



Summer 2011

La Peninsula

The Journal of the San Mateo County Historical Association, Volume xl, No. 1



Mexican Americans
in San Mateo County

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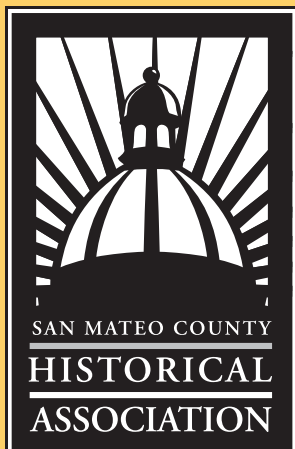
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preserving and
interpreting the history
of San Mateo County.

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Front Cover: Boy at Mexican Day Parade in downtown Redwood City, September 13, 1974. Photo by Reg McGovern.

Francisco Guerrero y Palomares

and his Neighbors on the San Mateo County Coast

by Mitchell P. Postel



Modern view of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* is similar to what the Spanish first saw.

Two Land Grants

In part, Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 meant California missions would be secularized. Much of the church's property ended up in the hands of influential Mexican citizens. 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*. The grants extended from the base of Montara Mountain south to Pilarcitos Creek. They included today's Moss Beach, Montara, Pillar Point, Half Moon Bay Airport, Princeton, El Granada and the northern portion of the town of Half Moon Bay.

For Guerrero and his southern neighbors, as was the case for most *rancho* owners of the Mexican era of California history, the land was used for raising livestock. The first to utilize this portion of the Peninsula in this way were the Franciscan fathers from *Mission San Francisco de Asís*. In the 1790s, they 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 renaming 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."¹ Thus the

Author's Note

Two years ago, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) commissioned the San Mateo County Historical Association to create histories for its parks in San Mateo County. Among these properties is *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. This property, a portion of the original Mexican-era *rancho*, is either agricultural land or open space. The park exists on the east side of Highway 1, from Montara Mountain down to El Granada, on our Coastside. In piecing this story together, our study team rediscovered Francisco Guerrero y Palomares as an important personality of the Mexican and early American period who had at least regional significance. As this *La Peninsula* is dedicated to the Mexican heritage of San Mateo County, our *La Peninsula* editorial committee felt it would be appropriate to excerpt a portion of the National Park study for the edification of our San Mateo County Historical Association membership and interested friends and scholars.

Mitchell P. Postel

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Franciscans changed the name of this part of the coast to *Rancho Corral de Tierra*. Which padre gave the new name and when he did so were not found by the study's research team.

Francisco Guerrero y Palomares

Francisco Guerrero y Palomares received title to the northern portion of *Rancho Corral de Tierra* 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. This group was formed to take advantage of the new Mexican secularization policy (to give lands once controlled by the missions to individuals) 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 known as a pioneer of San Mateo County's Woodside area, had joined the group after it arrived in California, and he stayed briefly with them in Sonoma.²

There is considerable confusion among local historians as to Guerrero's name and hence the name of his *ranch*o. 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 *ranch*ero, and his *ranch*o 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, (today's San Francisco), and, after five years, he had elevated himself enough among his peers as to be named *juez de paz* or justice of the 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 civic necessities, such as a jail.³ He also published police regulations for the community. 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 (builder of the Historical Association's Sanchez Adobe in Pacifica), 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."⁴

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 7,766.35-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.

Arroyo de en Medio is maybe the most significant place name associated with *Corral de Tierra*. Its original application was *El Arroyo del Rodeo de en Medio* translated roughly as “Central Rodeo Creek.”⁵ 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).⁶ In the 1890s, the Martini Ranch occupied the place and the Creek took its name as Martini Creek.⁷

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.⁸

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.⁹

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),¹⁰ because the *rancheros* found usable 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 1842.¹¹

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



Diseño of the Guerrero section of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

Hide and Tallow Trade



Beef fat was rendered down and molded around carving sticks or poured into a *bota* or cowhide bundle. The tallow was weighed and loaded on to trading ships.

The export of hides and tallow became the chief industry of the *ranchos*. Hides or “California Bank Notes” were traded for items brought by cargo ships from distant ports.

In locations such as Chile or the United States, tallow was made into soap and candles. Hides were formed into leather items such as shoes. Soap, candles, and leather items were brought back to California and traded for more hides and tallow.

named for the rock visible off Pillar Point. By 1838 the formation’s name changed to *los Pilarcitos* or “Little Pillars.” The creek took the name *Arroyo de los Pilarcitos* about the same time.¹²

All three mid-coast land 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 *ranch*. Similarly Tiburcio Vasquez was supervisor of the San Francisco mission’s livestock and Candelario Miramontes was an officer at the *Presidio*.¹³ 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.”¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸ 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. The study team has advised the GGNRA that an archeological investigation of the site is warranted.

The adobe itself was 24 feet wide and 60 feet long.¹⁹ On the first floor it had four rooms. An attic was present. A porch existed across its entire front.²⁰

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 their 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.²¹

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.²²



Photographs of the Guerrero Adobe from 1911 show the damage caused by the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake.



The thickness of the adobe walls can be seen at the windows.



Peterson sketched details of the Guerrero Adobe.



Diseño of the Vasquez section of *Rancho Corral de Tierra*.

During its heyday as a Mexican-era *rancho*, the adobe functioned to house the Guerrero family during *rodeo* (round up) and *matanza* (slaughtering) times, when they expected to be entertained by *vaqueros*.²³ 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

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 Francisco 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.²⁴ 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 he 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 rumored 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 of *Rancho Buri Buri* to the northeast shows us that he owed Vasquez 21 calves.²⁵

After troubles commenced with the Bear Flag Revolt (1846), 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-foot by 100-foot structure housed Vasquez, his wife and their 11 children.²⁶

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 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.

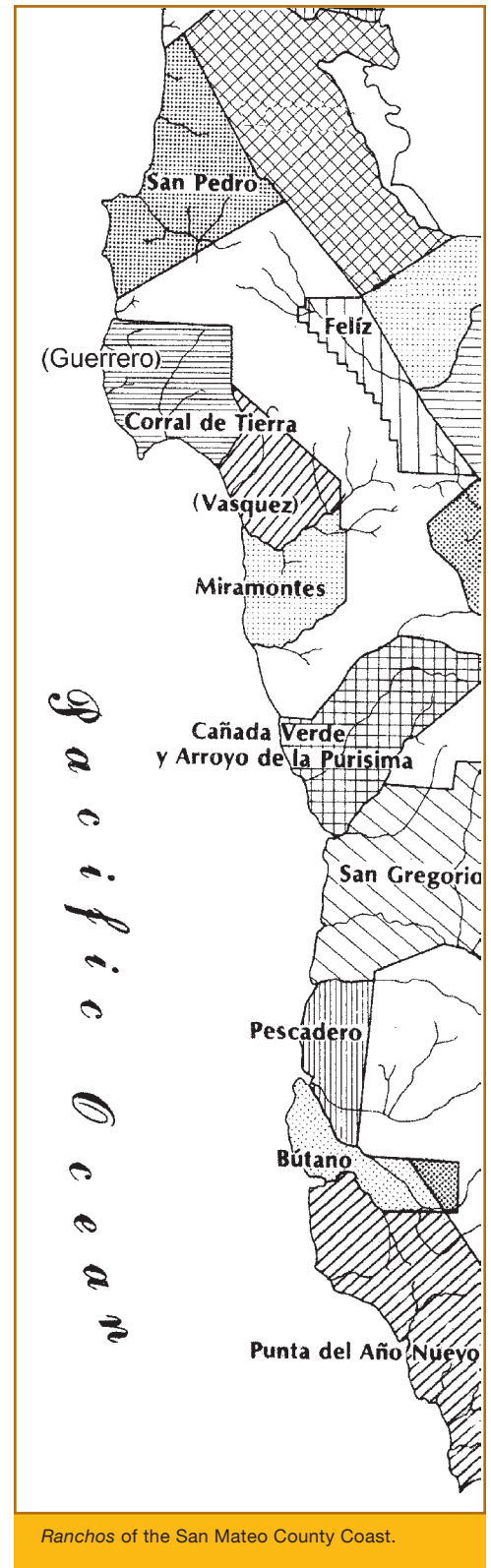
Just on the other side of Pilarcitos Creek resided the Miramontes family. Candelario Miramontes received his 6,657-acre *Rancho San Benito* in January of 1841. As had both his northern neighbors, Guerrero and Vasquez, he had served in the military, in fact, he saw duty during both Spanish and Mexican 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-acre *Punta del Año Nuevo* to Simon Castro in 1842.

American Takeover

For absentee land grant owners Guerrero, 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 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.²⁷ 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.²⁸

The three also were witness to the coming of American sea captains



Ranchos of the San Mateo County Coast.

Ranchero Diet

Various sources have described the *ranchero* diet in different terms. Some say it was varied, others say it was limited. A “varied diet” seems to be in the eye of the beholder. Most sources agree on what was available. Beef was a staple, being very abundant, and was often eaten three times a day, along with various legumes, grain and corn. Certain vegetables, like onions, tomatoes, peppers and squash or pumpkins, are regularly mentioned. Dairy products were available, but scant. At least one source says that goat’s milk was preferred, but they had no skill in making butter and cheese, so a rough substitute was prepared.

The food produced was more varied under the Missions, with their Indian labor, than with the *rancheros*. Missions also grew olives, grapes and orchard fruits, which the *ranchos* usually did not, although a few single trees may have been planted. Mutton, pork, game, fish and fowl were available, but usually mentioned in connection with special meals on festive occasions. Chocolate, coffee and refined sugar were import items used sparingly. Consumption of a “varied diet” would depend on the relative wealth of the families.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral*, San Francisco: The History Company, 1888, pp. 360-364, E.S. Capron, *History of California*, Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1854, pp. 27-28, and *The Diary and Copybook of William E. P. Hartnell*, Tr. by Starr Pait Gurcke, Santa Clara: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2004, for an inventory of the Missions 1839-1840.

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 unnecessary killing of the de Haro twins, approved by Fremont, during the spring Bear Flag Revolt must have hit Guerrero 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 customhouse 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.²⁹

Nevertheless, 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 Coastsides, like Guerrero, Vasquez and Miramontes.

Evidently, of the last mentioned 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.³⁰ 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,³¹ built their adobe home just across the stream 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*.³² 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 did 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 *ranch*, 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



Map of Spanishtown by Alan Brown.

was dismissed in June of 1859. The patent for his land grant was not received until 1873.

Miramontes joined Sanchez, Guerrero and Vasquez in receiving a confirmation, and squatters were either driven off their properties or forced to purchase the land. During the 1850s, the three more southern families sold land 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.³³

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. 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."³⁴ 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.³⁵

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."³⁶

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 conferred 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.³⁷

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.

Endnotes

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² C. Alan Hutchinson, *Frontier Settlement in Mexican California: The Hajar-Padres Colony and Its Origins, 1769-1835*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1969, pp. 183-392. Also: Alan C. Hutchinson, "An Official List of the Members of the Hajar-Padres Colony, for Mexican California, 1834," *The Pacific Historical Review*, University of California Press, Vol. 43, No. 3 (August, 1973) pp. 407-418; and H.H. Bancroft, *History of California*, republished by Wallace Hubbard, Santa Barbara, CA, 1966. Originally published by The History Company, San Francisco, 1884-1890, Vol. 3, pp. 259-281.

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⁴ Zoeth Skinner Eldredge, *The Beginnings of San Francisco*, John C. Rankin Company, New York, NY, 1912, Vol. II, p. 534.

⁵ Frank M. Stanger, *Peninsula Community Book: San Mateo County, California*, A.H. Cawston, San Mateo, California, 1946, p. 22.

⁶ Pablo Vasquez, "Place Names on the Coast," as described in letters to Mrs. Earl Barnes in 1892 and reprinted in *La Peninsula*, February, 1960.

⁷ Alan K. Brown, *Place Names of San Mateo County*, San Mateo County Historical Association, San Mateo, California, 1975, p. 51.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰ Vasquez, "Place,"; and Brown, *Place Names*, p. 35.

¹¹ Brown, *Place Names*, p. 35.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

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¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁸ As quoted in Barbara VanderWerf, *Granada, A Synonym for Paradise: The Ocean Shore Railroad Years*, Gum Tree Lane Books, El Granada, California, p. 29.

¹⁹ Frank M. Stanger, "Adobes of a Century Ago," *La Peninsula*, May, 1947, p. 3.

²⁰ Mildred Brooke Hoover, *Historic Spots in California: Counties of the Coast Range*, Stanford University Press, 1937, p. 401.

²¹ "To Prevent Ruin of Old Guerrero Home," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 20, 1911, p. 3.

²² Barbara VanderWerf, "Sanchez Adobe Last Link," *San Mateo County Times*, September 12, 1997.

²³ Margaret Kyne, "History of Moss Beach," manuscript collection at the San Mateo County History Museum, June, 1939, p. 2.

²⁴ B.F. Alley, *History of San Mateo County, California including its geography, topography, geology, climatology and description*, B.F. Alley, San Francisco, California, 1883, p. 217.

²⁵ Stanger, *History*, pp. 58 and 77.

²⁶ Stanger, *Peninsula*, p. 172.

²⁷ Zephyrin Engelhardt, *San Francisco or Mission Dolores*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1924, p. 316.

²⁸ June Morrall, "Ranchero Sought Safety on the Coastside in 1840s," *San Mateo County Times*, May 24, 2002.

²⁹ Bancroft, *History*, Vol. V, pp. 239, 241 and 295.

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.³⁸

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."³⁹ Northwestern portions of "the Colony" are on today's GGNRA.

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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹

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 gentleman" 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

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.⁴² He was caught in 1874, and executed in San Jose 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.⁴³

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

Endnotes (cont.)

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³³ Katherine Gualtieri, *Half Moon Bay, The Birth of a Coastside Town*, Spanishtown Historical Society, Half Moon Bay, California, 1988, p. 99.

³⁴ Kevin J. Mullen, *The Toughest Gang in Town: Police Stories from Old San Francisco*, Noir Publications, Novato, CA, 2005, p. 48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

³⁸ Kyne, "History," p. 2.

³⁹ Roy Walter Cloud, *History of San Mateo County, California*, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1928, Vol. 1, pp. 426-427.

⁴⁰ Kyne, "History," p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴² VanderWerf, *Granada*, p. 31.

⁴³ Stanger, *History*, p. 128.

⁴⁴ Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb, The Story of the San Mateo Peninsula*, Star Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1982, p. 176.

⁴⁵ Morrall, "Rancheros."

⁴⁶ VanderWerf, *Granada*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Hynding, *From*, p. 186.



Vaquez Adobe after the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake.



Raymundo Miramontes and Pablo Vasquez were featured in a 1909 issue of the San Francisco Call.

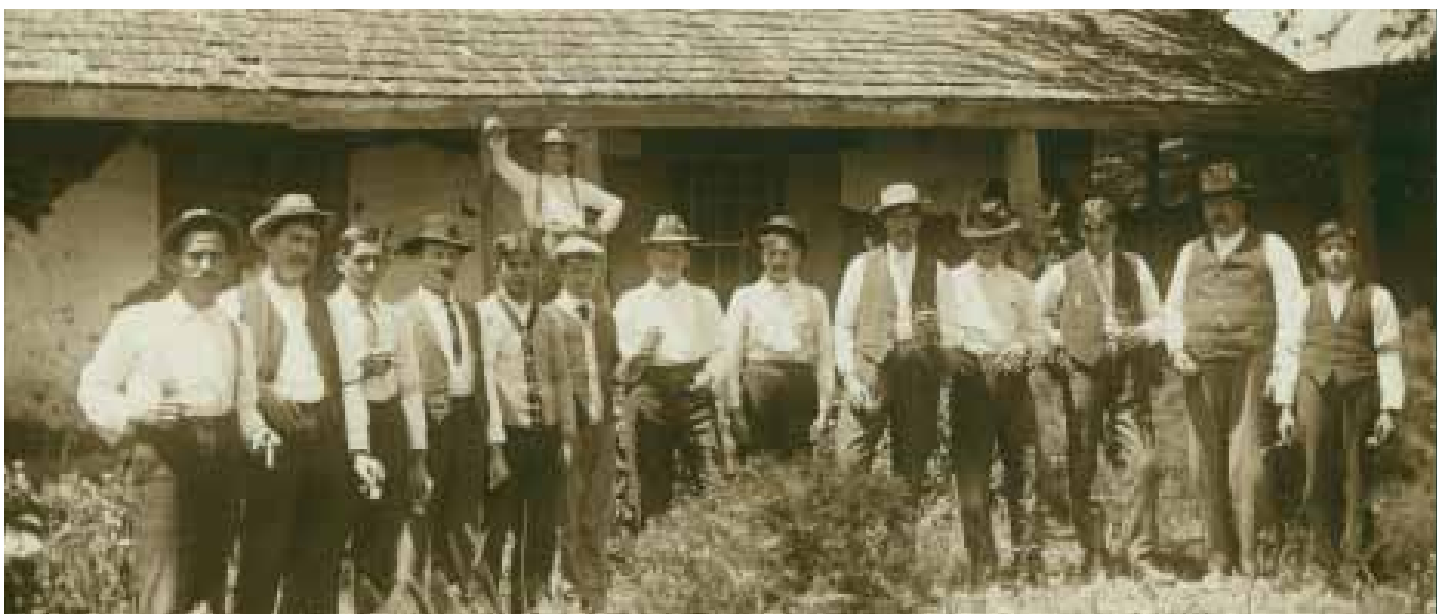
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On April 12, 1863, as he sat at a window in a Half Moon Bay saloon, an assailant from the street hit Tiburcio Vasquez with a volley of gunfire. He was declared dead at the scene. The unknown murderer got away, and an extensive manhunt failed to find him.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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 Coastside in 1868.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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. 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.



Group at the Guerrero Adobe in the late 1800s.

The Aguililla-Redwood City Connection

by Dian Missar and Albert A. Acena



The Aguililla Bakery (center) was one of many Mexican American businesses in the Fair Oaks area, May 20, 1980. Photo by Reg McGovern.

The Aguililla-Redwood City Connection in 1970: Dian Missar

The 1969 United States Census projection counted 941 of the 25,240 Heads of Households in Redwood City as Spanish surnamed. A current count of individual family members, to be available in February 1971, is expected to show that Spanish-surname residents of Redwood City and surrounding unincorporated areas comprise more than 5.3% of the total population recorded in the 1960 census figures. Since 1964, the Redwood City School District has kept annual records of the ethnic make-up of elementary and junior high schools: in October 1970, four of the eighteen schools had 25% or more students with a Spanish name in attendance.

Mexican Americans make up a major part of these statistics, judging from *Redwood City Tribune* files for 1970. (The 1969 Census projection includes for the first time a breakdown of the "Spanish surname" category into country of origin. These statistics are available at Stanford University Library, Government Documents section.) Mexican Americans here are asking to have the Police Department height requirement lowered so more of them can work in this community job. They requested bilingual programs in the schools, resulting in School Board plans to hire 38 bilingual teachers in 1971. Their testimony has brought a Federal investigation of U. S. Immigration Bureau practices. And they sponsored a Mexican Independence Day fiesta which attracted 20,000 visitors to the downtown shopping area.

Why are they here, and where do they come from? Interestingly, about 1,400 (estimates go as high as 3,000) come from the same

Dian Missar and Albert A. Acena

In 1970, Dian Missar wrote an article on the relationship between Aguililla, Mexico, and Redwood City, California, for a class on California history at the College of San Mateo.

As the relationship between the two continues to be important, Missar's paper has been edited for this issue of *La Peninsula*. Looking at the Aguililla-Redwood City Connection from a 2011 perspective, Albert A. Acena wrote the second part of the article.

Albert A. Acena is a professor emeritus of history and former dean of the social science division at the College of San Mateo. A native of Seattle, he received his graduate degrees from the University of Washington. He served on the Board of the San Mateo County Historical Association from 1984 to 2008.

La Posada



Xochitl Acosta and Christopher Mangiola practice for the *La Posada* festivities, December 11, 1968. Photo by Reg McGovern.

In Mexico, December 16 is the first day of the *Posadas* which represent the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in search of an inn. Every night of the nine days of *Posada*, a procession of singers go through the town. At every house they stop at, they are told there is no room. The singers are not invited into a house until Christmas Eve.

The treats children get from the piñata are the only gift they receive until January. According to tradition, the three kings bring gifts on Epiphany.

In 1968, the Mexican American mothers of the Community Play Center and the women of the First Congregational Church arranged a version of *La Posada* in Redwood City. They invited the public to share in this Christmas tradition from "below the border."

"Mexican Festival Tomorrow," *Redwood City Tribune*, Dec. 13, 1968, p. 17.

town, Aguililla, Mexico. It is their joke that there are more Aguilillans in Redwood City than in Aguililla itself! In that case we should know them better. This account is based on interviews with Aguilillans Juan "Johnny" García, Amador Bustos, Sr., Amador Bustos, Jr., Mrs. _____, and a Redwood City attorney who asked to be anonymous; with the interest and cooperation of Virginia Dunstan and her Redwood City Community Nursery School staff, Fernando Vásquez of PROBE (a program concerned with jobs and business in the Mexican American community), and René Cardona, Sequoia High School community liaison. The town of Aguililla is described as it was between 1950-1967.

Aguililla, meaning little eagle, is in the State of Michoacán, a Pacific Coast state. *Terry's Guide to Mexico*, 1965, said,

If one were limited to visiting only one state in Mexico, and wanted to say he had seen the country's most beautiful civic and ecclesiastical colonial architecture and countryside, the most fascinating regional dances, the best native crafts, the most fabulous Indian market (Tarascan Indians). . . and beautiful lakes as Lake Chapala . . . one would visit Michoacán.

The much-filmed active volcano, Parícutin, is also there. Yet, Michoacán is said to be the poorest of the twenty-nine states of Mexico.

Aguililla is located there in an isolated valley surrounded by high sierra. Because of the mountains, the 5,000 residents cannot get television or radio reception. There is a local radio station, but it does not operate regularly. The valley climate is "*templada*" – Amador Bustos, Jr., calls it eternal spring; a sweater is rarely ever needed. The seasons are reversed from that in San Mateo County: rain falls from June to October and sun shines from October to May. For this reason, many Redwood City relatives go back to visit during the Christmas holidays. Buses – *galeanos* – travel there three times daily from Apatzingán, a city of 20,000 about a two-hour drive away. Private planes hired there will also fly to the field which is marked as an airstrip. Few people own cars; horses, bicycles, and motorcycles meet most transportation needs.

The town is stretched along four narrow cobblestone main streets and numerous shorter cross streets. There is a low rise of land near the middle where the Catholic church stands. No one can remember the name of the church, although everyone is Catholic and it is the center of religious life there. They have always known it as "the church." The town square is at its foot and the whitewashed adobe houses with red tile roofs spread out from there. The houses are built quite close together with back yard space for horses and hay. In the surrounding hills there are also larger *ranchos* generally owned by wealthier families. The rich, especially the "good rich," and the poor seem to get along well, although the poor may remain very poor. Since Mexico has no public welfare system, the poor must depend on having this good

working relationship. Many Aguilillans are related to each other and the families are close. Big family names are García, Prado, Bustos, Mendoza, González and Sandoval.

A shallow river, the Nexpa, comes into town and irrigates fruit trees and other crops. Untreated ground water is now piped to the homes, and there is electricity and central telephone service where whoever answers must go and notify the proper party of the call waiting for him.

The most prestigious people are the priest and the municipal president. The latter is appointed by the Governor of Michoacán after various civic groups, such as the Agrarian Reform and Chamber of Commerce, have submitted their candidates and platforms. Because he has been nominated by the people, he is usually respected. There is also a reputable police force of local non-uniformed men supplemented by an eleven-man uniformed federal unit whose honesty is questioned.

During a typical week, most men work, most children go to school, and all women stay in the home. In the business district there are jobs in the bakery, restaurants, markets, three movie theaters, pool hall, clothing stores, and jewelry and sandal-making shops. Jewelers handcraft silver work as well as dental fittings for the dentist. There are also two doctors and a small new hospital. The sandal-makers' leather *huaraches* are just sold locally.

There is only one large industry, a brick and tile yard at the edge of town which produces all the brick and roof tile for buildings built there and employs quite a few workers. Twenty-five miles away, a new town, Dos Aguas, has been built around a saw mill which cuts and trucks pine from the wooded mountainsides. Aguilillans may drive lumber trucks, but do not work in the mill itself. The rest of the jobs are agricultural. Corn, tomatoes, mango, papaya, melon, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes grow on the *ranchos* and are marketed in Apatzingán. There is not enough work for everyone, so there is always a group of unemployed and a group of young people emigrating. Some risk illegal entry into the United States because it is the only way they can provide for their children. There is little opportunity in surrounding Mexican cities: Apatzingán is rough and most do not feel safe there; Guadalajara has its own unemployment problems. It is believed that relatives living in the United States send a large amount of money monthly to help out and that many Aguilillans could not manage otherwise.

Children attend one Catholic and four public schools. Most go to the free public schools as the Catholic school charges tuition. *Rancho* children study with a tutor and never attend formal school. Basketball and soccer are the most popular sports, while the curriculum is much like that in San Mateo, with Spanish being the only language taught. Few young people go beyond the sixth grade, however, which is the legal drop-out age. A good high school education is available at boarding schools in Morelia which are not expensive but too far away. College education is also inexpensive, but few from Aguililla feel the

Bilingual Instruction



Leticia Espitia, Rogelio Alvarado and Rosa Carranza look at bilingual materials with Michael Fernandez, January 9, 1969. Photo by Reg McGovern.

Starting in July 1968, Michael Fernandez headed Redwood City Elementary District's program for Spanish-speaking students. The program was intended for students who came from Mexican schools and homes where Spanish was the only language spoken. A vice-principal at Garfield Elementary and district's first bilingual administrator, Fernandez concentrated on developing skills in both English and Spanish.

Carol Card, "Bi-Lingual Instruction Rates 'Si' from R.C. Principal," *Redwood City Tribune*, Jan. 11, 1969.

Swimming Lessons



Janet Brinkop teaches Jorge Villegas, 6, to swim, July 11, 1972. Photo by Reg McGovern.

During the summer of 1972, every Wednesday around 36 kids and their mothers traveled to Ray T. Higgins' home to take swimming lessons. The children were Spanish-speaking members of the Redwood City Community Education Center. For most of the students, it was their first experience in a swimming pool. Classes were conducted on a one-on-one basis with only two students and two teachers allowed in the pool at a time. Mrs. Higgins noted a bonus to the project was that everyone got a chance to practice speaking English or Spanish.

"Swimming in Two Languages," *Redwood City Tribune*, Jul. 14, 1972, p. 16.

need for it.

Weekdays are quiet times and weekends are fun times, especially Saturday night and all day Sunday. The movies are popular Saturday night: many are American films with Spanish subtitles. Other places to go are the pool hall and restaurants, and ice cream at the end of the evening is customary. Young couples spend most dates over an ice cream or talking at each other's homes. On Sunday after Mass, everyone congregates around the town square to exchange local news and to socialize. (There is no Aguililla newspaper; some receive an Apatzingán paper which has world news.) Sometimes earlier, but usually after 6 p.m., a cherished custom is reenacted here every weekend. Eligible girls begin to walk on the outside of the circular walk around the square. Interested young men walk the other way on the inside of the circle, looking for a date for the evening. When one has decided on someone, he buys a small flower from vendors in the square and offers it to the girl. She may accept it or wait for the one of her choice by declining all offers, which may not be easy. That is why she walks on the outside, so she can walk away from the square if someone is bothering her too much. Usually there is then a dance, or it may be a fiesta day or a carnival in town. The evening is over around 11 p.m., and another quiet week begins.

The first Aguilillans to move to Redwood City were Johnny García and his cousin Abel Bustos. Around 1950 they signed with a farm labor contractor and worked farms in Salinas, Stockton, and Sacramento for several years. In Sacramento a contractor friend, (possibly Fred Vargas) who also owned a small market on El Camino Real in Redwood City, helped them get steadier work as kitchen help in Redwood City. Harry Kramer, owner of Harry's Hofbrau in Redwood City, hired Johnny García in 1953 to work in the Atherton restaurant he also owned. On a later visit to Mexico, Johnny married an Aguililla girl and established his new home in Redwood City. His story of a good job for good pay, an employer who was sincerely interested in helping Mexican Americans, a community where some people spoke and understood Spanish, and where the weather was almost as pleasant as at home in Aguililla interested his and his wife's relatives as well as friends. Redwood City had more appeal than Chicago, for example, where others had also immigrated.

Harry Kramer continued to hire Aguilillans and in 1965 helped Francisco Prado, an employee, get legal counsel when three Aguililla cousins working in Modesto were killed in a car accident. The men had been hired by a labor contractor, and it was not clear whether they were legally employed in the United States and their families entitled to survivors' benefits. A Redwood City attorney flew to Aguililla to prepare the case, won a sizeable settlement for each family, and flew back a third time to personally deposit the entire amount and set up trusts which today provide more in interest alone than the deceased earned in

wages. The attorney recalls being welcomed by the entire town on that trip. Harry Kramer went with him on one of the trips, and it is believed that they are the only Anglos from Redwood City to have ever visited there. As a result, Redwood City's good neighbor reputation was firmly established.

Today, Johnny García still works part-time at Harry's Hofbrau and Aguilillans comprise most of the kitchen staffs of most of the El Camino strip from the Hofbrau to Menlo House. PROBE's job placement counselor estimates he interviews twelve men a month from the Aguililla area and places them in factory or restaurant jobs. Most families live in the neighborhoods served by Hoover, Fair Oaks and Garfield schools; many are clustered on Willow Street, and some are in Menlo Park and Palo Alto. They socialize with all Mexican Americans, not necessarily only Aguilillans, and have never had a community reunion. Probably the largest gathering would be found at Sunday Mass at St. Anthony's Church, 3500 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park, or at Our Lady of Mount Carmel at James and Fulton Streets in Redwood City. Civil and religious fiestas, usually held at St. Anthony's, are also quite popular. Occasionally a home town family feud flares up here; recently a car was set on fire possibly because of a past *rancho* property disagreement.

Mrs. ____ (who chose also to be anonymous) does not want to return to Aguililla except to visit. She is happy that her husband is working and that they can have a house with electricity and running water that is purified and does not make her children sick. She is also grateful for medical care nearby; at home on the *rancho* she would have delivered her children in her house with only the aid of a midwife. And she likes having television. She has started her children in nursery school and wants them to finish high school. They will, however, be expected to keep Mexican, not American, standards of behavior. She will rear them as she was brought up in Aguililla.

Amador Bustos, Sr., Abel's brother, followed Abel here and has come to be the Aguilillan patriarch and spokesman. In Aguililla he was certified to teach grades 1 to 6. Now he is employed as a car sander and is active in the United Mexican American organization, the Club Mexicano Americano and other civic groups. He helped secure the first Spanish-speaking priest to minister locally. The *Redwood City Tribune* frequently quotes him on a variety of matters, most recently on high school district affairs. Because he himself received a higher education, he knows its value for young people today. He loves the Mexican American traditions and would like Anglos to understand and appreciate them, too. When he retires, he may move back home to Aguililla: he would enjoy the open space again and the warm weather.

Amador Bustos, Jr., 18, is a Cañada College student intent on becoming a lawyer. He is a leader in Mexican American youth organizations and believes his generation should be involved in local affairs working to end discrimination and to open opportunities in the



Fair Oaks Community Center in March 1974. The center is a multi-service facility for the Redwood City community that offers programs in both English and Spanish. Photo by Reg McGovern.



Celebrating the Fourth of July at the Fair Oaks Community Center, July 4, 1976. Photo by Reg McGovern.

Reading Program



Carmen Cohen aids Spanish-speaking Teresita (left) and Alaciél Vasquez, September 25, 1973. Photo by Reg McGovern.

In 1973, a new reading program in the San Carlos Elementary School District targeted the 40 students scattered throughout the district whose native language was not English. The program was run by parent volunteers. They were trained by volunteers from the Laguna Salada School District in Pacifica whose program had operated for two years. The volunteers took the children out of class twice a week for 30 minutes to practice language skills and to help build confidence in learning.

Bill Shiltone, "Parent Troubleshooters Pitch in to Help San Carlos Non-Readers," *Redwood City Tribune*, Sept. 27, 1973.

community and the nation to all. While he appreciates Aguilillan ways, he feels the older generation needs to live more in the American present than in the Mexican past. He liked a PROBE plan of two years ago which sought, but did not get, a grant to market Aguilillan *huaraches* in California and also to pay a craftsman to come here and teach the trade in order to stimulate the Aguilillan economy. He is well-informed, insightful and could be interested in many things, except he intends to be primarily interested in Redwood City. And Redwood City has already indicated its interest in him: several civic groups have already named him outstanding young citizen of the year, and he was chosen as the local congressman's 1971 summer aide in Washington, D. C.

And so the Aguilillans take their place in Redwood City's life.

The Aguilla-Redwood City Connection in 2011: Albert A. Acena

In the forty years since Dian Missar wrote her essay on the Aguillilla and Redwood City connection for a California history class, much has obviously happened to both communities and the people in them. Scholars and other observers have been intrigued by the special connection that developed between a small town in the Mexican state of Michoacán and a city in the Bay Area. At least two dissertations have been written on the topic, scholarly articles have cited the connection, and newspapers have reported on this fascinating relationship.

To see what has occurred since 1970, let us start with some demographics involving Aguillilla and the Redwood City-area communities Aguilillans have been associated with. Many of those whom Missar wrote about lived in or near North Fair Oaks, the unincorporated county neighborhood next to Redwood City, Menlo Park and Atherton. In the 2010 Census North Fair Oaks had a population of 14,687 of which 73.1% were Hispanic/Latino. Over the years, with the concentration there and in the adjoining sections of Redwood City and Menlo Park of people coming from Michoacán and Aguillilla, the area has been dubbed "Little Michoacán" or "Little Aguillilla." One estimate is that there are about 18,500 Aguilillans in the area.¹

In Redwood City proper, the 2000 Census showed that the Hispanic/Latino population numbered 23,557, of which 16,450 were Mexican American. Of the Mexican American population, 9,742 were born in Mexico. According to the 2005-2009 American Communities Survey of the Census Bureau, the Hispanic/Latino population had risen somewhat to 26,089 (35.7% of the total population) of which 21,093 or 28.9% were Mexican Americans. It would appear that in the period after 2000 Mexican Americans accounted for much of the increase in the Hispanic/Latino figures.² The figure recorded in the 2010 Census for the Hispanic/Latino population was 29,810 or 38.8% of Redwood City's total. (No further breakdown as to Mexican Americans or Mexican-born residents was immediately available.)³ "Redwood City," however, will often mean, in this article, the Redwood City area.

What about Aguililla? According to the 2005 *II Conteo de Población y Vivienda*, the municipality of Aguililla had 16,159 inhabitants.⁴ So the observation that there are as many Aguilillans in the Redwood City area as are in Aguililla itself has some basis. A municipality in Mexico being a subdivision of a state, it is similar to a county in California, and the municipality of Aguililla is one of the 113 municipalities making up the state of Michoacán. The town of Aguililla is the *cabecera municipal*, or municipal seat, for the municipality which encompasses 35 localities. Thus, Aguililla's political status is equivalent to that of Redwood City, the county seat of San Mateo County. The municipality of Aguililla is also somewhat similar to San Mateo County or perhaps a smaller-sized county in, say, Iowa, in that it is spread over an area, in this case, of 1,406.39 square kilometers or around 630 square miles.⁵ San Mateo County is 553 square miles. Besides the largely rural economic activity in Aguililla described by Missar, an important factor in its economy has been the remittances sent home from workers in the Redwood City area. Roger Rouse, who did field work in the 1980s in Aguililla for his dissertation in anthropology, observed that the municipality "had become a nursery and a nursing home for wage-laborers in the United States."⁶ That is, Aguililla was preparing its children to work in places like Redwood City, while retired workers were returning to be cared for by an extended family.

From the perspective of Aguililla and Redwood City the close connection between the peoples of the two communities might appear to be a unique one. This is not totally so. A similar relationship exists between Napizaro, also in Michoacán, and North Hollywood in the San Fernando Valley.⁷ Another connection between a town in Michoacán and an American city is that involving Acuitzio del Canje and Anchorage, Alaska. Of the 11,000 Mexican Americans in Anchorage in 2004, 1,000 were thought to be from Acuitzio.⁸ And if one looked further it would not be surprising to find localities and villages in Asia or Europe that have similar connections to American towns and cities. One example is the prefecture of Hiroshima in Japan and Hawai'i in the late 19th to early 20th Centuries. But one could argue that, with the numbers involved and the close ties developed over the years, the Aguililla-Redwood City relationship is unique.

While David García and Abel Bustos were noted in Missar's essay as perhaps the first Aquilillans to settle in Redwood City in the early 1950s, Aguilillans had been arriving in Redwood City since the early 1940s, and factors that might have drawn them to Redwood City were the once active S & W Cannery (where Costco presently is on Middlefield) and the nurseries that abounded in the Woodside Road area of Redwood City. Whenever it was that the migration started, people over the years continued to come from Aguililla to the Redwood City area in increased numbers with their hopes and dreams, and even with their feuds left over "from the old country."¹⁰ Arnoldo Arreola was one of those who

An Immigrant Story



Enrique Silva and his brother in the orchard fields, 1965. Photo courtesy of the Silva Family.

Born in 1943 in the Mexican state of Michoacán, Enrique Silva came to the United States in 1965. He started working in orchard fields with his brother in Suisun. Soon after he married his longtime sweetheart, Imelda, and settled in Redwood City where he worked in nurseries. They had three children. Enrique and Imelda became U.S. citizens in the mid-1980s.

Around 1972 Enrique began working in Woodside at the Village Pub where he waited on local celebrities. In 1990, he and a friend decided to go into business together. They purchased a well-established watering hole in San Bruno known as The Club. Founded in 1932, the one-time card room turned bar is located in the historic downtown area near Artichoke Joe's Casino. The neighborhood bar, closed only 4 hours a day (2 a.m.- 6 a.m.), catered to locals looking for a cold beer and to airport employees needing to unwind after a long shift. After 14 years of business, Enrique is retired and enjoying watching his grandchildren grow.



Enrique Silva at his San Bruno business. Photo courtesy of the Silva Family.



Students demonstrate a piñata at Cañada College, April 25, 1974. Photo by Reg McGovern.



Amador Bustos, Sr. congratulated by his wife, Amparo, after winning an outstanding citizen award, December 21, 1975. Photo by Reg McGovern.

Reg McGovern

Reg McGovern became a photographer for the *Redwood City Tribune* in 1945. His newspaper photographs from the 1960s and 1970s are featured in this article.

McGovern's photographs can be seen in two recent books, *Redwood City* and *Redwood City Then & Now*.

arrived in the mid-1960s from Aguililla. The family first lived at the Willow Apartments at Willow and El Camino Real; a 21-unit building, it functioned as a kind of “safe house” for new arrivals. Arreola's older brother was already in Redwood City when the rest of the family came. Arreola is now a realtor in Redwood Shores and chair of the Latino Community Council of Redwood City, an advocacy group working to advance Latinos and their issues through civic and community involvement.¹¹

Missar's essay concluded with a look towards the future in the person of Amador Bustos, Jr., Abel's nephew. He was an ambitious student at Cañada College in 1970. Born in Aguililla and the eldest of 7 children, he came to the United States at age 12. After attending local Redwood City schools, he received two B. A.'s from University of California, Berkeley, and went on to get a master's in educational administration there. He also did doctoral work in the sociology of education at Berkeley. His brother John, who was born in Redwood City, received a soccer scholarship from the University of San Francisco and was once Scholar-Athlete of the Year for the West Coast Athletic Conference. John got a degree in finance from USF and received an MBA from University of California, Riverside. Amador, Jr., was on the Redwood City School Board from 1981 to 1986, during which time his father worked as a janitor for the school district. He deemed his experience one of the “miracles an education can make in a single generation.”¹²

In 1980 Amador Bustos, Jr., started work with the then-Spanish language radio station KNBR in San Francisco and later became an advertising salesman for Spanish language broadcasters in the Bay Area. In 1992, along with his brother John, he launched Z-Spanish Radio Network, which grew to 21 stations by 2000, when the two brothers sold it. In 2006 they opened a Spanish-language television station in Milwaukee. By 2009 their Sacramento-based Spanish-language television and radio company, Bustos Media LLC, included 25 radio and several television stations in seven western states. They had about 160 employees and their syndicated radio formats were carried by 55 affiliates. However, in July 2010, NAP Broadcasting Holdings absorbed the media company and the Bustos brothers left the organization. The expansion of their media interests, unfortunately, coincided with the onset of the Great Recession. Amador Bustos still operates a family-owned company and is constructing radio stations in the Oregon and Washington markets. With a focus on developing the possibilities in the Pacific Northwest, Amador Bustos moved his family from Sacramento to Portland, Oregon. Besides his interest in Spanish-language media, he has independently owned stations serving the Vietnamese communities in San Jose, Houston and Dallas. The Bustos brothers have also been exploring opportunities in new technologies and green energy.¹³

Over the years, Amador Bustos has been recognized with several

awards for his leadership in the Hispanic community. In 2005, the *Hispanic Business Magazine* named him as one of the most influential Hispanics in the United States. In 2006, an important Mexican financial magazine named him one of the one hundred most influential Mexicans living abroad. Bustos has served on the board of several broadcast, music and banking organizations, including BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.).¹⁴

An interest of the family has been the improvement of educational opportunities for disadvantaged Hispanic youth. In 1996, Amador and his wife Rosalie established the Bustos/Lopez Family Fund through which they have supported over 50 graduating high school students as they continued through college. They have also been involved with other philanthropic activities involving the arts and education. Bustos has been quoted as saying his inspiration came from Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

In her essay, Missar elaborated on David García and Amador Bustos, Sr. Perhaps appropriate at this point are a few more words on Abel Bustos Palafox, Amador's brother, who came to Redwood City with his cousin David García back in the 1950s. Born in 1926 on a *rancho* in the municipality of Aguililla, Abel Bustos came to the United States at eighteen, an illegal immigrant. After some difficulties he became a legal resident and was able to help people to immigrate by providing letters of financial support to immigration authorities for these friends and relations. The friend and mentor who brought Abel to Redwood City was Frank Vargas, the owner of the Salinas fields where Abel worked when he first arrived in California. In his sixties, after a lifetime of hard work, Abel retired to Mexico, where he had a cattle ranch he had managed from afar. Every year since retirement he would return to Redwood City to visit and connect with family and friends, and it was in Redwood City that Abel Bustos Palafox passed away in January 2010.¹⁵ His life spent in going back and forth between Aguililla and Redwood City is only one example of the "transnationalism" that has characterized some of the recent immigration to the United States.

The matter of immigration was one that had been occupying the attention of lawmakers and the general public at the time Missar wrote her essay. This has especially been so concerning immigration and labor coming from Mexico. During the Second World War, the wartime labor needs of the United States involving Mexican workers was centered upon the Bracero Program. This program which began in 1942 in California's San Joaquin Valley later spread throughout California to other states and eventually included not just farm workers, but railroad track maintenance workers and other "unskilled" laborers. Possibly it was under the Bracero Program that Aguillians first came to Redwood City. This program continued after the war and lasted until 1964. Still, the need for agricultural workers persisted, and the vexing issue of illegal immigration remained an ongoing problem for officials

Firemen Visit



Redwood City Fire Department's Ray Jones serves visiting *bomberos*, February 25, 1975. Photo by Reg McGovern.

For a week in 1975, 116 *bomberos* or firemen from Mexico took part in training sessions on the Peninsula. They were participating in a program, administered by the State of California and the Mexican State of Baja California, aimed at familiarizing Mexican firemen with the latest techniques in dealing with earthquake and fire. The U.S. Army San Francisco Presidio bomb squad also demonstrated pipe bomb disarmament.

"Mexican Firemen Train on Peninsula," *Redwood City Tribune*, March 3, 1975.

Bilingual Preschool



Paulette Gariby (back) participates in preschool activities, April 9, 1975. Photo by Reg McGovern.

In 1975, 48 children participated in *La Escuela Cuauhtemoc*, a federally-funded preschool. The program sought to prepare non-English speaking children for public schools. The teachers would pick up the students each morning. They would meet in different homes to involve the parents in the education of the children. The program had offices at the Fair Oaks Community Center.

“‘Le Escuela’ Needs a Boost,” *Redwood City Tribune*, April 11, 1975, p. 17.



St. Anthony Catholic Church in Menlo Park. Photo by Albert Acena.

and legislators. In 1971 Assemblyman Dixon Arnett of Redwood City introduced a bill in the California legislature that would impose criminal sanctions upon employers who knowingly hired workers “not entitled to lawful residence in the United States.” The United States Congress followed a similar approach. In early 1972, the House Judiciary Committee, headed by Peter Rodino of New Jersey, drafted a measure that contained civil and criminal penalties for offending employers, similar to those in Arnett’s bill.¹⁶ In California Arnett’s bill drew both opposition and support within the Mexican American community, showing divisions over the place of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in the larger United States society.¹⁷

Eventually, Congress enacted the Simpson-Rodino Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in October 1986, which was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan the following month. IRCA followed the model set in Arnett’s bill, making the hire of undocumented immigrants illegal. “The IRCA,” two observers noted, “basically tries to achieve internally contradictory goals: to reduce immigration without restricting immigrant labor.”¹⁸ In 1994 California voters passed Proposition 187 aimed at illegal immigration. Three years later a federal judge ruled the law unconstitutional and Governor Pete Wilson appealed. The appeals process was dropped in 1999 by Wilson’s successor and in effect the proposition was killed.¹⁹ Immigration reform, especially immigration involving the countries south of the Rio Grande, has continued to be vexing and controversial, and the extent that it is equally vexing and controversial to native Aguilillans and their Mexican American relations is something that could be better explored.

Missar reported that the church in Aguililla was simply called “the church.” Its name seemed not be known. Whether that was actually the case or not, that church is the Templo de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, dedicated to the patroness of Mexico. It is an impressive Spanish-baroque-style building built in the 19th Century and is the religious focus of Aguililla. Menlo Park’s St. Anthony Catholic Church on “la Middlefield” has served a similar role as a religious center for the overwhelmingly Catholic Aguilillans and other Latinos in the area. The church as an institution represented a continuity with the past in their new country, and this has been true for not only Hispanics and Latinos, but many other groups as well. Other nearby churches with a significant Latino presence are the Church of the Nativity in Menlo Park and Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Redwood City. Apart from baptisms, weddings, funerals and the principal holy days, crowds flock to St. Anthony’s for the annual fiesta in honor of its patronal saint, Anthony of Padua, held near the Saint’s June 13 feast day. In 2011 this fiesta occurred on Sunday, June 12.²⁰ Fiestas and other Latin-flavored customs are evidence of the “Hispanization” of local Catholic churches over recent decades, and St. Anthony’s, founded in 1951 before a sizeable Hispanic population developed in the area, is an example of

this. In addition to its ministry serving a diverse, mostly Hispanic/Latino congregation, St. Anthony's has sponsored the Padua Dining Room, a separate entity from the parish, which has provided free meals to seniors and to the needy in the community since 1974. The operations manager of the dining room is Maximiliano Torres, originally from Baja California, who came to work there in the early 1980s.²¹

Not far on Middlefield from St. Anthony's is one enterprise among many with an Aguililla connection, the Chavez Supermarket. David Chavez was born on a *rancho* near the town of Aguililla in 1952. Nineteen years later he came to Redwood City and worked as a janitor, busboy, gardener and butcher. He opened Chavez Meat Market on Arguello Street in Redwood City in 1984 and nine years later the second one, Chavez Supermarket Carnecería, on Middlefield. By 2006 he had a second Redwood City location on Fifth Avenue, in addition to supermarkets in Sunnyvale, Hayward and San José. Besides these stores, he started a bakery in 2000 that supplies Chavez stores with baked goods. Another grocery enterprise is Mi Rancho Supermarket, situated on Roosevelt near El Camino in Redwood City. Founded in 1994 by Aguilillans Jesús and Yolanda López, it now encompasses two stores in Redwood City and one in San José.²² Clearly, Chavez and the Lópezes have found a niche in the area's grocery business.

The mention of food marts brings up the role of food itself in the transmission and maintenance of a culture. What is more familiar than the food one was raised with at home? What better way to know another culture, but through its food? Should one be in "Little Michoacán" or "Little Aguililla" (or "la Aguililla Chiquita") one could be transported back to old times in another place merely by the wafting aroma of food cooking. Among the food venues associated with this district along Middlefield that have (or had) a connection to Aguililla are the already-mentioned Chavez Supermarket at Middlefield and Seventh, Taquería González, Panadería Michoacán, and Rincón Tarasco. José Cortes, a native of Morelia, Michoacán's capital, met his wife Yolanda Valencia in Aguililla. Together they own Taquería González, whose specialty is *birria*, goat soup. Pedro Baez was eight when he started working in an Aguililla bakery. In 1978 he launched the first Panadería Michoacán on El Camino, but later moved to Middlefield. The bakery's specialty is *cernas*, a soft bread round. In the early 1970s Isidro and Socorro Valencia, husband and wife, and from Aguililla, opened Rincón Tarasco, a restaurant named for a plaza in Morelia. Its menu features deep-fried quail (*hullotos*) and dried beef in strips (*cecina*). The Chavez Supermarket meat counter offers house-made *carnitas* "among the best on the street."²³ One could also pick up lunch at Aguililla Market. A satisfied customer in 2001 stated that he had "enjoyed freshly grilled *carne asada* burritos from Aguililla [Market] . . . for about 10 years now."²⁴ There was also the Aguililla Bakery (see the 1980 photo on page 17). Thus, one could be in Aguililla Chiquita and be taken back, through

Endnotes

¹ "North Fair Oaks, California," in Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Fair_Oaks_California]; "Redwood City, Menlo Park and Aguililla, <http://aguililla.folj.com/>; <http://geo-mexico.com/2tag=usa-mexico-relations>, according to this source, 50% of the estimated 37,000 Latinos in the area come from Aguililla.

² RedwoodCity.areaconnect.com/statistics.html; <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFIteratedFacts?>

³ <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

⁴ "Aguililla (*municipio*)" in Wikipedia (Spanish)[[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aguililla_\(municipio\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aguililla_(municipio))].

⁵ *Ibid.*; Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," in David G. Gutiérrez, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigration in the United States* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), p. 261, n. 14. Rouse thinks "municipality" is a misleading term for *municipio* since it implies an urban community, which Aguililla is not. He prefers just using *municipio* untranslated.

⁶ Rouse, "Mexican Migration," p. 252; Alejandra Castañeda Gómez del Campo, "The Politics of Citizenship: Mexican Migrants in the United States," Ph.D. dissertation in anthropology (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2003), p. 97. Castañeda was probably borrowing her phraseology from Rouse when she wrote: "Aguililla is a nursery town, where people get educated and nourished to feed the U. S. labor market."

⁷ <http://geo-mexico.com/?tag=usa-mexico-relations>.

⁸ Sara Komanirsky, "Suitcases full of Mole: Traveling Food and the Connection Between Mexico and Alaska," *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2009), p. 44. Komanirsky is an anthropologist at University of British Columbia.

Endnotes (cont.)

⁹ Rouse, "Mexican Migration," p. 252; John Birdsall, "El Sabor de México: North Fair Oaks, Redwood City," *San Francisco* (Magazine), May 2008 [www.sanfrancmag.com/story/el-sabor-de-mexico-north-fair-oaks-redwood-city] and phone conversation, Arnoldo Arreola, July 1, 2011.

¹⁰ Castañeda, pp. 87-91, on family feuds, and also citing a report in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Sunday, July 28, 1991, p. 1a.

¹¹ Interview, Arnoldo Arreola, April 4, 2011, Redwood City.

¹² "Bustos Media" in Wikipedia [en. wikipedia.org/wiki/Bustos_Media].

¹³ *Ibid.*; Media Moves, Jan. 27, 2011 [www.mediamoves.com/2011/01/bustow-makes-comeback.html].

¹⁴ "Bustos Media" in Wikipedia.

¹⁵ Abel Bustos Palafox Obituary [<http://obits.dignitymemorial.com/dignity-memorial/obituary.aspx?n=Abel-Bustos+Palafox>].

¹⁶ David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 1-5, 189. 1970 is given as the year Arnett presented his bill; he was elected in 1970, his bill wasn't actually introduced until 1971.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-97.

¹⁸ Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans-American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos*, rev. ed. (NP: Hill & Wang, 1993), p. 269.

¹⁹ "Proposition 187 (1994)" in Wikipedia [en. [wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Proposition_187_\(1994\)](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Proposition_187_(1994))].

²⁰ Castañeda, p. 102; *St. Anthony Church Bulletin*, May 22, 2011.

²¹ Padua Dining Room History, www.paduadiningroom.com/secondary-pages/complete%20History.html; Suzanne Pullen, "The Jefferson Award: Maximiliano Torres Feeds the hungry," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 2005.

food, to the upland experience of southwestern Mexico.

Another establishment on Middlefield with a connection to Aguillilla was Mercado Aguillilla, bought by Álvaro and Martha Arias in the 1970s from an Aguillillan who returned home. The store reflected the culture of Michoacán, providing the trappings for various significant family and social occasions such as weddings, *quinceañeras*, and baptisms.²⁵ These markets, restaurants, eateries, and tiendas in "Little Michoacán" bring a touch of "home" and a feeling of the familiar.

Roger Rouse, currently a teaching professor in the department of history at Carnegie-Mellon University, has been the leading student of the Aguillilla-Redwood City relationship.²⁶ Rouse has linked history, anthropology and cultural studies in his academic work. He noted that the transplanted Aguillillans were largely to be found in the service sector within the greater Silicon Valley region which takes in Redwood City and San Carlos on its northern edge. He called them "proletarian servants," who worked as gardeners, hotel employees, janitors, dishwashers, nannies and house cleaners in an expanding economic setting.²⁷

Through his study of the movement of Aguillillans to Redwood City, Rouse has challenged the usual views on migration. In a world of multi-national corporations and a global economy, the previous ways of understanding migration and what might be called "social space" need modification. To begin with, Rouse views it "inadequate" to see "Aguillillan migration as a movement between distinct communities" with "distinct sets of social relationships."²⁸ The telephone, and this should include cellular phones, email and the Internet as well, link families and friends, enabling people to take part in decisions and events, despite being separated by the 1,800 miles between Redwood City and Aguillilla.

Indeed, through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information, the various settlements have become so closely woven together that, in an important sense, they have become a single community spread across a variety of sites, something I refer to as a "transnational migrant circuit."²⁹

Nor is Aguillillan migration just a shift between distinct environments. "Those living in Aguillilla . . . are as much affected by events in Redwood City as by developments in the *municipio* itself, and the same is true in reverse."³⁰ Finally, Rouse sees it a mistake to view Aguillillan migration simply as a move between two distinct lifestyles. Aguillillans, instead, have maintained their two distinct ways of life, seeing their lives "involving simultaneous engagements" with two different experiences.³¹

Perhaps Rouse has over-analyzed the process. He has possibly underestimated the actual attractions of Redwood City for Aguillillans, besides the work opportunities and the large number of compatriots in the area. The familiarity factor is not to be discounted, either; Redwood City has become a "comfort zone" for Aguillillans. Redwood City has "pull" factors which have helped bring in Aguillillans and make them

stay: a multi-level educational system, entrepreneurial possibilities, medical resources, to name a few. In Aguililla the educational system is not as extensive, its entrepreneurial opportunities slim and the medical resources limited. Since immigration implies a two-way channel or circuit, it would be good to know more about the effect Redwood City has had, beyond remittances and family connections, upon Aguililla. Homes have had additions built with remittance moneys and more cars are to be seen, but have infrastructure changes taken place or new public facilities built or policies created as a result of the Aguililla-Redwood City relation? On the other hand, many Aguilillans have made the decision to accept Redwood City as their home. This commitment is evidenced by what a long-time resident, "Doña Carmen," an Aguilillense, declared: "I became a [U. S.] citizen so that I wouldn't lose rights."³²

Scholars and other observers have seen this special connection between Aguililla and Redwood City as an aspect of the globalization of society and the economy, as an example of the phenomenon of transnationalism, wherein boundaries and borders no longer matter, and cultural, familial, and economic relations know no frontiers. Some see this as a new phase in the development of a global capitalist economy. Whatever the analysis, this transnationalism does involve real people and is not confined to Aguilillans and their relationship to Redwood City; it is also seen among recent immigrants from the Philippines, from Hong Kong, and from Mainland China, if not more universally among immigrants working round the world in this global village. The Aguililla-Redwood City connection has been a remarkable one and will continue, just as it has over the past 60 or so years, and will remain a topic of lasting interest into the future.

Endnotes (cont.)

²² www.chavezsuper.com/timelines/html;www.miranchosupermarket.com/about_us.html; phone conversation, Arnoldo Arreola, July 1, 2011.

²³ Birdsell, "El Sabor de México." The quote is from the article. More on the culture of food in Komanirsky, "Suitcases Full of Mole," pp. 41-56.

²⁴ Quote from Dave Tullis, April 19, 2001 [<http://chowhound.chow.com/topics/16709>]. The market closed in 2011.

²⁵ See "Mexican Migration to the United States: Family Relations in the Development of a Transnational Migrant Circuit," Ph.D. dissertation, anthropology (Stanford University, 1989).

²⁶ Rouse, "Mexican Migration," p. 253.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³² Castañeda, p. 206. Castañeda honored the wish of "Doña Carmen" to be anonymous (p. 125).



Enrique Silva helps his daughter, Gabriela Silva, into her high heels at her *quinceañera* in 1998. Photo courtesy of the Silva Family.

Quinceañera

Much like a Sweet Sixteen, a *quinceañera* or *quince* celebrates the transition from little girl to young lady. After her *quince* at the age of 15, a girl is permitted to adopt a more adult appearance and date.

While many immigrant mothers never had a *quince* due to economics, it is an event some want to give their daughters. In the United States, the *quince* may blend traditions from Mexico, Puerto Rico and other cultures.

At the party, the young woman wears an elaborate dress and has "maids." Her mother crowns her with a tiara while her father changes her flat, low-heel shoes to high heels, symbolizing the girl's passage into maturity.

Liza Mundy, "The *Quinceañera* Craze," *Slate Magazine*, August 2007 [<http://www.slate.com/id/2172635/>].

Mexican Independence Day Parade



On September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla started a Mexican revolt against Spanish rule. Spain was finally defeated in 1821. Mexican Independence Day is celebrated on September 16.

In the early 1970s, parades celebrating Mexican Independence Day occurred in downtown Redwood City. The parade was described as an "unusual blend of Latin America culture, patriotic display, and fading Americana." It featured beauty queens, unicyclists and high school bands. The floats included recognized both Mexican personages, such as Father Hidalgo for the Mexican revolt, and Californians, such as John Sutter for discovering gold.

Walt Yos, "Fiesta Parade Swirls through Redwood City Streets," *Redwood City Tribune*, September 16, 1972, p. 1.





A Renee Jaurequi Berryman was a 15-year-old student at Sequoia High School when she reigned over the 1972 Redwood City Mexican Independence Celebration. Photo by Reg McGovern.

B Boy watching the parade, September 13, 1974. Photo by Reg McGovern.

C Marching band parades down the street. September 15, 1972. Photo by Reg McGovern.

D Showing the ethnic diversity of Redwood City, residents parade in Germanic outfits, September 13, 1974. Photo by Reg McGovern.

E Musicians entertain as they ride down the parade route. September 13, 1974. Photo by Reg McGovern.

F Couple dressed in elaborate costumes to promote the parade, September 8, 1972. Photo by Reg McGovern.

Ruben Barrales

by Albert A. Acena



Ruben Barrales served as a San Mateo County Supervisor. Courtesy of Redwood City Karl A. Vollmayer Local History Room.

“Not bad for a skinny Mexican kid from Redwood City,” observed 30-year-old Ruben Barrales when he learned that, with the results of the June 1992 primary election in San Mateo County just in, he would be in a run-off election for the 4th Supervisorial District. The District comprised Redwood City, Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks and East Palo Alto, and Barrales would be facing veteran Redwood City councilman Bill Stangel in the November general election. In his campaign for supervisor Barrales would stress his support for local enterprises and for the extension of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to San Francisco International Airport and his opposition to offshore oil drilling.¹

Five months later, when the returns from the November 3 election came in, the tallies showed Barrales with 50.13% of the votes or 101,514, a narrow lead. Two days later, with absentee ballots counted, the vote for Barrales had increased to 109,451, while Stangel fell just short with 108,136 votes. Thus, Barrales, a newcomer to political campaigning, would be sitting on the County’s Board of Supervisors, the first Hispanic in the 20th Century to do so and perhaps the youngest person as well.²

The son of parents who came to Redwood City from Mexico City, Barrales attended Garfield Elementary School locally and finished his primary grades at Nativity School in Menlo Park. From there, Barrales continued at San Mateo’s Junipero Serra High School. Barrales then entered University of California, Riverside, receiving a bachelor’s in administrative studies and political science.³

Barrales may have benefitted from the unique situation in San Mateo County: in contrast to California’s other counties San Mateo’s non-partisan supervisors reside in and represent the County’s districts, but the entire county votes on the candidates. In the primary Barrales received 38,913 votes, while Stangel got 32,236. In the general election Barrales was able to augment his county-wide support considerably. On January 4, 1993, Barrales was sworn in as the 4th District Supervisor at Garfield Elementary, his one-time school, which serves the North Fair Oaks community in Redwood City. As supervisor, besides the goals he had set in his campaign, he worked to curb crime in East Palo Alto, and he also aided in obtaining charter status for Garfield.⁴

When he came up for re-election in 1996, Barrales roundly won another term by garnering 70% in the March primary, earlier than the past because California was jockeying for a better position in the presidential primary sweepstakes. Barrales’ overwhelming victory (his opponent received only 29.1% of the total) meant that he did not have

to stand in the November final election. His victory, he claimed, showed “strong support for my platform. Now, I feel I am in a stronger position to work for public safety, for putting more resources into education and for planning regulations that truly protect resources.” In addition to serving on the Board, Barrales was the Board of Supervisors’ first Latino (and Mexican American) president.⁵

The young supervisor, however, had aspirations beyond the local political scene. He had been listed among the most influential Hispanics/Latinos in the country. Before he ran for the nonpartisan supervisorial seat, Barrales had been a registered Democrat, but he had subsequently become a Republican. In 1998 he sought the office of State Controller and won the Republican nomination. He faced the Democratic incumbent, Kathleen Connell, but in the November election he was defeated by her.⁶ After leaving the Board of Supervisors halfway through his second term and continuing in private industry, Barrales was tapped to join the incoming administration of President George W. Bush. In 2001 he was named by the President to be Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, where he served as the executive branch’s liaison with state and local officials. He served in that capacity until 2006. Barrales later relocated to the San Diego area where he became the president and chief executive officer for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.⁷

Ruben Barrales’ political career in San Mateo County may have been in the long run a mere flash in the pan as he moved on to other responsibilities beyond the County. Nevertheless, he was the first Hispanic/Latino to hold a county-wide elective office since the county was carved out of San Francisco County. In his time and since, many Mexican Americans, like Barrales, have held local elective positions in their communities. For example, at this writing, in Redwood City, Alicia Aguirre, originally from Michigan, has been serving on the city council of Redwood City and is the current vice mayor. Other Mexican Americans holding city council seats in the county include Sal Torres in Daly City, Helen Fisicaro and Raquel Gonzalez in Colma, Pedro Gonzalez in South San Francisco, and Carlos Romero, Laura Martinez, and Ruben Abrica, all in East Palo Alto.⁸ If one mark of ‘visibility’ in the county for a group might be elected political leadership, the Mexican American community has certainly become more ‘visible’ since Barrales’ day.

Endnotes

¹ *The Times* (San Mateo), June 1, 1992, p. 1, and June 3, 1992, pp. 1-2.

² *Ibid.*, Nov. 4, 1992, pp. 1-2; Nov. 5, 1992, p. 1, and Nov. 7, 1992, pp. 1-2. When what is now San Mateo County was part of San Francisco County, Francisco Sanchez became the Supervisor for the 2nd District in 1850. (Dorothy Regnery, *The Battle of Santa Clara* [Smith & McKay, 1978, p. 141].)

³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruben_Barrales; www.smartvoter.org/1998nov/ca/state/vote/barrales_r/bio.html.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *The Times* (San Mateo), Nov. 4, 1992, p. 2, and Jan. 5, 1993, p. 1.

⁵ *San Mateo County Times*, March 27, 1996, pp. A6-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 4, 1998, pp. 9, 11. O’Connell had 61% of the vote to Barrales’ 33%.

⁷ www.joeinvestoronline.com/library/Ruben-Barrales.php; www.cotce.ca.gov/commissioners/ruben_barrales/. Barrales has also been on the California Commission for the 21st Century Economy in recent years.

⁸ Email, March 8, 2011, from Alicia C. Aguirre, vice mayor of Redwood City.

Celebrating Mexican Heritage with the San Mateo County Historical Association



A Casa de la Cultural Quetzalcoatl performs at the Immigrants Day Festival on Courthouse Square in front of the San Mateo County History Museum on May 16, 2010. The group was created in 2005 by Paloma and Isabel Jiménez as a way to give back to the community and promote Latino heritage through traditional Aztec and Folkloric dances

B Student practices a *vaquero*'s skills during a school field trip to the Mexican-era Sanchez Adobe, 2008. Photo by Carmen Blair.

C Between 1842 and 1846, Don Francisco Sanchez built an adobe home on his 8,926-acre *Rancho San Pedro*. Today, the Sanchez Adobe in Pacifica is a county park interpreted by the San Mateo County Historical Association. Photo by Carmen Blair.

D Day of the Dead altar on exhibit in *Land of Opportunity: The Immigrant Experience in San Mateo County* at the San Mateo County History Museum. Photo by Randy Silver.

HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE advocates for the Mexican and Latin American communities in promoting economic development throughout San Mateo County.

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California State Legislators attend the Mayor's Diversity Awards Celebration held at the San Mateo County History Museum in 2010.



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Orlando Trujillo was born in New Mexico and came to California with his family when he was 12 years old. Orlando learned the trade in San Francisco and then started his business with only three painters. Within seven years he had 25 painters and by 1976 decided to incorporate his business. His sons, Orlando, Jr., Joseph and Anthony grew into the business. Known as the Graffiti [Removal] Committee, the family paints over the unsightly graffiti found on walls all over San Mateo at no cost to the city. ORLANDO TRUJILLO PAINTING CONTRACTOR, INC. is the painter of famous icons of San Mateo County: Peninsula Golf & Country Club, all Oracle Campus Buildings, Foster City Towers and most recently the Gramercy on the Park Condos in San Mateo.

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Pictured to the right are three generations of the Trujillo family: Orlando, Jr., Orlando, Sr., grandson Matthew and son Joseph at a job site. Son Anthony (not pictured) is now a mechanical engineer.



RUIZ JANITORIAL SERVICE

Lupe Ruiz was born in Mexico and came to America in 1975. He immediately settled in Redwood City and has called it "his home" ever since. He was hired as a janitor by a large corporation. He says, "I did not even know what a vacuum cleaner was or even how to operate one." But he learned all the various aspects of the trade quickly and became the corporations' utility expert and then was promoted to supervisor. By 1983, he was ready to go out on his own.

Today RUIZ JANITORIAL SERVICE has about 50-55 employees with many big contracts for their services. Mr. Ruiz says, "I have had to work very hard to be successful. I still work 25 hours a day because I knew it [success] would not fall from the sky."

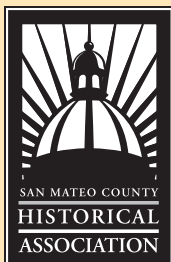
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