunks Dinner at Filoli. William and Agnes Bourn, the owners of Filoli, "being sober" and infirm

Types of Speakeasies

Smaller illegal drinking establishments were called blind pigs, gin mills and juice joints. These operations were usually less fancy than speakeasies at restaurants or hotels.



The speakeasy kitchen in *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies* features hiding places similar to those at Maymie Cowley's Ocean Beach Tavern.



Allegedly, the Hotel Princeton was a speakeasy and a bordello.



Undersheriff Buster Quinlin (second from the end) relaxing at Tony's Place in San Gregorio. Tony Silva (far right) allegedly provided moonshine for his customers.

Endnotes

¹ Barry Smith, "The Era of Sheriff McGrath and the Gambling Problem under his Regime" (Research Paper, College of San Mateo, 1977), 73-74.

² Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb: The Story of the San Mateo Peninsula* (Belmont, CA: Star Publishing, 1982), 223.

³ Betty Sears, "The Not-So-Dry Years," *La Peninsula* 20, no. 3 (1980): 3.

⁴ Clifford James Walker, *One Eye Closed the Other Red: The California Bootlegging Years* (Barstow, CA: Back Door Publishing, 1999), 33.

⁵ June Morrall, "A Sobering Home Invasion in Menlo Park," *San Mateo County Times*, August 1, 1997.

⁶ June Morrall, *Half Moon Bay Memories: The Coastside's Colorful Past* (El Granada, CA: Moonbeam Press, 1978), 168.

⁷ Hynding, 218.

⁸ George Havice, interview by Don Ringler, July 7, 1970, SMCHA Collection. In 1970, Don Ringler interviewed a series of Coastside residents about early Coastside hotels and resorts. In the process, he captured many Prohibition stories.

⁹ Sears, 11.

¹⁰ Havice interview and William Miramontes, interview by Don Ringler, July 18, 1970, SMCHA Collection.



The Wheel-of-Fortune in *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies* features horse racing imagery. On exhibit courtesy of Slot Machines of San Bruno.

did not attend, but Ida Bourn hosted the festivities for 20 prominent guests.⁴⁷

Not everyone was happy about repeal. Earning \$10,000 a week as a bootlegger, G. William Puccinelli of San Mateo called Prohibition "the greatest law that ever was."⁴⁸ The economy of the Coastside suffered with the end of the illegal jobs associated with Prohibition.

During Prohibition, gambling often occurred at the speakeasies. By the end of the 1920s, the police raided gamblers as often as bootleggers. After the repeal of Prohibition, bootleggers turned their attention to gambling. Racketeers like John Marchbank and Emilo Georgetti made gambling the county's main law enforcement problem.

Gambling Den: A building in which games of chance are played.

From Gold Rush days, wagering of many kinds was common on the Peninsula. During the 1920s and 1930s, laws against different forms of gambling were as ineffective as those outlawing liquor. Slot machines and card games were common in speakeasies.

The gambling dens in San Mateo County featured a variety of games. One South San Francisco gambling den had a lottery booth, blackjack, faro, dice and chuck-a-luck tables. Reflecting lessons learned in Prohibition, the den had a hidden false front and heavily barricaded doors.⁴⁹ Some of the gambling dens had wide audiences. The Oriental Gambling Emporium in Bayshore City (now part of Daly City) brought in hundreds of Chinese from throughout the Bay Area.⁵⁰ Some towns were known for their gambling establishments. Bus drivers referred to Brisbane as "Little Reno."⁵¹

Emilio Georgetti, an Italian immigrant, was one of the biggest racketeers on the Peninsula. About 1930, he opened a small smoke shop in South San Francisco that featured slot machines, liquor sales and bookie wires.⁵² He sold slot machines through his front man A.P. Gianotti who ran the J and A sales company in Menlo Park.⁵³ By 1938, the Willow Tree, his Colma business, was reported to be the most luxurious casino in California and the largest of its kind west of the Mississippi.⁵⁴

The gambling dens seemed to flourish with little official opposition. In 1934, a county grand jury charged that local councilmen in several towns had ordered local police to "lay off" the dens at the request of big-time racketeers.⁵⁵

While there were some raids on gambling dens, not much was found. Sheriff James McGrath and Emilo Georgetti were friends. When sheriff deputies finally raided the Willow Tree, the place was almost empty.⁵⁶ Georgetti was not the only proprietor warned. Mary Arcotti, a former employee of the Brisbane Inn, noted that the sheriff would notify the owner of raids in time to hide the slot machines.⁵⁷



Grayhounds racing at Baden Kennel Club, 1938.

Grayhound: A racing dog.

In the early 1900s, the Progressive Movement in California succeeded in having many forms of gambling outlawed, including dog and horse racing. Racketeers sought to return racing to California. In 1931, greyhound racing started at a Belmont track. Soon there was a dog track at South San Francisco and one at Bayshore City.

Dog racing had connections to gangster activity on a national level. Investors invited Thomas Keen to operate their Belmont track. Keen had previously operated the Hawthorne Dog Track in Chicago that was nicknamed the “Capone Gang Dog Track.” Although Keen claimed to have cut ties with Capone, charges persisted that the Belmont track was an extension of Capone’s empire.⁵⁸

The dog tracks in San Mateo County operated under an “option betting” scheme. Under option betting, the bettors were not actually wagering on the competing animals, but purchasing an option to buy them. When option betting was challenged in the county courts, local judges ruled it was legal.⁵⁹

Even though the judges had ruled in their favor, investors at the Bayshore City track went a step further to protect their activities. Located near the San Francisco County line, Bayshore City incorporated in 1932 to insure a local government friendly to the track and bookies in the vicinity. Dog racing was the town’s purpose. Bayshore City disincorporated when dog racing was outlawed in 1939 under pressure from horse racing interests.⁶⁰ The former Bayshore City is now part of northeast Daly City.

Endnotes (cont.)

¹¹ Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett, “South San Francisco Police Department,” in *The South San Francisco Police Department 1892-2003*, ed. Charles DeSota et al. (South San Francisco, CA: South San Francisco Police Department & South San Francisco Police Association, 2003), 11.

¹² Tony Torres, interview by Don Ringler, August 26, 1970, SMCHA Collection.

¹³ Walker, 120-121.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 428.

¹⁵ Hynding, 219.

¹⁶ Kathleen Kay, email to Dana Neitzel, September 2, 2010.

¹⁷ Havis interview.

¹⁸ Hynding, 214.

¹⁹ Henry Bettencourt, interview by Don Ringler, August 19, 1970, SMCHA Collection.

²⁰ Walker, 118.

²¹ Hynding, 217.

²² Havice interview.

²³ Sears, 12.

²⁴ Silvia Belli Dianda, interview by Don Ringler, August 27, 1970, SMCHA Collection.

²⁵ Mitchell P. Postel, *Historic Resource Study for the National Recreation Area in San Mateo County* (San Francisco, CA: National Park Service, 2010), 227.

²⁶ Hynding, 214.

²⁷ Svanevik and Burgett, 10.

²⁸ Sears, 12.

²⁹ Morrall, *Half Moon Bay*, 173.

³⁰ Svanevik and Burgett, 13.

³¹ Hynding, 220.

³² Postel, 228.

³³ Lilian Bernardo Mattos, interview by Don Ringler, September 2, 1970, SMCHA Collection.

³⁴ Postel, 228.

³⁵ “Traffic Officer Accused of Giving Tip on Roadhouse Raid,” *San Mateo News Leader*, January 22, 1920, 1.

³⁶ Svanevik and Burgett, 13.

³⁷ “A Larger Hen Would Have Saved the Booze,” *San Mateo News Leader*, April 30, 1921, 1.

³⁸ June Morrall, “Maymie Cowley, the Coast’s Rambunctious Red-Headed Madam,” *San Mateo County Times*, April 20, 1999, 7.

³⁹ Hynding, 218.

Endnotes (cont.)

⁴⁰ Mattos interview.

⁴¹ Hynding, 222.

⁴² Visitors to the Sanchez Adobe have shared Prohibition stories with the docents, without identifying the “secretaries.”

⁴³ Hynding, 222.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁵ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and the Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 201.

⁴⁶ “FDR and the End of Prohibition,” National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, accessed November 2, 2011, http://face2face.si.edu/my_weblog/2008/12/fdr-and-the-end-of-prohibition.html.

⁴⁷ Ferol Egan, *Last Bonanza Kings* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1998), 249.

⁴⁸ Walker, 123.

⁴⁹ Smith, 16.

⁵⁰ Hynding 227.

⁵¹ Oral History Assoc., *Spirit of Independence: A History of Brisbane Before Incorporation* (Sausalito, CA: Oral History Assoc., 1986), 25.

⁵² Hynding, 228.

⁵³ Smith, 71.

⁵⁴ Postel, 230.

⁵⁵ Hynding, 228.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵⁷ Spirit, 25.

⁵⁸ Michael Svanevik, “Unsolved Mystery: Who Killed Tom Keen,” *The Times*, January 5, 1990, B3.

⁵⁹ Hynding 226.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁶¹ Smith, 28, 30.

⁶² Hynding 226.

⁶³ Herb Phipps, *Bill Kyne of Bay Meadows: The Man Who Brought Horse Racing Back to California* (Cranbury, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1978), 14.

⁶⁴ Robert “Boots” O’Neill, interview by Jon Rubin, June 16, 2008, SMCHA Collection.

⁶⁵ Phipps, 115.

⁶⁶ O’Neill interview.

⁶⁷ Hynding, 228.

⁶⁸ Smith, 42.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁰ Hynding 230.

⁷¹ Svanevik and Burgett, 11.



Seabiscuit won the Bay Meadows Handicap twice.

Thoroughbred: A horse breed best known for its use in horse racing.

In 1900, wealthy San Francisco sportsmen opened Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno. The track gained national attention for its thoroughbred racing. When horse racing was outlawed in the early 1900s, auto racing and aerial barnstorming shows drew thousands to the track.

During the 1920s, John Marchbank and some partners purchased Tanforan. Marchbank was a powerful political figure in North County. With money from his many gambling dens, Marchbank financed local politicians. In return, Marchbank got protection for his illegal activities. At one time, he convinced the Daly City government to legalize all gambling operations in the town.⁶¹ In 1930, he used a loophole in the law to reopen Tanforan for betting under the same option betting scheme as the grayhound races.⁶²

At one time, William Kyne was called the youngest bookie in the country.⁶³ A former partner of Marchbank’s at Tanforan, he waged a battle to legalize pari-mutuel betting. In pari-mutuel betting, all bets of a particular type are placed together in a general fund. After the track’s take is removed, the funds are shared among all winning bets.⁶⁴ Kyne succeeded in legalizing pari-mutuel betting for California thoroughbred horse racing in a 1932 referendum.

In San Mateo, Kyne opened Bay Meadows Race Track in 1934. At Bay Meadows he introduced to California racing innovations including the photo finish.⁶⁵ From the guy-next-door to movie stars, the track was the place to be as it hosted some of the most famous horses and jockeys of the day. When Seabiscuit won the Bay Meadows Handicap in 1938, the track was so crowded, “the whole place was shaking.”⁶⁶

While Tanforan and Bay Meadows operated in legal ways for the most

part, there were also many illegal bookie operations in the county. Radio broadcasts allowed local bookies to increase their revenue by allowing for betting on race results from Southern California and the east.⁶⁷ A bookie could make hundreds of thousands of dollars each year off race betting.⁶⁸ The streetcar made it easy for bettors from San Francisco to get to bookie places in San Bruno that had race track windows.⁶⁹

Illegal bookie operations were apparently protected in San Mateo County. Later investigations showed that Sheriff James McGrath and San Francisco police shielded a large telephone booking syndicate in Colma. Racketeers including Emilio Georgetti had interest in the operation that handled \$200,000 a day from all over the nation.⁷⁰

Regular: Normal, typical, average.

During the 1920s and 1930s, officials promoted San Mateo County as an idyllic place to live. Promotional films highlighted the advantages of the county's schools, businesses and outdoor attractions. However, the norm did not match the advertisement. While San Mateo County might not have been the most corrupt county in California, illegal activities such as bootlegging and gambling were regular parts of many people's lives. A general disregard of the law existed. As one South San Francisco resident commented, "You couldn't put the whole town in jail."⁷¹ Real reform did not come until after World War II, when the thousands of new residents settling in the county demanded change.



Sheriff McGrath and William Kyne at Bay Meadows.

Carmen J. Blair

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Casket: Slang. Large crates packed with artichokes.



Trucks filled with caskets.

An edible flower, the artichoke was at the center of a national mafia story. In 1890, Coastside farmer Dante Dianda planted the first artichokes for commercial purposes in California. By the 1920s, artichokes had become a valuable commodity, especially back east where the Italian delicacy was rare.

In 1920, 95% of all artichokes grown in the United States came from the coastal strip between Pacifica and Santa Cruz. Local Italian immigrants who wanted to lease property for farming were required to grow and sell artichokes through "Boss" John Patroni. The farmers packed the artichokes in "caskets," or crates, which sometimes included liquor to increase revenues.

Patroni's artichoke fields became the sites of occasional gun battles as competing racketeers attempted to steal the prized

vegetables. Farmers not willing to cooperate with organized crime lords had crops damaged by machete-wielding henchmen and crates of their artichokes stolen from trucks and warehouses. Armed with sawed-off shotguns supplied by the sheriff, "artichoke vigilantes" patrolled the Coastside's back roads to protect the crop.

Back east, "Artichoke King" Ciro Terranova purchased all artichokes shipped to New York from California. He marked up the prices 40% and scared away competitors with the threat of violence. Saying "Half Moon Bay Artichokes" in New York meant property of organized crime syndicates. Trying to stem the violence in 1935, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia declared the sale, display and possession of artichokes to be illegal in New York City.

From:

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Bay Meadows Remembered

by Jon Rubin



A gambler named Bill Kyne spent his own money on two statewide initiatives to make pari mutuel wagering legal in California. Sketch originally published in the *New York Press*, 1933.

Jon Rubin

Filmmaker Jon Rubin produced and directed the documentary *Last Train from Bay Meadows*. Jon and his company, National Image Works, are currently working on a documentary on former San Francisco Mayor George Mascony. He is a frequent video contributor to the San Mateo County Historical Association

It's been more than three years since the music stopped at Bay Meadows. With The Last Dance Stakes on an overcast day in the summer of 2008, an era, a tradition, and a way of life came to an end.

August 17, 2008, marked the end of 75 years of continuous operation at the legendary oval by the railroad tracks in San Mateo. Through war, depression, good times and bad, the thoroughbreds ran and the bettors, the swells, the railbirds, the just plain people and The Bay Meadows family made a living and created a culture around the magnificent synergy of man and animal that is horse racing.

When we lost Bay Meadows, we lost more than a racetrack, we lost another part of the unique culture that is America. We lost another piece of our humanity as the sights, the sounds, the smells and the pace of real life gave way to the merciless drone of the digital interface and the sterilized loop of televised sound bites. Like wooden ballparks and roller coasters, drive-in movies, dirt tracks and road houses, Bay Meadows has already begun to recede in the rear view mirror of history – a memory of organic communion now increasingly rare in the new world order.

Any reconsideration of Bay Meadows has to include the families and the generations that were the engine that ran the track for three-quarters of a century. The grooms, grounds keepers, trainers, exercise riders, hot walkers, farriers, outriders, pony people, veterinarians of the barns or “back side” and the ticket sellers, vendors, maintenance people, caterers, waiters, bar tenders, parking lot attendants and executives on the “front side” as well as the jockeys and the horses themselves were a subculture whose like won't pass this way again.

What follows is a glimpse of the history of Bay Meadow, a history of the people and players, the horses and riders who gave everything for 90 seconds of glory on dirt or grass. Such Jockeys as Johnny Longden, Bill Shoemaker and Russell Baze aboard such great horses as Seabiscuit, Citation and Lost in the Fog fulfilled the dream of a visionary gambler named Bill Kyne who risked everything to open the track in 1934.

The Early Days



Bill Kyne built Bay Meadows by the railroad tracks in San Mateo. He bet \$5,000 it would open on time. He won the bet. The track opened on Nov. 13, 1934.

A Building the tote board.

B The track opened on November 13, 1934. Screen star Wallace Beery helped Dorothy Kyne cut the ribbon.

C Ticket Sales.

D Kyne managed to keep the track open during World War II by giving 92% of its earnings to the government.

E Pete Pederson was among the many people working the races.

Legendary Horses



Legendary Jockeys



Over the years, legendary horses set records at Bay Meadows.

F Citation won the U.S. Triple Crown in 1948.

G Seabiscuit won the Bay Meadows Handicap in 1937 and 1938. He was Horse of the Year in 1938.

H Lost in the Fog won the Bay Meadows Speed Handicap in 2005. The same year, he was U.S. Champion Sprint Horse.

I Ralph Neves won 3,772 races. On May 6, 1936, he fell from a horse during a Bay Meadows race and was declared dead. He revived and continued to race until 1963.

J Russel Baze won 36 riding titles at Bay Meadows. In 2006 at Bay Meadows, he won the record for most career wins. He remains the winningest jockey in history.

K Bill Shoemaker (left) and Johnny Longden (right) at the opening of the Johnny Longden Turf Course at Bay Meadows in 1978. In 1956, Longden became thoroughbred racing's winningest jockey. He had 6,032 career wins. In 1970, Shoemaker broke Longden's record. Shoemaker had 8,833 career victories.

L In 1999, Lafitte Pincay, Jr., broke Shoemaker's record of most races won. He retired with 9,530 victories.

Celebrities at the Track



Working at the Track



Q



R



S



T



U



V

Over the years, Bay Meadows welcomed heroes of sports and the silver screen.

M Baseball star Joe DiMaggio (center) with Bill Kyne (left) in the stands.

N Actor Oliver Hardy talks with a jockey.

O Heavyweight champion Joe Louis (right) and Bill Kyne (center) pose for the cameras.

P Roger Moore (left) in the 1985 Bay Meadows Ascot Handicap Winner's Circle. Events like Ascot Days and the El Camino Real Derby became track traditions.

The barns, the track and the horses are the responsibility of the "backside" crew. The "frontside" crew handles parking, betting windows, bartending, catering, ticket selling and management.

Q Farrier at work. Photo by and courtesy of Scott Buschman.

R Track announcer Michael Wrona.

S Track veterinarian Diane Isbell. Photo by and courtesy of Scott Buschman.

T Camera man records the race from the press box.

U Bugler David Hardiman starts the races. Photo by and courtesy of Scott Buschman.

V The clocker times workouts and races.

...And They're Off



W Breaking from the gate.

X Heading for the back stretch.

Y Racing for the wire. Photo by Bill Vasser.

Z Somebody has to win. Photo by and courtesy of Scott Buschman.

AA You Lift Me Up, winner of the Last Dance Stacks, August 8, 2008. Photo by and courtesy of Scott Buschman.

Daly City-Colma: Leaves of History

by Samuel C. Chandler



John Daly and James Casey viewing the Colma-Lake Merced area, 1915. Photo by A.G.C. Hahn.

Robert Sheldon Thornton had cause to be happy. From the Atlantic shores of Rhode Island to the famed Bay of San Francisco he had looked for a spot to build his home. His journey had led him to the western portions of his native state where he had met and married Susan Ann Smith, and there he had left her with a promise to return and “fetch her” when he found the land of his dreams.¹

In California Robert Thornton spurned the gold mines that lured other men, to remain in San Francisco where he could find reports of government land being offered to homesteaders. To support himself he worked on a ship that serviced the ports of California.

On an August day in 1853 he read that a survey had declared that the land immediately south of San Francisco between Lake Merced in the north and *Buri Buri Rancho* on the south and westward to the Pacific Ocean was government land and therefore available for purchase. Immediately he elected to go see the area.

Riding south from Mission Dolores, Thornton passed Portezuela where two roads from San Francisco met at the top of a knoll. Beyond lay a gentle rising plateau fringed with southern hills that rose to the base of Mount San Bruno on the East. This was the government land mentioned in survey.

Thornton noticed that the area was criss-crossed with the trails of wild Spanish cattle. Carefully he followed one of them until he reached



Robert Thornton playing violin.

Editor's Note

As this year marks the centennial of Daly City's incorporation, the Publications Committee believed it was fitting to reprint this article originally published in *La Peninsula* in 1979.



Growing vegetables in the Colma Valley, 1915.
Photo by A.G.C. Hahn.

a spot half way up the mountain. There he stood and surveyed the landscape. A small creek flowed southward along the base of the mountain until it ran into San Francisco Bay. In the hills to the south of the land there were several small lakes fed by wild springs and small creeks. The hills and the district north of them were covered with scrub oak and wild brush. This was virgin land, having never been cultivated.

Thornton stooped down, and let the sandy loam fall through his fingers. It was rich, nearly as black as golden. Slowly he became aware of a gentle breeze that was blowing a thick fog from the ocean to the bay. As his nostrils filled with the dampened air, he felt a sense of joy come over him. This was the place that he had sought for many years. Almost in a dream he laid his plans. He would hasten to San Francisco and file on 160 acres of the flat land extending east from the Pacific Ocean. Then he would come back and fence it in and make some improvements. As soon as that was done he would go for Susan Ann and bring her “home.”

On the very day that Robert Thornton decided to settle on the plateau, Patrick Brooks rode through the hills west and south of San Bruno Mountain and near the aging *Buri Buri Rancho*. He was a sturdy man, this Patrick Brooks, with a posture as straight as a ramrod and with a large head and a rugged face brightened by the sharp gleam of his Irish eyes.

A few months before he had come from New England looking for a place to grow potatoes or to start a dairy farm. As he gazed at the hills marching in gentle slopes towards the mountain, he laughed with pleasure. “I’ll stay,” he resolved. “I can see cows on every hill growing fat on this grass.” His eyes focused on a valley between two hillocks. “There,” he resolved to build his house and to make it tall like the hills, using no materials in it that would not blend with the countryside. Having made his resolve Patrick Brooks hastened to purchase the land he wanted from the owners of the *Buri Buri Rancho*. As time passed he and his wife were forced to guard the acres they owned from encroaching squatters and troublesome neighbors,² yet they remained for 50 years in the home they made in the sloping hills south of San Francisco.

A dozen Americans and Europeans followed Robert Thornton and Patrick Brooks to the country cleared by government survey. Among them were the Knowleses. Isrial came from the gold fields of Eastern California with muscles hardened from swinging the pick but with empty pockets. As he rode past San Bruno Mountain, he noted that the countryside was vast and empty save for the houses built by Thornton

and Brooks and those constructed by James and Charles Clark, who had settled near the edge of the present day cemetery area of Colma. Ike Knowles chose to build his house on the plateau, east of Robert Thornton's land but closer to San Francisco.

He was soon joined by others who had been unsuccessful in the gold camps: Jason White, Millard Hallingsworth and J. E. King among them. It is said that they brought nothing with them except the name of a town in the gold country, Coloma, which tradition says, they changed to Colma and bestowed it upon the valley heretofore known to railroad builders as the Sand Hills.

Michial Comerford came with slips of eucalyptus trees to plant in the sandy soil near the ocean beach. Peter Doncks came from Germany and filed on 160 acres that stretched in a narrow strip westward from the present business district on Mission and San Pedro Streets. His gift of land for schools and churches would long be remembered. Asahel Easton and his brother Ansel settled near San Bruno Mountain. Later Ansel married into a prominent San Mateo County family and helped settle other cities. Asahel became the County Surveyor.

James and Elizabeth Casey came from the boarding house in San Francisco where they had met and married. They purchased 227 acres which proved sufficient to provide for the sixteen children who were born to their union. John Daly came from a dairy farm in the southern part of the country to acquire his own land and to find fame and fortune. Joe Hill came to be the first postmaster, John Husing to become a leading merchant, and Ben Green to operate a ranch known for the quality of its potatoes and hay.

As a result of the work of these men, the land south of San Francisco was soon dotted with milk farms and hog ranches. Writing of these pioneers Dr. Frank Stanger said "most of the settlers were men with families but not large means. Their improvements...varied in value from a few hundred up to six thousand dollars.³ All observers agree that they were unpretentious, hard working people whose strength lay in the desire they shared to make their homes in a congenial environment. From their posture as modest men and women, they bequeathed a destiny to the communities that sprang from their settlements to be neighborhoods of comfortable homes.

A reporter who resided in northern San Mateo County wrote of the pioneer village: "A prettier place could not have been found for a growing village. During the summer it has none of the sweltering heat so often experienced by the interior towns of this state, being between the waters of the Bay and the Ocean, the temperature is kept cool."⁴



John Daly's San Mateo Dairy provided milk to San Francisco, 1892.



Colma hog farmers.



Southern Pacific tracks before 1907.



Residents on the "Top of the Hill" in Daly City, c 1900.

As Robert Thornton and the other settlers of the district now covered with Daly City and Colma had sought the golden promise of owning land of their own, a wave of Italians followed the pioneers into the area. They were ambitious young people and buoyant older people, gardeners from Liguria and factory hands from Genoa, who had heard rumors of free land in California and came, many on borrowed funds, to seek the promised land.⁵

Of them it is said, many planned to stay in America long enough to make the acres they acquired produce the funds necessary for them to return to Italy and become landlords where they had been peasants. However, the magic of the American melting-pot led many of them to drop such goals and become home builders and boosters of America and California.

In the Colma area they found themselves part of the community that was not concerned about the national origins of its residents. The drama of their integration into American life is described by August Conci, the son of Genovese settlers. "We were Italians, we were Irish, we were German in those days. We got along beautifully; we didn't draw the line. We Italians were looking to be sent back because of our nationality. We were in the prime trying to find our place. You know, to be recognized, and we found it, and, I think, we all did it with dignity."⁶

Another picture of the integration of the Italian immigrants is cited in Paul Radin's *The Italians of San Francisco*. "When I arrived, all in, my brothers were at the Ferry Building and were waiting for me. We went into a buggy and drove to Colma where I stayed with my brothers for over four years. Work was not so hard here in the vegetable gardens (as in his native village in the province of Genoa) and what I liked best was no snow or ice and no hours of walking. I got more money every year...."⁷

As the years passed the dream such people held of returning to Italy to live dimmed until many like the man quoted above wanted nothing more than to go (to Italy) for a few months "to see what is left of our home place."

Yet the Italians of Colma retained pride in their origin and taught their children that it was an advantage to be both Italian and American. Speaking of this fact Mr. Conci said, "...When I went to school, I couldn't speak English for the reason that at home they all spoke Italian. And I started learning English...but it didn't take long. I still thank my parents that I can read and write the Italian language as well as the English language. So that's given me an advantage. That's where I think the parents are wrong today if they forget they were of a different

nationality.”⁸

The scene that attracted the Italian immigrants to the Colma-Daly City area was described by the *Redwood City Times and Gazette* of May 8, 1886, thusly, “Colma, nine miles south of San Francisco, is situated on an eminence about one hundred feet above the level of the Pacific Ocean, on a plot of ground forming a gap between the San Bruno Mountains on the east and the low range of hills on the west, and also forming a watershed, part of the winter’s rain running northwest into Lake Merced, which empties into the ocean, the other portion running southwesterly into the Bay, making good drainage and healthy towns.”

“The soil is a sandy loam, well adapted to cultivation of all kinds of vegetables. A fine quality of cabbage is raised in large quantities on the low range hills west of the village, on the land extending over those hills southwest into San Pedro Valley. Lakelets and living springs of water are dotted over the hillside land, sufficient in many places for irrigation in the driest seasons.”⁹

Another reporter for the *Times and Gazette* noted that vegetables “grown in the fog-saturated hills west of Colma (the area of the present-day Serramonte Subdivision) are of excellent flavor. It is good cabbage land,”¹⁰ he declared.

The area proved to be good “flower land” as well. Within seventy years after the pioneers had planted their first crops, Colma violets were found on the flower stands as far away as Missouri and Kansas. Straw flowers were raised as a field crop. Gardens of roses, dahlias, marigolds, chrysanthemums and marguerites were found among the cabbage and potato patches. Indeed it is estimated that by 1920 over 20% of the land was being used for flower culture.¹¹

Seizing their opportunity to work in such a land, the gardeners from Italy labored with a zeal that impressed many of the first settlers. Speaking for other pioneers, Robert Thornton wrote, “The vegetable land is cultivated principally by Italians, who are industrious, frugal and most painstaking cultivators.”

The work of the Italians, with the cooperation of the first settlers who had remained in the district, produced “Colma’s greatest business.” On May 8, 1886, the *Times and Gazette* reported that 206,618 pounds of cabbage-like vegetables were shipped from the area.

Thirty years later the *Daly City Record and Tattler* reported that 1,742,825 pounds of vegetables were shipped in a single month.¹²

“I walked out of the rubble (of the earthquake and fire in San Francisco) in my worst set of clothes, they were all I had left, bought a couple of refugee shacks, hauled them out to an area of Daly City



Wagons from the farms shared Mission Road in Daly City with newer forms of transportation, c. 1915.



Traveling by car along Skyline Boulevard., c. 1923.



Along with homes, new city buildings were constructed including the John D. Daly Public Library, c. 1920.



Firemen pose by the fire truck after 1911.

now known as Santa Barbara Avenue, set them down and called them home.”¹³ These words of a refugee from the earthquake and holocaust that destroyed San Francisco in April 1906 express the experience of hundreds of victims who fled to the area now covered by Daly City and Colma. They streamed down Mission and San Jose Roads to the top of the hill where tents and helter-skelter shacks were set up on John Daly’s dairy ranch and in the gardens kept by the early residents and their Italian neighbors.

“I remember,” wrote Edmund Cavagnaro, whose family kept a garden near the dairies at the top of the hill. “It was a scene never to be forgotten, three days of fire raging in San Francisco. I still remember the people – some with a cat, a dog, or a canary in a cage – walking out Mission Road; turning to look at the flames and smoke over their shoulders every now and then but not actually coming to a stop. It just seemed they couldn’t get far enough away.”¹⁴

The ranchers and gardeners opened their homes to the refugees and supplied them with food and bedding. Cavagnaro remembered that his mother had people staying in their home and that the schools were overrun with refugees who claimed they never wanted to go back to San Francisco.

“We well remember the days of the 1906 earthquake,” wrote John Daly’s daughters, “when our father opened his fields to the homeless campers and supplied milk for all. Before the brick had cooled or the streets were passable in San Francisco, figuring there were women and children in hospitals who needed milk, he” (their father) “sent a supply in one of his wagons. The first one was confiscated for the transportation the horses provided. The following wagons went with a Red Cross nurse beside the driver and were unmolested.”¹⁵

Edmund Cavagnaro also remembers the benevolence of the gardeners and ranchers and the administrations of the Red Cross. Thus he spoke of them: “Soon there were loads of supplies with provisions of all kinds including vegetables being distributed twice daily. People from miles around were given rations. One of the refugees recalls that even street cars were used to haul groceries to Daly’s Hill.”¹⁶

To house the refugees, the Red Cross devised a standardized residence that has been described as a “small, lightly constructed cottage, about fourteen by eighteen feet in size and in two and three-room designs.”¹⁷ Within weeks other refugees were obtaining loans from the Bank of Italy and others to purchase building sites where there had been gardens and dairies and hog ranches and were placing upon them the remnants of burned-out buildings from San Francisco.

It cost 25 dollars to have the H. H. Smith Teaming Co. haul a building from San Francisco to the area around Daly's Hill. Business was so good Mr. Smith said: "We were making easy money."¹⁸ In spite of the altruistic nature of his work, the City of San Francisco presented Mr. Smith with a demand that he tear down his stables and build new ones with concrete floors. Never one to be dictated to, Smith promptly moved to Daly City and opened a second hand lumber yard where "I sold the lumber from my stables."

Although the refugees lived in shacks built of used lumber, some salvaged from the fire and earthquake, they put their "Yankee ingenuity" to work to make them livable. "We moved in just in time to have Christmas dinner in the winter of 1906," wrote a Mrs. Bliss. "When we furnished our living room, the people called us rich. We had pictures on the wall." Mrs. Bliss's furnished living was so inviting, she was asked to rent it to a group for a Sunday School.

Mrs. Bodien, not content with her refugee shack, shingled it herself with only her son to help her. This was her home, and she resolved to stay forever.

Overnight, it seemed, northern San Mateo County became a boomtown. "There were shacks everywhere," Edmund Cavagnaro wrote. "Every section – Hillcrest, The Mission Track, the Concordia Tract, Vista Grande – received its share of these mostly two-room shacks."

As the boom continued, the owners of the refugee shacks replaced them with more substantial homes, while merchants moved on to Mission Street and into shopping centers. Bill Sweeney's blacksmith shop became a garage. A nickelodeon grew into a movie palace, a post office of substantial size was built where John Daly's cow barn had been. A water system was installed, a sewer was laid, banks were built at the top of the hill and in Colma.

Joining the boom, subdevelopers and real estate agents worked with old time settlers, to divide the land into building lots. Robert Thornton became a real estate agent. John Daly, "seeing the dire need of the fire refugees for locations to build new homes and himself beginning to feel the result of his many years of arduous toil and deserving to retire to enjoy some of the comforts he had accumulated, divided his land into well-arranged building lots."¹⁹

With the builders came a mob of boomers, promoters, contractors, salesmen, lawyers, merchants, each ready to turn the garden patches and "hog ranches" into housing tracts – each, in his own way, seeking to exploit the boom. They were the heralds of an era that grew steadily

Endnotes

- ¹ *Daly City Record: Golden Jubilee Anniversary Celebration Edition*, October 4, 1961.
- ² "Notes on the History of Colma," (unpublished manuscript), Daly City Public Library Collection, 1.
- ³ Frank M. Stanger, *History of San Mateo County* (San Mateo, CA: San Mateo Times, 1938), 111.
- ⁴ *Daly City Record and Tattler*, Dec. 25, 1915.
- ⁵ Paul Radin, *The Italians of San Francisco: Their Adjustment and Acculturation* (San Francisco, CA: R&E Research Associates, pre-print 1970), 20-21.
- ⁶ August Conci, unpublished interview, January 4, 1973, Daly City Public Library.
- ⁷ Radin: *Ibid.*, 77.
- ⁸ Conci: *op.cit.*
- ⁹ *Redwood City Times-Gazette*, May 6, 1886.
- ¹⁰ *Redwood City Times-Gazette*, February 20, 1886.
- ¹¹ Samuel C. Chandler, *Gateway to the Peninsula*, (Daly City, CA: City of Daly City, 1973), 59.
- ¹² *Daly City Record and Tattler*, December 25, 1915.
- ¹³ Arthur J. Bodien, *Westlake Times*, February 10, 1965.
- ¹⁴ Edmund Cavagnaro, (unpublished manuscript), Daly City Public Library Collection.
- ¹⁵ Minnie E. Carson and Lillie I. George, Letters to Arthur J. Bodien, *Daly City Record*. Oct. 12, 1961.
- ¹⁶ Notes from Old Timers Meeting, Feb. 27, 1951, Daly City Public Library Collection.



Daly City police in 1927.

Endnotes (cont.)

¹⁷ "Daly City—Its History," *La Peninsula* 6, no.1 (1951): 3.

¹⁸ H. H. Smith, Notes from Old Timers minutes, February 27, 1951, Daly City Public Library Collection.

¹⁹ Mrs. Bliss, Notes from Old Timers meeting, February 27, 1951, Daly City Public Library Collection.

²⁰ *The San Francisco News*, April 20, 1940, 7.

²¹ Mission Street tract, broadside.

²² Cavagnaro: *op. cit.*

²³ *Daly City Record and Tattler*, December 25, 1915.

²⁴ Daly City General Plan, 1978, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁶ "Best Suburbs," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1974, 128.

²⁷ *Daly City Tattler and Record*, December 25, 1915.



Henry Doelger developed Westlake in Daly City.



Daly City viewed from San Bruno Mountain.

for over a half a century until one of the subdevelopers was hailed as America's largest home builder.²⁰

With a surprising singleness of purpose the builders and the boomers agreed that the district south of San Francisco should be developed as a homeland for Americans with moderate means. Buy a house with "a price that will not become a burden with the years," became the slogan of the Doelger Company, developers of the area known as Westlake. Shortly after the earthquake a subdivider advertised lots on macadamized streets for "30% less in price than ten miles further down the Peninsula."²¹ Salesmen spoke to buyers of homes with streamlined baths and a breakfast nook in every house, with monthly payments best suited to individual needs.

Over the years the developers and the salesmen became so eager to build and sell, they forced the gardeners and ranchers to sell their property. "The vegetable garden owners were given notice to vacate within one year or be squeezed out."²² Sewers and paved roads were not extended to homes that were held by the original owners. Numerous suits were filed against hold-outs while legal means were found to force the "unprogressive" to join the builders.

From San Francisco's rows of look-alike houses and from apartment dwellings and walk-up flats in every Bay Area City, the people came to achieve the dream of owning a home of their own. They were "just folks": clerks, teachers, car salesmen, storekeepers, preachers, doctors, policemen, truck drivers. By the hundreds and thousands they came to dwell on their 33-by-100-foot lots and to keep their houses painted and their lawns trimmed. Cheerfully they shopped in the bright new stores and sent their children to schools adorned with brick and glass.

From the very beginning the district became the embodiment of suburbia. Its detractors referred to the homes as "little boxes on the hillside" while its boosters responded that the residents of those houses "enjoyed comforts of cities ten times the size."²³

Statistics mark the growth: In 1910 there were 400 people in the area that became Daly City; by 1920 the population had increased to 3,770. By leaps and bounds it grew, until in 1960 it was placed at 44,791. Ten years later the U.S. Census reported the population of Daly City to be 66,922. Seven years later there were 73,100 people living in Daly City with approximately 7,000 living in non-Daly City area.²⁴ [Editor's note: Today, the population of Daly City exceeds 110,000.]

In 1911 the northern parts of the district voted to incorporate as the City of Daly City. Since then it has grown to cover the major part of the land between San Francisco and the cities of South San Francisco and



Daly City as seen from Highway 280 in 1980. Photo by Bob Andres.

San Bruno.

Declining to join the growing city, the southern part of the area remained unincorporated County land until 1920 when it became the town of Colma with its own city government.

Throughout its history the Daly City-Colma area has remained a community of homes. Thus in 1978 almost 35 percent of the 4,518 acres within the boundaries of Daly City was occupied by single-family homes while another 7.5 percent was used for multiple-family homes. All but 8.4% of the remaining acres were used for facilities that support the homeowners and apartment dwellers.²⁵

Speaking of Westlake area of Daly City, which covers a large portion of the Daly City-Colma area, including the homesite of the first settler, the *Ladies Home Journal* wrote, "Many Bay Area Communities are swankier, but this comfortably middle class area offers a stimulating cross-section of people and excellent transportation."²⁶

Such accolades echo the words written by Robert Thornton, the pioneer. Toward the end of his long life he asked the people who resided in the land he had chosen for his home to "join hands with their neighbors for improvements which will be beneficial...in advancing the education of the rising generations."²⁷



Construction in Daly City.

Samuel C. Chandler

Samuel C. Chandler served as the City Librarian for Daly City from 1958-1983. In 1978, he wrote *Gateway to the Peninsula*, a history of Daly City. His scholarly articles were published in various professional journals. He served as a member of the San Mateo County Historical Association Board of Directors for many years.



The Callan Legacy

Tom Callan Sr. was a County Supervisor from 1952-1960 and one of the most colorful politicians in the county's history. A native of Colma, he purchased land all over the Bay Area and California, yet still had time to raise hogs and cattle in San Gregorio. As a major land owner, it was said "he knew San Mateo County acre-by-acre and lot-by-lot." He was active in the San Mateo County Historical Association until his death in 1979.

His sons, Tom Jr. and Mike, opened **Callan Realty** following their service in World War II; developing Westborough and hundreds of homes and apartment buildings in the Daly City area and also lending the family name to Callan Blvd. Tom remains active in the community today.

The well known and eye-catching **Callan Realty** sign along Junipero Serra Blvd. is the original sign from the late 1940s. Photograph of Tom Callan today by the sign.

Duggan's Serra Mortuary

Duggan's is a tradition that began in 1916 and has been passed on from generation to generation. Beginning with Bud and Madeline Duggan, their sons, Bill and Dan and now Matt, all consider this their ministry. The "family-owned" mortuary had its grand opening on April 21, 1963 at its current location in the beautiful Spanish style building on Westlake Avenue.

The 50-year-old building is partially hidden by a new parking structure.



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Miramar Beach Restaurant

From 1918 to 1955 a redheaded madam named Maymie Cowley, aka "Boss", ruled the **Miramar** (known as the Ocean Beach Hotel at this time). During her reign, the roadhouse was raided numerous times for illegal liquor, gambling and prostitution during Prohibition. The **Miramar** was a notorious drop off point for illegal liquor. Smugglers brought their booze in from Canada and shipped it down the coast to Half Moon Bay. Under the cover of darkness, small vessels, known as "rum runners", met the large ships off the coast and transferred the illegal cargo to shore. Rum Runners, because of their speed and agility, were ideal vessels to make the transfer from ship to shore. Because of this the vessels were often able to outrun Coast Guard patrol boats. Half Moon Bay was the ideal location for the transfer of illegal cargo because it was a small isolated area yet still close enough to San Francisco for transport by car.

The Miramar Beach Restaurant was originally designed and built as a Prohibition roadhouse. This meant that in order to keep the contraband hidden during raids, secret compartments and revolving kitchen doors were built into the building. The upstairs of the Miramar served as the bordello. Ten small rooms each equipped with a sink, a light, hat rack and bell system to the kitchen below allowed the restaurant to serve their customers upstairs.

Since the Golden Era of the Half Moon Bay Coastside, nearly all the speakeasies of that time have disappeared. **Miramar Beach Restaurant** is one of only a handful of buildings from that time period. Upon your visit to this restaurant, please feel free to look around at the collection of old photos of the building and the Coastside.

Historical Old Molloy's

was originally called the Brooksville Hotel, built by Patrick Brooks in 1883 for the workers who were building the new cemeteries. Patrick and his brother owned property from Old Mission Road to Skyline which was part of the Buri Buri Land Grant. Afterward the hotel was a speakeasy from 1920 to 1932.

A native of County Donegal, Ireland, Frank Molloy brought his family to Colma in 1929. He managed a bar at 12th and Howard Street in San Francisco before prohibition. After the repeal he took over the old Brooksville Hotel and opened up **Molloy's Springs No. 2** in 1937. His cemetery and funeral stories are legendary.

After Frank's death in 1965, Lanty George Molloy took over the establishment, changed the name to **Historical Old Molloy's** and restored the original interior. There are historical pictures and memorabilia throughout. It is a history lesson just walking around and reading the headlines from the 1906 Earthquake, World War II, baseball games and political winners.

Lanty's son, Owen, tells the story of Henry Doelger, the Westlake area builder, asking his grandfather if he could hide liquor in the cellar of Molloy's. Afterward, the cans would be picked up and delivered to different gas stations along El Camino where they were "sold" along with gasoline. Stories like this abound when talking about the days of prohibition.

Molloy's has become a famous watering hole for the entire Bay Area.

Owen Molloy, Proprietor

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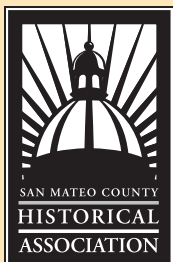
Serramonte Center

Serramonte Center sits atop the land that was originally called The Colma Hills. In 1852 Patrick Brooks purchased 950 acres and settled his family there. Eventually Brooks, the Christen Brothers and other pioneers became dairy farmers. Most of the land remained family farms for nearly 50 years. Christen Ranch was the last farm and a fixture in the Bay Area with "city folk" coming to see a real dairy operation. In 1963 it changed hands.

It was strange that the center of Daly City (then Colma) should be one of the first to attract settlers and the last to yield to urban development. Suburban Realty Company began the process of planning and building the Serramonte area.

Serramonte Center opened in 1969 with Montgomery Ward as an original anchor store. The center was renovated in 1995. In 2002, the mall was sold to its current owners and they began the center court rejuvenation in 2008. This has given the center a Zen feel which features a koi pond, bamboo landscapes and plush furniture for tired shoppers.

Serramonte Center has always been supportive of the local residents and business by being involved with the Daly City Chamber of Commerce and other community activities.



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Historical Association

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