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La Peninsula

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Exploring
San Bruno's
History



Our Vision

To discover the past and
imagine the future.

Our Mission

To enrich, excite and
educate through
understanding, preserving
and interpreting the history
of San Mateo County.

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The San Mateo County Historical Association

operates the San Mateo
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located in Redwood City,
California, and administers
two county historical sites,
the Sanchez Adobe in
Pacifica and the Woodside
Store in Woodside.



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Cover: Marching in the 1954 Posy Parade. Courtesy of the San Bruno Public Library.

A Message from the San Bruno Mayor and City Council

Dear Residents and Business Leaders:

Welcome to the City of San Bruno's Centennial Edition of the San Mateo County Historical Association's journal, *La Peninsula*. This commemorative edition of the journal was developed through collaboration between the City of San Bruno and the Historical Association to celebrate San Bruno's history and is designed to serve as a keepsake of the community's 100th birthday of incorporation.

On December 23, 2014, our City will celebrate its Centennial anniversary of incorporation. When San Bruno officially incorporated as a municipality on December 23, 1914, this was a small rural town of about 1,400 residents. Many of these early residents first arrived to San Bruno as refugees from the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. At that time, San Bruno's primary business was agriculture, with ranches providing food, dairy products and flowers for the urban San Francisco population. Today, with our 42,000 plus residents, San Bruno is known as the "City with a Heart" renowned for our beautiful parks and friendly well-kept residential neighborhoods, as a regional transportation hub, and now, as a thriving high-tech business center. The City has come a long way over these past 100 Years of Progress!

Our Centennial year has been filled with special events and programs. Our first major initiative in celebration of the City's Centennial was the commissioning of a mosaic mural to be installed later this year at the new Posy Park adjacent to the new San Bruno Caltrain Station. Other lasting programs offered over the year include the planting of 100 Centennial Trees throughout the community by the City's Beautification Task Force, the creation of Centennial Tile

Mural by both children and adults alike for installation at the City's Recreation Center, the oral history project which records community members' uniquely San Bruno memories, and the development of a computer disc archive of historic photographs which is available at the San Bruno Library.

Cultural activities and events have also been a focal point of this year's celebration including walking tours showcasing the City's architecture and history. In fact, step-by-step instructions are provided within the pages of this journal for a self-guided walking tour of San Bruno's Historic Downtown. Other special programs were delivered to engage the community's youth in the Centennial including a Centennial scavenger hunt. This year's Posy Parade, a historic activity in its own right as the longest running children's parade in the United States, also took on a Centennial flair with the inclusion of the City's Centennial Float.

The year-long Centennial celebration includes two capstone events for the community's enjoyment. On September 27, 2014, San Bruno City Park was transformed into a Centennial Carnival with field and carnival games, rides, entertainment, and food. The final event in the year-long celebration will be the semi-formal Centennial Gala on December 6, 2014, at Skyline College. More information about these events and the City's Centennial may be found at www.sanbruno100.org.

As San Bruno celebrates its Centennial, we are also excited about our bright future. We hope you will enjoy the articles in this special edition of *La Peninsula*.

San Bruno before the Gold Rush

Mitchell P. Postel

The Urebure of San Bruno

Native California people we now refer to as Ohlone were composed of over 50 local tribes stretching from Contra Costa to Monterey County. Some of these local tribes numbered in the hundreds, others, such as the Urebure, whose lands included today's San Bruno and South San Francisco, could be counted in the dozens. In fact, the Urebures apparently possessed the smallest population of people on the San Francisco Peninsula, according to Spanish baptismal records. The missionaries at *Misión San Francisco de Asís* (Mission Dolores) counted just 40 of these people taken in by the Church. This compares with 135 Yelamu, their northern neighbors, who mostly occupied today's San Francisco and 176 Ssalson, whose lands included much of Millbrae, Burlingame and San Mateo. Even the Urebure's western neighbors, the Aramai, who inhabited the Pacifica area, were counted at 47.

The Urebure were also the quickest of the Peninsula Indians to be taken in by the Church. In 1777, the year the Franciscan fathers began baptizing Ohlones at *Misión San Francisco de Asís*, four Urebures joined 27 Yelamu and one Lamchin (from the Redwood City area) as new converts. All the other Urebure, 36 of them, were baptized by 1785, making them the first people under the authority of the Mission at San Francisco to be completely absorbed into the new religion. This number included 19 adults and 21 children.

The Spanish referred to the tribe's leader as "Captain of San Bruno." The Mission's records also tell us that one of the Urebure was born at their village, which they called Siplichiquin.

It is accepted amongst all academics that Ohlones did not fare well in the Mission system. Their die-off rate was terrible, as they had no immunity to communicable diseases brought by the Spanish.

They did little better under the later Mexican and then American regimes. By 1900, the entire Indian population of San Mateo County was reduced to just one person.

What were the Urebure like before this contact with the Spanish? There is but scant information to go on. Most everything that was recorded by the Spanish was written by Franciscan Padre Francisco Palou in 1774. Palou was with an exploratory expedition led by army officer Fernando Rivera y Moncada. They reached Urebure lands on December 3 of that year, when:

About two in the afternoon twenty-four heathen came to visit us... they speak the same language and use many of the same words as those of Monterey. They brought us their present of large tamales, more than a span across and correspondingly thick, kneaded of a dough made of very black wild seeds, resembling tar ... I returned their gift with strings of beads, and the captain did the same.

The friendly and generous attitude of all Ohlones was a common observation of the Spanish. The Franciscans maintained a keen interest in the language of these people to help them in their Christianizing work. The next day, Palou noted about the Urebure:

I again made them presents of beads and a little tobacco and as soon as they saw it they called it by the same word as at Monterey, *savans*. They began to smoke, and I noticed in them the same ceremony of blowing the smoke upwards, repeating some words with each puff. I only understood one, *esmen*, which means sun....We set out from camp at half-past eight, and the heathen went to the beach of the bay, which they call *aquas*, in distinction from those of Monterey, who call it *calen*.

Sweeney Ridge and the Discovery of San Francisco Bay

The two most dominant geographic features that can be viewed from San Bruno are the San Francisco Bay to the east and Sweeney Ridge to the west. The history of these two came together dramatically on November 4, 1769, when Spanish Army Captain Gaspar de Portolá, and his expedition, climbed up to Sweeney Ridge from the Pacifica side and became the first Europeans to view the San Francisco Bay.

This discovery was a long time in coming. The Spanish and other voyagers had been sailing past the Golden Gate and the Bay since 1542. However, the Farallon Islands, persistent fogs and the small mouth to the Bay that the Golden Gate presents curtailed the actual realization of the existence of the greatest natural harbor on the Pacific Coast of North America for 227 years.

It took Portolá's overland party to finally happen upon it, and even at that, his group had actually passed by its real objective, Monterey Bay. Portolá had started off from Baja California with 300 under his command. Along the way they were to be supplied by three packet ships. Their instructions were to found two outposts in Alta California in order to begin its colonization which would, in turn, help discourage other powers such as the Russians and English from taking the region away from the Spanish Empire.

Portolá's group rendezvoused with two of the supply ships at San Diego. Here Franciscan Father President Junípero Serra and most of Portolá's command founded the first two Spanish settlements in Alta California, the San Diego mission, to be operated by Franciscan priests of the Catholic Church, and the accompanied *presidio*, to be operated by the Spanish Army. Portolá, meanwhile, continued north with a few dozen of his men. Monterey was designated to be the northernmost outpost for the Spanish. Back in 1602, charts, that turned out to be exaggerated, were drawn up which depicted Monterey as an enclosed natural harbor. When Portolá's party got to that point on the map and

looked at Monterey, they could not believe this was the place where the second settlements (again a mission and *presidio*) should be established; so they continued north.

By the time they had gotten to the Pacifica area, they knew they had overshot their true objective. Hearing from some local Indians that the third ship, the *San José*, was dutifully waiting for them and could be viewed from what we call Sweeney Ridge today, Portolá sent scouts up the hill to reconnoiter the situation. They did not see the ship. Sadly, the *San José* was lost at sea and was never heard from again. However, they did gaze out at an impressive body of water.

On hearing this report, Portolá and his main body, consisting of 63 officers, soldiers, Indian scouts and Padre Juan Crespi, scaled the hill and saw San Francisco Bay. Of course they did not really understand what it was that they were seeing. As any hiker going up to Sweeney Ridge knows, while there are spectacular views of the Bay and Ocean from there, the elevation is not high enough to see the Golden Gate. In fact Portolá felt he had found nothing of note, and later reflected that if the Russians really wanted this God-



View of San Francisco looking north from Sweeney Ridge, c. 2010. Note the Golden Gate is not visible. Courtesy Mitchell Postel.

forsaken part of the world that they should have it as punishment for their aggressive ambitions.

At this point Portolá made a fateful decision. Instead of continuing north and inevitably discovering the Golden Gate, he turned south down the Crystal Springs Valley, finally stopping at Palo Alto. Although he did send a scouting party into the East Bay, they did not proceed far enough north to see the Golden Gate either.

The return trip down the California Coast was one of despair. However, Father Crespi had an elevated opinion about the body of water they had seen. The next year, Portolá was ordered back north to Monterey to establish the mission and *presidio* there, and because of Crespi's urging, another party of exploration went north and finally discovered the Golden Gate. Within five years more exploration allowed the Spanish to understand crucial keys to the geography of California. In 1775, these discoveries were made even more important when the *San Carlos*, one of the original three ships assigned to Portolá's 1769 adventure, managed to sail through the Golden Gate, demonstrating it was navigable. Now the Spanish realized that if they could control the Gate, militarily, they would control the Bay, and if they could control the Bay, they could control the Delta, and if the Delta was under their control, then the Sacramento and San Jacuín Rivers could also be navigated and controlled. Thus, in the next year, 1776, Spain established a *presidio* and mission at the tip of the San Francisco Peninsula.

As it turned out, Spain lacked the personnel and resources to fully exploit the situation, and later Mexican authorities were even less able to take advantage of it. However, after the Gold Rush (1849) and California statehood (1850), the new American authorities were. Even before the onset of the Civil War (1861-1865), they fortified the Golden Gate with a variety of forts and gun emplacements.

It all started in 1769, when Gaspar de Portolá looked out from Sweeney Ridge at the future city of San Bruno and the San Francisco Bay.

Rancho Buri Buri

The Sanchez Family of the northern part of the San Francisco Peninsula were important during the heyday of the Mexican period of California History. The head of the clan was Jose Sanchez whose *Rancho Buri Buri* included the southern portion of San Bruno Mountain, South San Francisco, San Bruno, Millbrae and the northern part of Burlingame.

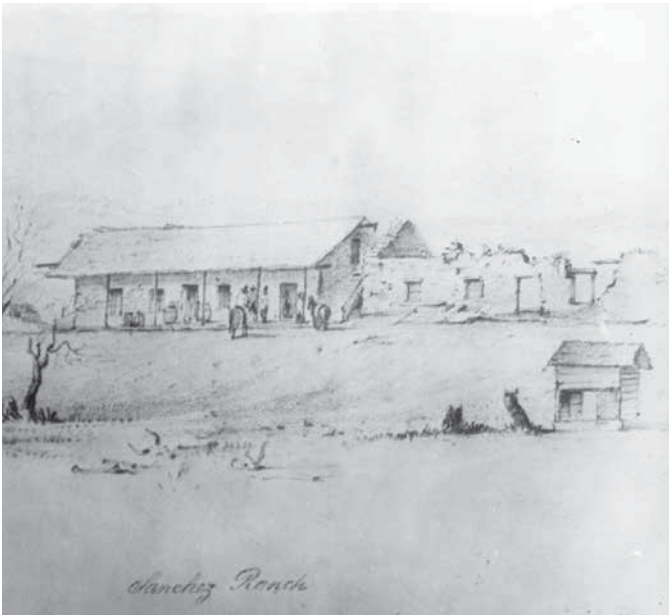
The history of Buri Buri goes back even farther than the Sanchez's occupation of the land. During the previous Spanish California era, dominated by the mission system, this land became reserved for the cattle herd of the soldiers at the San Francisco Presidio.

At the beginning, just after the establishment of the *presidio* and mission at San Francisco (both in 1776), cattle were allowed to roam freely on the open range. The animals belonging to the soldiers were branded with an "R" for *Rancho del Rey* (King's Ranch), as the ultimate authority for the soldiers was vested with the King of Spain. The cattle belonging to the padres were branded with an "F" for Franciscan, the order of priests doing the work of the Church in Alta California.

After a few years, a problem arose. Each animal required several acres of land for feeding, and there was but limited land on the northern tip of the Peninsula. In 1791, the Franciscans were able to convince the Spanish authorities that only one herd was actually necessary. The soldiers were now required to purchase their beeves from the padres, which inevitably caused friction. In 1796, Governor Diego de Borica allowed the soldiers to have their own herd once again and in the process allowed them to have their own tract of land that became known as *Rancho Buri Buri*.

One of the promises of the Mexican Revolution (1821) was to take lands previously controlled by the missions and issue land grants to individuals. In 1834, this process, known as secularization, commenced at *Misión San Francisco de Asís*.

Jose Sanchez, a soldier of both Spanish and Mexican eras, in anticipation of secularization, settled on *Rancho Buri Buri* in 1825. As a child Sanchez had come to



Artist William Dougal sketched *Rancho Buri Buri* on July 27, 1850, as he traveled from San Francisco to San Jose.

California with the original pioneers of the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition of 1776. He grew up to become a soldier of Spain and lived at the *presidio* where he rose in rank to sergeant. He stayed a soldier during Mexican times and became a lieutenant in 1827.

According to the nineteenth century California historian, H.H. Bancroft, Sanchez was a distinguished soldier who took part in over 20 campaigns of Indian skirmishing and expeditions of exploration. He retired to his 15,000-acre *rancho* in 1836, a year after it was legally granted to him.

Afterwards, in 1839, his son Francisco Sanchez was awarded an adjacent land grant, the 9,000-acre *Rancho San Pedro*, which basically stretched over today's Pacifica. His son-in-law, Francisco de Haro, was given *Rancho Laguna de la Merced* in the Daly City area in 1837. Grandson Domingo Feliz received title to *Rancho Feliz*, the watershed area west of Burlingame and San Mateo in 1844.

Jose Sanchez became busier than most *rancho* owners. The majority of the *dons* felt farming beneath their station, but Sanchez grew wheat, corn and vegetables. His grist mill still exists and is on display

at the San Mateo County History Museum. His herds of animals originally numbering 2,000 head of cattle and 250 horses were said to have grown greatly. The important byproducts of the cattle, their hides and tallow, were the most marketable items Sanchez possessed. He built an *embarcadero* (or dock) on the nearby slough, where he conducted trade with Yankee ships' captains and others.

Sadly for the Sanchez family, their time was running out. Jose died in 1843 at the age of 67. He therefore did not have to endure the great changes brought to California by the Bear Flag Revolt (1846), Mexican American War (1846-1848), the discovery of gold (1848), the Gold Rush (1849) and statehood (1850). Because of the great number of newcomers, problems arose. Legal procedures necessary to protect their properties against squatters, tax issues and other difficulties forced the Sanchez family off much of their holdings. Within 15 years of the Gold Rush, Buri Buri came to be owned by 50 different individuals reducing the land actually owned by the family to a small percentage.

Mitchell P. Postel

Mitchell P. Postel has been the Executive Director/President of the San Mateo County Historical Association since 1984. He taught history at the College of San Mateo and is a frequent speaker on San Mateo County history. Postel is a member of the San Mateo County Historic Resources Advisory Board and the Treasurer of the San Mateo County Visitors and Convention Bureau. He is the author of seven books on local history, including *San Mateo County: A Sesquicentennial History*.

Each November 4, Postel leads a walk to Sweeney Ridge to commemorate Portolá's discovery.

Sources

Information on the Urebu was gleaned from a study compiled by Randall Milliken, Lawrence H. Shoup and Beverly R. Ortiz entitled *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*. It was conducted for the National Park Service and completed in June of 2009.

Information on Sweeney Ridge and the discovery of San Francisco Bay was derived from the *Historic Resources Study for Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Mateo County* written by Mitchell Postel in 2010.

Information on Rancho Buri Buri was based on materials found in traditional histories of California and San Mateo County, including those written by H.H. Bancroft, James Rawls, Walton Bean, Frank Stanger and Alan Hynding.

From Gold Rush to Great War

Mark S. Still, Ph.D.

At the time that the United States acquired California from Mexico in 1848, the area which now constitutes San Bruno was undeveloped and was part of the cattle grazing lands of the 15,000-acre *Rancho Buri Buri*, owned by the family of Jose Sanchez. It is the purpose of this brief article to trace the slow development and evolution of San Bruno from the Gold Rush to the town's incorporation in 1914.

While San Bruno's incorporation came relatively late, Dr. Frank Stanger, founder of the San Mateo County History Museum, observed that: "Its name is among the oldest on the Peninsula, for the San Bruno Mountains had been on the map since the earliest Spanish beginnings."¹ It is thought this name was conferred by Lt. Bruno Hecate, a Spanish naval officer and explorer who reconnoitered the area for a likely spot to establish a *presidio* in 1775. San Bruno takes its name from a medieval Roman Catholic saint who was the founder of the Carthusian monastic order.

That the region eventually began to emerge and slowly develop after the American annexation was due to several factors. One cannot ignore the role of the Gold Rush which drew a floodtide of Argonauts into the Golden State, which in a few years, came to number more than 200,000. San Bruno was closely adjacent to the little settlement of San Francisco – the fastest growing city in the world during the 1850s – which emerged as the state's urban center. Many Argonauts, frustrated by their lack of success in the mines, desired to turn to farming. However, as they looked around they came to resent the fact that the best land along the coastal reaches of settlement was made up of huge *ranchos* with most containing multiple thousands of acres and owned by a few families. This seemed positively feudal to the newcomers, who began to put pressure on the federal government to rectify the

situation. The result was the Land Act of 1851 which required all those in California claiming land under Spanish and Mexican title to prove up their titles. The results were disastrous to *rancheros*, particularly in Northern California. Historian Leonard Pitt estimated that 40% of the land held by Californios passed out of their hands as a result of this unfortunate legislation.

The *Rancho Buri Buri* was a good example of this phenomenon. By the late 1860s, when a final legal settlement was made, less than 4% of the land was still in the hands of Jose Sanchez's heirs. Some heirs were taken advantage of by shrewd and unscrupulous entrepreneurs and loan sharks. Much of the southern part of the *rancho* fell in to the hands of two men, Ansel Easton, whose Black Hawk Ranch embraced the Broadway area of Burlingame, and his brother-in-law, multimillionaire banker Darius Ogden Mills, who purchased 1,500 acres of the Buri Buri encompassing what became north Burlingame and Millbrae. On this property Mills created one of the region's great estates, which included extensive gardens and an impressive forty-two room mansion built in the second empire style. This baronial estate remained in the Mills family until its subdivision in 1954.

The pattern of utilization was different in the northern part of Buri Buri which was to become San Bruno. No great estates appeared that far north. The form of agriculture that prevailed during the remainder of the nineteenth century was cattle ranching, but not for the purpose of obtaining hides and tallow, as had been the case during the old *rancho* days, but instead for meat and dairy products to meet the needs of the local area.

One of the first dairies in the San Bruno area was established by Argonaut Alfred F. Green in or about 1853. Eventually Green merged his operation into a partnership with D.O. Mills' Millbrae Dairy, which

continued to operate until well into the twentieth century.

In the meantime during the mid-1850s, Green was joined in San Bruno area by his in-laws, the Tilton family, staunch Yankees from the Granite State of New Hampshire. The patriarch, Green's father-in-law, Stephen Tilton, with his wife Julia, and at least two sons, Stephen Tilton and John Quincy Adams Tilton, established themselves in San Bruno where they purchased land. In evaluating the significance of this extended family, author Don Shoecraft noted that from the beginning, "the Green-Tilton clan produced some of the first settlers in the district, some of the first homes, the first dairies, the first Protestant church [in northern San Mateo County] and the first educators."² By 1857 John Quincy had moved down to San Mateo where he became a prominent citizen. There his impressive Victorian home, built in 1865, still stands at 36 North Claremont Street.

Certainly one of the most notable dairies in the area was the Jersey Farm Dairy established in 1875 by Richard G. Sneath, a native of Frederick County, Maryland, who became a San Francisco banker and merchant. Purchasing 2,600 acres, Sneath established an operation which, with the latest technology and mass production methods is credited as being "one of the longest-lived and largest dairies in the world."³ Unlike earlier dairies in the area, this one was intended for the San Francisco market. At the height of its operation the dairy shipped an estimated 11,000 gallons of milk a day.

Historian Alan Hynding suggested that: "Until the twentieth century, San Bruno remained a foggy wind-swept speck on the map of the Peninsula. It was hardly more than a place name."⁴ From one perspective that statement is true. Nevertheless the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of what would emerge in the early twentieth century as a community. That San Bruno came to be located where it is today can largely be attributed to factors related to transportation. It all goes back to the Spanish, who, as they founded their missions, *pueblos*, and *presidios*,

established a primitive road called El Camino Real which connected all of these along the coast. Coming up the bayside of the Peninsula it crossed what is now San Bruno where it veered to the northwest of San Bruno Mountain and on to Mission Dolores. With the onset of the Gold Rush, traffic along the road greatly increased, and it became a major artery of transportation. It is in this context that some time about 1850, John Thorpe established the Fourteen Mile House, so-called because of its distance from Mission Dolores. Located at the future site of San Bruno, it was probably the first business structure in the area. One disgruntled traveler described it as a flea-infested, dirt-floored shack. Later in the century this property evolved into Uncle Tom's Cabin, a popular French restaurant, which stayed in business until the roadhouse was demolished in 1949.

Sometime in or about 1862 a second road house, Richard Cunningham's San Bruno House, opened about a mile northeast of the Fourteen Mile House. Within a few years two improvements in transportation helped to ensure the development of a town near the site of Cunningham's modest hostelry. First, in 1859 the San Bruno Toll Road was completed. This new route from San Francisco came south around the east side of Mount San Bruno on the Bayside terminating at the County Road, as El Camino came to be called,



In 1910, guests came by both carriage and automobile to Uncle Tom's Cabin.

where San Mateo Avenue intersects El Camino today. A few years later in 1864 the San Francisco & San Jose Railroad was completed, providing rapid transit between those cities. The Railroad established a station at the intersection of the railroad and toll road where the San Bruno House was also located. It designated the station as “San Bruno.” The name San Bruno, which earlier had applied solely to the mountain, was now definitely attached to the area where a community would develop.

Dr. Frank Stanger was certainly correct when he commented that “‘Rapid transit’ was the magic phrase that opened the gates to progress, or at least unlocked them.”⁵ However, in the short term neither the advent of the toll road nor the railroad resulted in any significant influx of migrants with the result that only a few businesses and houses were added to the small settlement during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “The area’s greatest claim to fame was the Tanforan racetrack,”⁶ observed historian Mitchell P. Postel. In 1898 a Polish nobleman, Prince Andre Poniatowski provided the financing of the building of this major horse racing track, which was named after a branch of the Sanchez family that had lived nearby. The racetrack continued to be a prominent landmark until its closure in 1963 and its destruction by fire the following year. Although it became best known for horse racing, at times it was used for other purposes, particularly during the years when California outlawed racetrack betting. A particularly notable event took place in 1911 when aviator Eugene Ely took off from Tanforan and landed his Curtiss biplane on a platform constructed on the deck of the cruiser, *USS Pennsylvania*. Military historians regard this as marking the beginning of the age of the aircraft carrier. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the U.S. into World War II, Tanforan was used as an assembly point for Japanese Americans headed for the controversial internment centers further inland.



Tanforan overcrossing of the “40-Line” of the streetcar.

The opening of Tanforan also stimulated the long-delayed completion of an electric railroad line from San Francisco which stopped at San Bruno and Tanforan before terminating in San Mateo. Because it boasted lower fares than the existing Southern Pacific, enterprising entrepreneurs envisioned the possibility of the development of suburbs down the Peninsula for commuters. In the case of San Bruno this led to the development in 1904 of San Bruno’s first residential subdivision, San Bruno Park. The tract was bounded by San Mateo Avenue to the south, Masson Avenue to the west, Huntington Avenue to the east, paralleling the railroad right of way, and Euclid Avenue to the north. Two other subdivisions followed in short order. Despite the use of persuasive sales techniques, such as free lunches and generous prices – lots were offered for \$225 each – few lots were bought and fewer houses were built. Then something happened which markedly

accelerated San Bruno's development.

Historical writer Darold Fredericks summarized it very well: "The development of San Bruno as a population center can be attributed directly to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake."⁷ Hordes of survivors fled south from the ruined city by the Bay. A refugee camp was set up in San Bruno. Developers A.T. Green, George Hensley and R. Masson Smith took advantage of this opportunity to renew their sales efforts, this time with much greater success. Soon a real estate boom was on as additional residential subdivisions were laid out and lots were gobbled up by prospective suburbanites. By the end of 1906 Hensley-Green had opened their Fourth Addition to San Bruno Park. The following year other developers began subdivision of nearby property. With the rapid increase in population, businesses began to appear along San Mateo Avenue. The growing population also stimulated the desire for civic institutions. 1907 and 1908 witnessed the establishment of the community's first two churches, St. Bruno Catholic Church and the first Protestant church, Community Methodist Church, as well as the construction of the first school house. Built in 1910, Green's Hall helped meet the community's social needs as the site of dances and other social events. Between 1890 and 1914 San Bruno's population grew from 200 to 1,400, with commercial and residential development scattered over two square miles, and twenty-three miles of unpaved roadways.

By 1912, residents were clamoring for public works such as sewers, lights, and a water system. Since the town's dirt streets turned to impassable quagmires during winter, paved streets were particularly desired. As a result a movement for incorporation ensued; after county supervisors approved a petition for an election on incorporation, the town voted on December 18, 1914. Out of a population of about 1,500 those who favored incorporation carried the day by 296 to 158 opposed. The town that had slowly emerged around a crossroad now entered a new era.



The Huntington Park Addition in 1910. Lots could be purchased for \$225. Buyers could pay \$5 a month. Courtesy San Bruno Public Library.

Mark S. Still

Dr. Mark S. Still is professor emeritus of history at the College of San Mateo, where he taught classes in U.S. and California history for thirty years. He holds three degrees in history, the B.A. and M.A. from the University of Arizona and the Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University and is a member of Phi Alpha Theta (national history honor society).

A fifth generation Californian and a native of San Mateo, Dr. Still has served on the board of directors of the San Mateo County Historical Association and also as its president. He has written a number of articles for *La Peninsula* and has served as a regional vice president of the Conference of California Historical Societies. Together with the late Dr. Alan Hynding he edited *California Historymakers* (Kendall Hunt, 1995, 1999).

Endnotes

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³ *Ibid*, p. 36.

⁴ Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb: The Story of the San Mateo Peninsula* (Belmont, CA: Star Publishing Co., 1982) p. 121.

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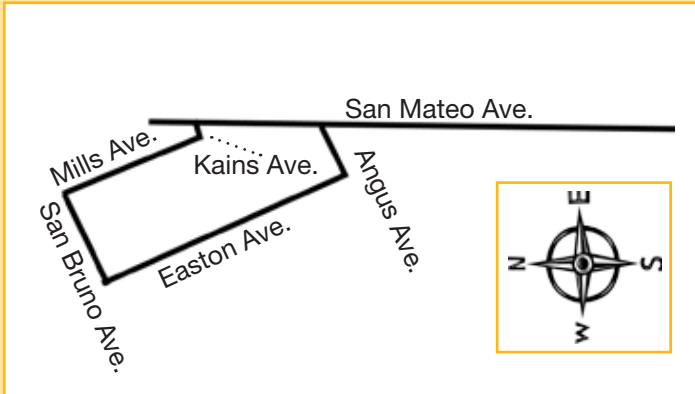
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⁷ Darold E. Fredericks, "The City of San Bruno: A Look to the Past," *La Peninsula* XXII (December, 1984): 15.

Sources

In addition to the publications above, information for this article came from Darold E. Fredericks' *San Bruno People and Places* from 1989 and *San Bruno (Images of America)* from 2003; Kent Seavey's *Historical Resources Inventory, San Bruno Redevelopment Project, City of San Bruno, California* from 2001; and Frank Stanger's *History of San Mateo County* from 1938 and "A Californio Rancho Under Three Flags: A History of Rancho Buri Buri in San Mateo County" from 1938.

Walking Tour of Historic Downtown



Walking Tour Route

Begin at the junction of El Camino Real and San Mateo Avenue. Proceed north past Kaines Avenue to the American Legion building, then head back south until you reach Kaines. Turn west and walk a half block to Mills Avenue and head north again until reaching San Bruno Avenue. Walk west on San Bruno Avenue for two blocks until you reach Easton. Turn south on Easton until you are at Angus. Here turn east until you are back on San Mateo Avenue, the end of the tour.

Editor's Note

The walking tour was created by San Mateo County Historical Association staff while organizing an activity for the City of San Bruno recognizing its centennial celebration. Most of the information was taken from Kent Seavey's *Historical Resources Inventory, San Bruno Redevelopment Project, City of San Bruno, California*, of August 2001. Mr. Seavey has graciously allowed us to directly excerpt from the *Inventory*.

The *Inventory* was written as a planning tool to help the City understand its historic resources. It encompasses many parts of the City and not just the downtown. Each of the properties mentioned on this tour has an extensive description in the *Inventory*, not necessary for this simple piece. Anyone wishing to look at this *Inventory* can find it at the San Bruno Public Library or within the archives of the San Mateo County History Museum.



August Jenevein's Junction House in 1910. Signs indicate the "Mission Road" (El Camino Real) on the left and "San Bruno Road" (then the San Bruno Toll Road, now San Mateo Avenue) on the right.



By the 1930s, the junction of El Camino Real (left) and San Mateo Avenue (right) had become a busy area for traffic.



Barney Ward Building was still a single story c. 1910. To the left is the building that served as one of the first schools in the area.

1. **Begin the Tour:** Start at the City's mini-park at the northeast portion of the junction of El Camino Real and San Mateo Avenue. Note that you are standing just southwest of the old El Camino movie theater, established at least as far back as the 1930s. If you look north from the sidewalk, you will see the Union Service Station, present in one form or another since 1921. This is the site of August Jenevein's Junction House built in 1889 (see picture left). Jenevein, the early San Bruno businessman for whom the Avenue in the City is named, ran the House as a restaurant and bar with sleeping rooms available upstairs.

Tour Participants: Proceed north on San Mateo Avenue. It is recommended to walk on the west side of the street.

2. Address: 460 San Mateo Avenue
Historical Name: Club Barber Shop/ also Archie's
Date of Construction: 1940

This former barber shop is the best commercial example of the Art Moderne style of architecture in San Bruno. It was constructed by DeViveiros Construction Co. and was originally known as the Club Barber Shop; it was Archie's barber shop until the late 1990s.

3. Address: 495 San Mateo Avenue
Historical Name: Barney Ward Building
Date of Construction: circa 1905

Barney Ward originally constructed this building a bit prior to 1906. After the San Francisco earthquake of that year, he began selling alcoholic beverages here. In 1925, Ward enlarged the structure and added a second story for living quarters. Dan Newell purchased it from Ward in the 1930s and changed its name to Newell's Bar. It is still known as such despite the fact that it has a new owner.

4. At 575 San Mateo Avenue is longtime San Bruno businessman Harry Costa's "Just Things" store. His store is not always open, but if you are lucky and catch Harry, ask to see his amazing collection of San Bruno historical items.

5. Address: 588 San Mateo Avenue
Historical Name: San Bruno Lumber Company Office
Date of Construction: 1925

This is the first brick building in San Bruno. It originally housed the offices for the San Bruno Lumber Company, the first lumber company in San Bruno. Architectural historian Kent Seavey writes of it as a "curious mixture of Mission Revival and Art Moderne design motifs."



In 2000, karaoke sales and rentals occurred in the former EiMac office.

6. Address: 598 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: First EiMac Corporation Office

Date of Construction: 1932

This rather unassuming building, with its raised panels in Art Moderne design, is perhaps the most significant historic structure in the City. According to Kent Seavey:

598 San Mateo Ave. is significant in the area of history as the first home of the Eitel-McCullough, EiMac Corporation, manufacturer of radio vacuum tubes. In 1934, two young entrepreneurs William Eitel and Jack McCullough left San Francisco... to start their own business in the field.... The inventors began with one employee in the 598 San Mateo Ave. office turning out limited quantities of hand-made radio tubes. By 1937 the radio had turned from a novelty to a necessity in America, and the business was booming with twelve employees and a second office space at the SE corner of San Mateo and San Bruno Aves.

In July of 1940, with the approach of WWII, Western Electric Corp. contracted with EiMac for the production of ten thousand tubes for use in communication equipment, and the newly developing radar system. 598 San Mateo Ave. became a hiring office. More working spaces were rented in northern San Mateo Ave. to keep up with the demand for product, which increased ten-fold as the war drew closer. In 1941, with three daily shifts of workers in production, Eitel and

McCullough pioneered the hiring of women, from San Bruno and neighboring communities, for the war industry, initiating an entirely new work force in the bay area. They established a nursery school for pre-school children of their workers, and a summer day school for school age children. They published their own in-house newspaper, the EIMAC NEWS which came out each Friday. In August of 1942 EiMac was awarded the first Army-Navy "E" award for excellence and efficiency, presented to an electronics company in the United States.

EiMac's production expanded to include a large facility in Salt Lake City, Utah, before the end of the war. With the end of the conflict and the slow down in production, the firm directed its efforts toward the development of vacuum tubes for the emerging television industry. Continuous expansion of the successful enterprise and lack of adequate space in San Bruno saw the firm move its efforts to San Carlos in 1958. EiMac merged with Varian Associates in 1965. Many of the San Bruno facilities associated with EiMac were lost to fire.



A crowd gathers at 601-605 San Mateo Avenue in March 1930.

7. Address: 601-605 San Mateo Avenue

No historical name

Date of Construction: 1930

601-605 San Mateo Avenue is significant in the area of architecture as the best example of Mediterranean

Revival design in a commercial building block on the Avenue. In fact, it was employed as a period set for the motion picture *Tucker* (1988). The building has been used for a variety of retail and service functions over time, including the San Bruno Pharmacy (1930). The original owner was local dairymen and farmer Sebastian Lombardi, who had a pasteurizing and bottling plant in San Francisco, and sold some of his milk to the Dairy Delivery Company in San Bruno. Lombardi had land holdings around the state, and operated a greyhound coursing track in the San Bruno marshlands.

Gustav Magnuson, the contractor for the building, was a native of Sweden. He arrived in San Francisco in 1894 and originally worked as a seaman in the costal trade. He was a captain in the San Bruno Fire Department.



In 1910, a pharmacy was a featured company in the Debenedetti Building. Compare this picture to the 1930 picture on the left, where the building was home to an electrical company.

8. Address: 609-613-617 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: Debenedetti Building

Date of Construction: 1909

This building is an excellent early commercial example of the Mission Revival style of architecture and is the oldest intact commercial block remaining along San Mateo Avenue. Constructed as a general store by the Debenedetti Brothers of Half Moon Bay, the building also housed the San Bruno Drug Company and later the San Bruno Post Office.



In the 1920s, Joe Sammut operated a successful card room. Photo by Fred Beltramo.

9. Address: 678 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: Joe's Pool Parlor/Joe's Pool Hall/
Artichoke Joe's

Date of Construction: circa 1907

678 San Mateo Avenue is significant in the area's history as the site of one of the two original businesses in what was to become the commercial core of San Bruno. One of these was Joseph LoReaux's plumbing shop. The other was the Della Maggiora General Store at 733 San Mateo Avenue. LoReaux's shop was accessed by climbing wooden steps over the 30" main pipeline of the Spring Valley Water Company, running along the east side of San Mateo Avenue, toward San Francisco. The pipeline was placed underground in 1916. By that time the plumbing shop had become a pool hall under the ownership of a Mr. Martin.

In early 1921, Mr. Joseph Sammut, a native of Malta who had been running a successful card room on San Francisco's Geneva Avenue, took over the operation as Joe's Pool Hall. Mr. Sammut's enterprise evolved into one of the most successful businesses on the San Francisco Peninsula. In 1942 the senior Sammut turned the gaming operation over to his son, also named Joe. According to local historian Darold Fredricks, the younger Sammut was asked how he would cover his bets if he had no money. He responded that he would pay in artichoke leaves. That was the genesis of the name change in 1964 from Joe's Pool Hall, to the now

famous Artichoke Joe's. Grandson Dennis Sammut assumed the management of the business, regularly expanding the facility to its current configuration along Huntington and San Mateo Avenues.

10. Address: 733 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: Della Maggiora General Store

Date of Construction: 1907

One of the first two original commercial buildings remaining along the north end of San Mateo Avenue, this general store sold groceries and wine. It was owned and operated by Sebastiani Della Maggiora, who purchased the property in 1904. The produce sold here came from local Italian farmers who grew vegetables along the west side of El Camino Real near Sneath Lane.



Grafton Tyler Brown created this lithograph of the San Bruno House for Moore & DePue's 1878 *Illustrated History of San Mateo County*.

11. Address: 757 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: American Legion Post #409

Date of Construction: 1935

Please note, this is the site of San Bruno's first building, the San Bruno House. It was constructed by Richard Cunningham in the 1860s. Born in Ireland, Cunningham came to the United States in 1847. He settled in San Bruno in 1862. The next year rail service began down the Peninsula from San Francisco. Cunningham's San Bruno House functioned as a hotel and waystation, with Cunningham serving as agent.

Thus the story of San Bruno's business district begins at this location.

The current building on this site, American Legion Post #409, is home to one of San Bruno's early community service and social organizations. It is the oldest veteran's group still operating in the city. The building is one of just a few intact examples of the Art Moderne architectural style in San Bruno. The Post was established along with its Women's Auxiliary in February of 1931. In 1935, it bought its property at this location and began construction. During World War II, many U.S.O. dances occurred here and were attended by EiMac workers along with military service personnel. The dances were held at various times of the day reflecting the work shifts of the electronics plant.

Tour Participants: Now turn around and head back south to Kaines Avenue. Turn west here and then, after a short block, turn north again on Mills Avenue. It is suggested to stay on the east side of the street.

12. Address: 777 Mills Avenue

Historical Name: Arthur G. Meehan House

Date of Construction: 1915

This wood-framed house is an excellent example of the California Bungalow architectural style. It was home to San Bruno police officer Arthur G. Meehan, who was the first on the San Bruno force to be killed in the line of duty when he attempted to stop two suspects fleeing from a South San Francisco robbery in 1923.

13. Address: 785 San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: J.H. Galleher House

Date of Construction: 1922

This wood-framed Colonial Revival style house is an example of the craftsmanship of Prosper Bou, an important early San Bruno contractor of French descent. The house's first owner, John H. Galleher, was a postal employee.

Tour Participants: At San Bruno Avenue, turn west. It is suggested to stay on the south side of the street.

14. Address: 200 W. San Mateo Avenue

Historical Name: Nieri Funeral Home

Date of Construction: 1935

This building is significant in the area of architecture as the best remaining example of Spanish Eclectic style commercial architecture in San Bruno. Constructed by Joseph Bettencourt, the building appears to be basically unchanged. The Spanish Eclectic style is unlike the previous Mission Revival style, as it relied on more accurate historical precedents for its decorative embellishments.

15. At 383 W. San Bruno Avenue is the Welch family's real estate office. If enough of the family is around when you walk by, you may ask if it is convenient for you to go upstairs and view one of the greatest collections of historic slot machines found anywhere.

Tour Participants: Continue west on San Bruno Avenue until you get to Easton Avenue and turn south. It is suggested to stay on the east side of the street.



The Drescher family had a large garden, c.1921.

16. Address: 649 Easton Avenue

Historical Name: Mathias Drescher House

Date of Construction: 1915

Mathias Drescher, a skilled cabinet maker, came to San Bruno from Baltimore, Maryland in 1906. He convinced his three brothers, who were also cabinet makers, to join him in San Bruno. The four worked as contractors on many jobs following the building boom resulting from the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906. He built this wood-framed Craftsman style home as his own residence.

17. Address: 625 Easton Avenue

Historical Name: Louis Traeger House

Date of Construction: 1912

This wood-framed California style residence was home of San Bruno's first Mayor, Louis Traeger. Traeger was one of the many San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906 refugees. Having lost his house there, he moved his family to San Bruno. He was an early leader of the volunteer fire department and was elected a city trustee when San Bruno incorporated in 1914. As such, he served as Mayor from 1914 to 1920. Besides his roles with the fire department and City Trustees, he served as a reserve police officer, dog catcher, school crossing-guard, and for 25 years, city building inspector. About 1912 he began construction of this house.

Tour Participants: Continue south on Easton until you get to Angus Avenue. Here, turn east. It is suggested to stay on the north side of the street.

18. Address: 300 W. Angus Avenue

Historical Name: N.D. Hall/Carpenter's Union Hall

Date of Construction: 1910

Nicholas Drescher was one of the younger brothers of Mathias Drescher (see site #16). In 1910, he and a number of local carpenters purchased this lot and constructed a wood-frame meeting hall for the carpenter's trade. Nick helped finance the project with the provision that he would be reimbursed. The loan was never fully repaid, so in 1924, Drescher took possession of the hall and added living quarters for his family on the north end. After this, the building was referred to as N.D. (for Nicholas Drescher) Hall and served as an important meeting place for the town. Later it became a chapel for a number of religious congregations and actually functions as such to this day.

Tour Participants: This is the end of our excursion. Just to the east of your present location is San Mateo Avenue. Thank you for taking the time to learn a little bit about San Bruno's interesting history.

The Beginnings of the Airport

Mitchell P. Postel

San Bruno and aviation history are linked at several junctures (see San Bruno military history on page 20). The creation of the San Francisco Airport on mud flats to the east of town in 1927 is the greatest story, and begins in 1926 with the initiation of air mail service by the United States Post Office. This put pressure on the City to establish an adequate commercial airport. Even before World War I, an airfield had been in operation in the Marina District of San Francisco. Any expansion was limited however, with the Bay, the Presidio, and residential streets bounding it on all sides. The Army's Crissy Field, just west of the Marina, had similar geographical problems.

A number of local citizens made various suggestions to a newly formed Airport Committee organized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Some felt a platform over the waterfront wharves might be a logical location; others suggested a platform over the Southern Pacific train sheds at Third and Townsend; one group advocated reclaiming shoals off Yerba Buena Island (which would eventually become Treasure Island); some still believed the Marina could be made usable. McLaren Park was talked about. Someone mentioned the Twin

Peaks mesa as a potential site, but since no one on the committee knew quite what or where the Twin Peaks mesa was, this idea was dismissed. The committee even considered a suggestion to roof Civic Center for use as an airport.

For most San Franciscans, City Engineer M.M. O'Shaughnessy's advice that the city's forty-four square miles simply did not have space for an airport seemed to make sense. San Francisco had long since realized that because of its small size it had to look beyond its borders for such necessities as a water supply and even a place to bury the dead. Several locations were discussed, including a site on Bay Farm Island in the East Bay, close to where Oakland would eventually locate its airport.

On November 1, 1926, O'Shaughnessy presented his recommendation to the Committee, advocating purchase of Mills Estate property just east of the town of San Bruno. He explained that the site was but fourteen miles from San Francisco, only a twenty-two minute drive by automobile on the newly improved Bayshore Highway. The site included almost 200 dry acres immediately available for creation of an airport. Another 1,000 acres of submerged lands lay close at hand for substantial expansion in the future. He estimated the cost of developing an airport here at \$1,542,000.

At first, San Francisco City Hall hoped that Ogden Mills (son of the late banking king D.O. Mills, who had initially purchased the property in the 1860s) would donate the property. Unfortunately Ogden Mills died while en route to San Francisco, and the affairs of the estate were left to his son, Ogden L. Mills, at that time Under Secretary of the United States Treasury, who was not inclined to contribute the land. He did realize that the City had financial limitations and was amenable to renting 150 acres to it at \$1,500 per year.



Women fliers at Mills Field in 1927. Courtesy San Bruno Public Library.

On March 18, 1927, the first contract for construction on the airport was signed. Still hoping that the Mills Estate might donate the property to the City, on April 25 the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 27,197, naming the new public entity Mills Field Municipal Airport of San Francisco. Although regular operating personnel would not be on duty until July, on May 7, 1927, city officials formally dedicated Mills Field. Milo Kent, Chairman of the Airport Committee, presided over the festivities. Mayor James Rolph received the airport for the people of San Francisco. He predicted “a great future” for the field.

On June 1, Frank Flynn, a native San Franciscan and former World War I military pilot, was named as the first superintendent of the airport. On September 16, Flynn received a big boost of positive attention when pioneer aviator Charles Lindbergh landed at the field in his famous airplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

While the airport seemed to be off to a good start, for Frank Flynn and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the early months of its operation turned out to be difficult ones. Some aviators at Mills Field became detractors. Civilian pilot Paul Isaacs called the airport “a mud hole, just a mud hole.” Others referred to it as “Cyclone Gulch” because of the winds that blew through the Gap in the Skyline Hills. While these impressions were “off the record,” many somehow became aware of them, and an unfavorable attitude toward Mills Field took root.

A variety of setbacks then occurred, but none received more attention than Charles Lindbergh’s next stop at the field. In early 1929, he had charge of selecting airports for a proposed transcontinental air and rail passenger service. He flew into Mills Field in a thirty-two seat Patrician biplane, said to be the largest and heaviest airplane of that day. Of course, large crowds came to greet and send off the famed aviator. When about to take off, Lindbergh made room for another plane. While doing so, his own plane, equipped with sharp rubber tires (the balloon tire had not yet been developed), cut through the upper surface of the field



Charles Lindbergh landing at Mills Field in 1927. Courtesy San Bruno Public Library.

and sank in the mud. Five minutes later a tractor pulled the Patrician out of the mud, and though Lindbergh reportedly sent his passengers to Oakland by car, he was eventually able to take off.

Unfortunately, newspapers from around the world picked up the story that Lindbergh had gotten stuck in the mud at Mills Field. San Franciscans found themselves embarrassed by their airport. Lindbergh then recommended Oakland and not San Francisco as the terminus of the proposed new air passenger venture. When he later discovered how much criticism had materialized about Mills, Lindbergh declared: “If Mills Field is not a good one, we should all quit flying!” Still the damage had been done.

Things finally began to turn around for the airport on January 8, 1932, when a new San Francisco City charter went into effect, giving control of Mills Field to the Public Utilities Commission. Its manager, Edward G. Cahill, hired Bernard “Mike” Doolin as the new superintendent.

Doolin used his connections with old army aviation friends to have millions of dollars directed to San Francisco Airport during World War II. In the year after the war, now San Francisco International Airport, saw 1,025,000 passengers pass through. Doolin envisioned the present configuration of the airport, with a central terminal, plus north and south terminals surrounding a parking facility. The central terminal was completed in 1954.

Sources

The information for this article was primarily derived from Mitchell Postel’s *La Peninsula* article of Winter 1991-92, “San Francisco International Airport.”

San Bruno's Military History

SMCHA Publications Committee

Early Military Aviation Milestones

San Bruno also has important connections with military history. For example during a 1911 airshow at Tanforan racetrack (now the regional shopping center), pioneer aviators achieved two firsts which proved the potential of airplanes in warfare.

Lieutenant Myron C. Crissy of the United States Army's Signal Corps successfully accomplished the initial milestone by releasing a six-pound bomb from a Wright biplane piloted by a civilian named Philip Parmelee. The explosive went off in a marshy area east of the show (probably on present San Francisco International Airport property) and created a three-foot by two-foot hole in the mud. The concept of aerial bombardment was born.

Three days later, on January 15, a young mechanic, automobile race driver, and pioneer aviator named Eugene Ely achieved the most daring feat of the show. Ely and Glenn Curtiss decided to demonstrate it was possible to land an airplane on a ship. In order to do so, the armored cruiser *USS Pennsylvania* anchored in the Bay. A wooden platform was temporarily constructed on its aft section. Bags of sand were placed on both sides of the deck. Ropes crossed the deck and were tied to bags lying on opposite sides. A hook under the tail of Ely's Curtiss "pusher" airplane was designed to snag the ropes and help stop the plane before it reached the crash barrier. Thousands watched as the daredevil approached the *USS Pennsylvania*, flying at forty miles per hour. It is said that Ely's hook missed the first two ropes but finally snagged the third. For the first time an airplane had landed on a ship. Only thirty years later, airplanes taking off from and landing on ships would attack and cripple the American fleet at Pearl Harbor and plunge the United States into World War II.

Tanforan during the World Wars

During World War I, the federal government shut down Tanforan race track in order to convert it into an United States Army training center. This was made necessary because the much larger post built for the artillery regiment known as the California Grizzlies, at Camp Fremont at Menlo Park, was at capacity. Tanforan thus served as an auxiliary site. Still several hundred soldiers at a time pitched their tents on the infield and practiced maneuvers throughout the area.

A year before World War II began, Tanforan was taken over by the United States Navy. Then, in the spring of 1942, it was utilized as an "Assembly Center." This came about as a result of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Navy on December 7, 1941. Fear gripped the West Coast of the United States, and people of Japanese ancestry were ordered to be interned until the duration of hostilities. While camps were being built in the interior of the country, for four months Tanforan



At Tanforan, five Japanese American internees lived in two small rooms of a converted horse stall, 1942. Photo by Dorothea Lange.

was used as an Assembly Center where nearly 8,000 Japanese Americans from throughout the Bay Area were detained. Then these thousands of people were loaded into railroad cars destined for such desolate places as Camp Topaz in central Utah. It has long been recognized that constitutional rights were ignored and racial prejudice was allowed to rule the day. After the Japanese internees left, the Navy resumed its management of Tanforan as a base.

Camp Terry B. Thompson Navy Base

Just across El Camino Real from the base at Tanforan, the Navy established another base in 1944. Camp Terry B. Thompson, at its height of activity, consisted of 113 buildings on some 80 acres. This included a hospital, recreation hall, bowling alley and barber shop. The swimming pool there has been said to have been the largest in California at the time. Through the years, the Navy has let go of most of the real estate. Today, the 23rd Marine Regiment, a reserve infantry unit, occupies 20 acres of the site.

Golden Gate National Cemetery

During the 1930s, the Sneath family began relinquishing its San Mateo County dairy lands. In 1932, approximately 250 acres were sold to San Francisco City and County for the purpose of building a jail. The six-story structure was constructed in 1935 to hold 554 prisoners. Then in 1938, the Sneaths sold 162 acres for \$180,000 to the United States government for the purpose of creating the Golden Gate National Cemetery.

The Works Progress Administration directed the Cemetery's construction. The superintendent, foreman and the office employees were all veterans of World War I. The first coffin was buried there on July 25, 1940. Since that time more than 135,000 have been laid to rest at the cemetery, including Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander of the Pacific Fleet in World War II, and 15 recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Sources

Information for this essay was garnered principally from the writings of Darold E. Fredericks, Al Hynding and Mitchell Postel.

Entrepreneurship

The City of San Bruno has thrived in large part due to the people who have built their businesses within its borders, including immigrants, pioneers and more recently high-tech entrepreneurs. From before its incorporation to the present day, San Bruno maintains its standing as a place where enterprising individuals forge their own successful paths.

In the early years of the 21st Century, the Gap built its corporate headquarters in the Bayhill Office Center and remains a presence in San Bruno through its ownership of buildings leased to several high-tech firms. One of San Bruno's most famous high-tech businesses is YouTube. The domain name "YouTube.com" was activated on February 14, 2005, and began a whole new era in video

sharing over the Internet. Started by three former PayPal employees, YouTube revolutionized the way in which users could upload, share, and view videos. In October 2006, Google Inc. acquired YouTube for \$1.65 billion in Google stock. Over the last decade, YouTube has been instrumental in virtually every aspect of global culture and politics.

In recent years, San Bruno has welcomed the corporate headquarters of Walmart's Global eCommerce, which leads all online and mobile innovation for Walmart. San Bruno is also home to CBR Systems, Inc., a leader in stem cell therapies, Oracle's Responsys, Inc., which provides global Cloud and consulting services, and Stella & Dot, which revolutionized the jewelry business by creating a community-based sales model.

The Posy Parade: A Unique Tradition

Maryanne Dornlas

San Bruno's Posy Parade is a celebration of the community's children that evolved from the Admission Day Parade the city held each September starting in the 1920s. Those parades consisted of the usual mix of bands and dignitaries waving from flag-bedecked fire trucks as well as a procession of children and young women chosen as the "Queen" and her court.

In 1941, Wayne Poland, a member of a service organization called the Exchange Club, had the idea of a "festival of flowers" dedicated to children. The late Carl Hultberg, an Exchange Club member, recalled, "We wanted to pattern the parade after the Tournament of Roses in Pasadena, so we selected a popular flower, the posy, to name the parade after."

The first parade attracted about 80 children who assembled on Hensley Avenue and marched from San Bruno Avenue to Huntington Avenue and then south on San Mateo Avenue. The marchers were grouped into "divisions" which included wheeled toys, pulled wagons or carts, doll and baby carriages, bicycles, floats done by groups or children's organizations and "unique or original ideas."

The parade grew in popularity during the War years and in 1943 the parade route was extended across El Camino to the City Park on Crystal Springs Road. In 1944, Patty Lang rode a pony in the parade as the first Posy Parade Princess. In the early years, the princess was chosen by a superintendent of the San Bruno Park School District. Starting in 1970, the princess and her court were chosen by drawing.

To raise funds for the parade, the first Posy Parade Ball was held in 1945 at the North Brae School. The Ball became an annual event and for at least ten years was held at the Tanforan Race Track Clubhouse. The 1953 Ball, which the Exchange Club hailed as "San Bruno's most gala social event," featured a ten-piece

orchestra. Tickets sold for \$1.00 each.

From 1945 to 1950, a baseball game called "The Posy Parade Classic" was held in City Park after the parade pitting teams from North Brae and Edgemont Elementary Schools against each other. Through the years various other pairs of local schools vied to win the big game. Currently, the challengers are Parkside Intermediate School and St. Robert's Catholic School.

In 1955, the Exchange Club disbanded and the Optimists club took over and worked tirelessly to fund and organize a parade that was truly achieving fame. As San Bruno's population ballooned, the number of parade participants grew to 2,000 and the number of spectators was estimated at 20,000. Any child could enter and march as long as flowers predominated the decoration of their cycles, buggies, floats, pets, etc. By 1964, the local newspaper solicited extra flowers from readers to help with the parade effort. Children gathered flowers from neighbors and nurseries all around the city. Participation was open to non-San Bruno residents but it was all about the children.

The 1956 parade was particularly exciting as a house caught fire along the parade route. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, "Fire trucks detoured 15 blocks to reach the blaze. When the marchers arrived, fire hoses were lying across their path. But the happy, not to say dazed children, dragging their flower-banked fairy-tale vehicles, forged serenely ahead, into the swirling smoke, onward and into the sunlight again....It took an hour passing the judges stand."

By 1957, the workload of producing the parade was so great the Optimists were getting assistance from other chapters throughout the Bay Area. But 1968 was a dark year in the annals of the event. The sponsoring Optimists canceled the event due to "a lack of manpower." The next year, the Optimists got offers

of help to stage the parade. By 1984, the Lions took over sponsorship.

Newspaper photos of the parade over the last 30 years show a wondrous, sometimes whimsical, display of floats, some quite elaborate. The space race influenced entries in the 1960s. In 1962, a prize went to a floral Aurora rocket built by Cub Pack 271 and the Division 6 winner was the William Tieken family's flowering flying saucer.

As the parade continued through the 1970s, more marching bands from around the area came to strut their stuff down San Mateo Avenue. Excellent bands from Capuchino and Crestmoor High Schools, the San Bruno Park School District, Parkside Junior High, and Laguna Salada School District represented the City's educational institutions. Also appearing over the years were bands from schools in South San Francisco and San Mateo.

In 1982, San Bruno born entertainer Suzanne Somers returned to town to join Mayor Bob Marshall as a co-grand marshal. Throngs of spectators showed up to see the hometown girl who made it big in Hollywood. Her family home had been right along the parade route, so from ages 3 to 14, she either marched in or viewed the parade. She said, "...it's such a wonderful effort to bring the community together; it's just a real nice event for the town to get involved in, especially in this age when people are isolated from each other."

Former parade participant Jennifer Gravem, now grown and an educator, was pictured in 1983's *San Bruno Herald* coverage dressed in a polka-dot clown suit, waving from her flower-bedecked tricycle. Jennifer noted, "It's wonderful for a community to be brought together on a happy occasion, for it seems that in this world today, we only unite for tragedy. The Posy Parade is the opposite. I was able to be a part of my community and have fun with old friends as well as make new ones that lived just around the corner."

In 1989, the 49th parade was a celebration of San Bruno's 75th anniversary of incorporation. The parade procession time, which had dwindled over the years,

increased to 2 hours of floats, classic cars, dignitaries, and, of course, children. San Bruno's 1914 Parade Queen Edith Cook, smiled and waved to onlookers from the back of a convertible. A host of past and present mayors, Council members, City staff and prominent citizens joined in the celebration and the floral decorations (albeit mostly artificial) once again made the Posy Parade true to its name.

In the last 20 years, the parade's look has greatly altered. Division 1 now consists of "sports" teams that are allowed to march without any decoration. By 1999, there were only 3 decorated carriage/buggy entries and only 2 cart/wagon entries. *The Independent* newspaper still called the event "a floral parade for boys and girls" but there was hardly a flower in sight.

San Bruno's Centennial celebration has renewed interest in the City's unique civic event. The 2014 parade brought back more familiar faces and community pride. Hopefully, the City's claim to fame will grow again in popularity and participation and San Bruno's Posy Parade will live on and prosper.



Posy Parade float from 2014. Courtesy San Bruno Library.

Maryanne Dornlas

Maryanne Dornlas has lived in San Bruno since 1956 and was educated at San Bruno schools until attending the University of San Francisco. She retired in 2005 after at 31 year career at the San Bruno Public Library as the Circulation Services Manager. She's been happily married to husband Dave for 37 years.



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La Peninsula



On January 15, 1911, Eugene Ely took off from Tanforan and landed on the *USS Pennsylvania*. It was the first time a plane landed on a ship.