

# **Shell Mounds to Cul-de-Sacs: the Cultural Landscape of San Pedro Valley, Pacifica, California**

A research report submitted to the faculty of  
San Francisco State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree

Master of Arts  
in  
Geography

by

John Culp

San Francisco, California

November, 2002

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## CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Shell Mounds to Cul-de-Sacs: the Cultural Landscape of San Pedro Valley, Pacifica, California*, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Geography at San Francisco State University.

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# **Shell Mounds to Cul-de-Sacs: the Cultural Landscape of San Pedro Valley, Pacifica, California**

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2002

Abstract: Even ordinary elements of the American cultural landscape have unique histories that have helped create their present form. San Pedro Valley, a suburban landscape since the 1950's, has evolved from a number of distinct different landscapes, a few small relics of which can still be found if one takes the time to search them out. This paper traces the development of the cultural landscape of San Pedro Valley from the valley's occupation by native Americans up to the present. The evolution of the landscape is divided into several phases: the Ohlone Landscape, the Mission Period Landscape, the Rancho Landscape, the Truck Farming Landscape, the Early Suburban Landscape, the Modern Suburban Landscape, and Today. Using archival research coupled with interviews and field research, the history of the valley is examined in an attempt to re-create images of how the landscape appeared during each of these phases. Cultural landscapes are complex entities and this paper demonstrates that even seemingly ordinary places have complex and interesting histories that have helped shape their present form.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this research paper.

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(Nancy Wilkinson, Chair, Research Paper Committee)

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(Date)

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## **Introduction:**

There is beauty and intrigue in the seemingly ordinary elements of the American cultural landscape. The wooden three-story house of a New England factory town standing starkly against a pale blue winter sky; a near-empty rest area off Interstate 40 in the Texas Panhandle with the late afternoon sunlight filtering orange through the humid haze; the flat, empty expanse of the southern San Joaquin Valley with its beige cloud of wind-blown topsoil hovering over the fields; the bullet-riddled, rusting carcasses of automobiles half buried by old hydraulic mining deposits in a California Gold Country stream; the 1950's ranch style house fronted by a sun-baked, yellowing lawn, distinguishable only by subtle details from its neighbors. Each of these places contains its own distinct beauty with a unique story to tell, one just has to spend a little time to learn it.

Donald Meinig defined "landscape" as "*comprehensive and cultural*"; that it encompasses everything to be seen in our ordinary surroundings, and that virtually all that can be seen has been created or altered by human intervention." He further states that we need to see "*landscape as history*" and that every landscape "is part of a vast, cluttered, complex repository of society, an archive of tangible evidence about our character and experience as a people through all our history – if only we can learn how to read it." (Meinig in Conzen 1990:xv). Meinig's words have inspired me to try to "read" a landscape, to uncover its history, to tease apart its many layers and led me to San Pedro Valley.

San Pedro Valley is part of the city of Pacifica on the San Mateo County coast, known as the "Coastside" by locals, of California<sup>1</sup>. Only a couple of miles long and a half mile wide, the valley is surrounded by steep hillsides on the north and east, while San Pedro Mountain and the 1,833 foot high peak of Montara Mountain wall the south side. The west end of the valley is open to the Pacific Ocean. The steep hillsides on the valley's flanks are composed mostly of sandstone. The exceptions to this are the slopes of the North Fork San Pedro Creek, which are mostly greenstone, and upper Montara Mountain, which consists of granitics. The valley floor is



covered with alluvial fill, brought down from the hillsides by the valley's creeks. The San Andreas Fault lies just to the east and San Pedro Valley itself follows the trace of the Pilarcitos Fault, which is thought to be inactive (Matuk 2001:16, SPCWC website 2000).

San Pedro Valley's climate is classified as Mediterranean, with long dry summers and a rainy season that extends from November to April. The average annual air temperature is 54°-58° F (12.2°-14.4° C) with a growing season that ranges from 275-350 days per year. Average precipitation for the valley is 33 inches per year, with the mouth of the valley receiving around 28 inches and the higher elevations getting as much as 38 inches (965mm). The San Mateo County coast has numerous microclimates, a result of the cold Pacific Ocean and the high coastal mountains. These mountains can prevent the ocean forming fogs that occur in summer from extending inland, creating areas on the immediate coast that are cold and foggy, while a few miles inland, it can be warm and sunny. Montara and San Pedro Mountains do just this, helping block fogs from penetrating to the back end of the valley, leaving it warm and sunny while the beach is shrouded in fog (Collins et al 2001:5, Matuk 2001:12).

The watershed of San Pedro Valley consists of some 5,114 acres (2,082ha), or about 8.2 square miles. There are five main tributaries of San Pedro Creek, all of which are spring fed and run year round. The North, Middle, and South Forks converge at the back end of the valley. The Sanchez Fork drains a small valley below the saddle between San Pedro and Montara Mountain. The last significant tributary is the creek that runs through Shamrock Ranch, although it is not mapped by the USGS. There is also a creek on the north side of San Pedro Valley that used to discharge into a lake at the mouth of San Pedro Valley, but now empties into San Pedro Creek just below the Adobe Drive Bridge via a ditch. There are also a small number of intermittent creeks that flow during the winter months (SPCWC website 2000).

At least 5,000 years ago, people arrived and started altering the landscape. Today, the valley is filled with suburban tract housing. What did the valley's landscape look like at various times during its history? How did it become what it is today? Are there relicts of past landscapes still visible? How does one penetrate today's seemingly ordinary landscape to

uncover its history? These were some of the questions that I grappled with on my first visit to San Pedro Valley several years ago.

In order to learn the valley's story, I relied on methods put forth by Carl Sauer (1941). Sauer believed that in order to fully understand a landscape, one has to combine fieldwork with archival research. Therefore, many an afternoon was spent sifting through the Pacifica Library's history files and making countless trips to the San Mateo County History Museum. Then I wandered through the valley itself, camera in hand, using the archival information to see beyond the present landscape and into the past. Because many elements of the valley's historical landscape have not been fully recorded, I have, at times, inferred what the landscape looked like by examining events and landscape changes in other parts of the San Mateo coast and in the county as a whole. Combining a variety of historical sources with first-hand accounts from people who lived in the valley has allowed me to piece together vignettes of how the landscape appeared during different historical periods. I shall start with how the landscape appeared when the Ohlone called the valley home and Europeans first clambered down the slopes of San Pedro Mountain.

## **I. The Ohlone Landscape:**

The native-Americans who occupied San Pedro Valley were members of a group that early Spanish explorers named the "Costenos" or "Coast People" (Margolin 1978:1). According to Margolin, the name preferred by the surviving members of these people is 'Ohlone' and this term will be used here. The Ohlone occupied a large part of the southern San Francisco Bay Area and Monterey Bay Area on lands bounded by the Golden Gate and Carquinez Strait to the north, Mount Diablo and Mount Hamilton to the east, and Big Sur to the south. The Ohlone arrived some 4,500 years before the Spanish claimed parts of California for themselves (Margolin 1978:59). They were not one large tribe as such, but 40 individual tribelets or groups each with their own chief, connected by similar customs and a language that evolved from the same root.

As the Ohlone settled into the various valleys and coastal regions around the Bay Area, differences in language slowly evolved. Eight to twelve different languages were spoken with no more than a thousand or so speakers per language. The diversity in language may be the result of the Ohlone having been a highly settled people with few outside contacts. Although they were hunter-gatherers and traveled between meadows, coast, and hillsides for food, the land was abundant and groups were able to meet most of their dietary needs within small territories, which usually did not exceed 100 square miles. Groups were self-sufficient and stayed within their own territories except for the occasional trading foray (Margolin 1978).

The Ohlone of San Mateo County may have numbered 1,500 when the Spanish arrived in the late eighteenth century (Hynding 1982:5), but the Coastside population was only a small portion of this. Possibly 275-350 people lived along the coast between Montara Mountain and the Half Moon Bay area (Miller 1971:18). The Spanish encountered few Ohlone north of Montara Mountain, but they did report at least one village within San Pedro Valley (Stanger and Brown 1969:98).

Ohlone villages were located near good water supplies and consisted of a cluster of dome shaped huts built of frames from willow branches covered with tule mats. Each village had its own refuse pile or shell mound, which grew to considerable size over centuries of settlement (Margolin 1978:60). Ohlone groups moved about their small territories during the year, going where seasonal foodstuffs were most abundant. Frequent travels over the same footpaths led to incision of some paths to over a foot in depth (Margolin 1978:62). Being a semi-nomadic people, the Ohlone did not occupy their villages year round and had little need of permanent structures, as indicated by their choice of building material (Margolin 1978:52).

The Ohlone diet consisted of meat from deer, elk, and other terrestrial mammals; marine organisms from tidal pools; whale meat from beached whales; salmon and steelhead from the streams; insects, such as grasshoppers; and roots, berries, acorns, and grass seeds (Margolin 1978). For tribes who lived along the bay and farther east, acorns were a crucial part of the diet; along the coast, where the cool, foggy climate limited the growth of oak trees, grass seeds played a larger dietary role (Miller 1971:17).

The Ohlone reliance on grass seed had a profound impact on the coastal landscape. Every few years, fire was set to the meadows and the Spanish expeditions of Portolá of 1769 (Brown 2001) and of Rivera in 1774 reported frequent grass fires (Miller 1971:20). Fire was used to prevent the growth of coastal scrub and to maintain and rejuvenate the grasslands, increasing grass seed production. Fire also maintained the rangeland for deer and elk and stimulated germination of the digger or gray pine, a source of pine nuts (Margolin 1978:49). Frequent fire would have created a valley and hillside landscape of tall grasses with little of the coastal scrub and trees present today.

A variety of wildlife inhabited the area in and around San Pedro Valley. Elk, hunted to extinction on the coast by the late nineteenth century, were once the most abundant game animal in California. Elk prefer moist habitats in open country, occupying the margins of marsh-grassland communities and the lower elevations of contiguous grassland ranges. They were found throughout the California coast north of the Salinas Valley (Burcham 1957:109). Grizzly

bear, also now extinct in California, were found in abundance on the Coastside. Though aggressively killed by Spanish and American settlers, there was at least one grizzly still in the San Pedro Valley as late as 1859 and grizzlies persisted in the mountains of San Mateo County until 1880, when they were finally hunted to extinction (Stanger 1963:132, Hynding 1982:179). Mountain lion also called the valley area home and reports of lion sightings are still common (Pacifica Tribune 1961a, Culp 1999). Deer, coyote, wolves, bobcat, otter, bald eagles, ducks, geese, quail, and many types of birds were some of the other species that lived in the San Pedro Valley area (Margolin 1978:7).

The Ohlone left no written accounts or paintings of their landscape. Images of the Ohlone landscape can, in part however, be inferred from early Spanish accounts of the Coastside. Spanish explorers came to the San Francisco Bay Area in the later part of the eighteenth century trying to find a land route to Monterey Bay. Padres traveled with the exploring parties and kept journals of their travels and some of the explorers had an official diary recorder.

When the first Spanish explorers came to San Pedro Valley, they found mostly grass-covered hillsides with willow and alder trees comprising the major riparian vegetation along the creeks, and for the most part the only trees to be found (Miller 1971:20). Father Juan Crespi, who accompanied Gaspar de Portolá's 1769 expedition as the expedition's padre, noted few trees in and around the valley. He wrote in his diary, "There are no trees here, other than a few low willows on the stream beds - a very small matter. There are no trees to be seen upon any of the ranges of knolls that are in view from the height, other than a few trees upon the summit of a mountain range encircling this harbor." (Brown 2001:591)<sup>2</sup>. Crespi also observed that the grasses were not as lush here as in areas farther south, "I have noted a change in the grasses, which are not so lush as previously, beginning at the last point which we passed; everything, however, is very grass-brown." (Brown 2001:591). The diary written by Miguel Costanso, also on Portolá's 1769 expedition, described the valley as "plentiful in grass and all surrounded by very large high hills making a deep hollow open only toward the bay on the north west" (Dietz et al 1979:15)

Crespi made numerous diary entries about fire; burning would have helped explain the lack of trees on the hillsides. About the areas to the south of the valley, Crespi wrote, "...tableland and rolling knolls, burnt off, with very good soils" and "...level land of rolling tablelands, close to the shore, of very good soil, all the grass burnt off" (Brown 2001:585-587). As Portolá's expedition left their camp and headed east up the hills on the north side of the valley, Crespi wrote "...went up quite high knolls, all of them burnt off"(Brown 2001: 595).. Grasses would have been mostly bunched perennial species, dominated by needle grasses including wild ryes, junegrass, pine bluegrass, and deergrass (Burcham 1957:104).

At the mouth of the valley, just behind and extending the length of the beach, was a shallow lake or wetland. Crespi described the lake and the creeks that fed it as follows:

"Here at the little flat, which may measure some six hundred or more yards out to the sea, with its width a bit more that a hundred yards, run two streams having very pure delicious waters: one of them has its course by the northwestward, along where we came down (this is most likely the small creek that runs through present day Shamrock Ranch), while the other stream flows from the east; each one carries a good *zanja's* worth of water, and the two meet here at the little flat and run together to the shore, where before entering the sea they make a good-sized inlet of fresh water which must reach over a hundred yards inland." (Brown 2001: 591).

He further wrote that the willows made "a small wood" close to the lake (Brown 2001: 591). Costanso referred the lake as "a marsh of considerable extent [covered with cane-grass] and reaching near to the sea" (Stanger and Brown 1969:96). A few years later, Father Palou, who accompanied Rivera's 1774 expedition to the San Francisco Bay area, described the lake on the expedition's return south, "came to a large lake between high hills, which are in the plain ending in a small bay on the beach". He further wrote, "We made a detour around the lake and stopped about one in the afternoon in a canyon of the valley near an arroyo of running water, one of two in the valley from which the lake is formed. It is well covered with tule, and on its banks there are some willows and blackberry brambles." (Dietz et al 1979:17-18).

The valley floor was described by both Crespi and Costanso as "very lush" with creeks "of very fine delicious waters" and contained "very lush brambles, many rose patches, and all kinds of lush plants, very plentiful" (Stanger and Brown 1969:96-98). Father Palou was quite impressed with the valley, and wrote in his diary in December of 1774, "If the place had timber it would be suitable for a mission, on account of its proximity to the mouth of the port, for it does not lack land, water, or pasture for cattle." (Dietz et al 1979:18).

Portolá's expedition was well received by the Ohlone they encountered. Father Crespi wrote "A village of very fine, well-behaved heathens was hereabouts, and they came over at once to the camp, bringing a good many black pies made of their seeds. As a great many smokes are visible, there must be many villages about this harbor." (Brown 2001: 593). A small village was located on the main creek approximately one mile from the coast (Chavez, Dietz, and Jackson 1974) and possibly a second village or cluster of dwellings was located farther downstream near the mouth of the valley (Drake 1994). However, when Father Palou traveled through the valley he did not mention encountering any Ohlone or seeing any of their villages. It is possible that the Ohlone had made one of their annual migrations east over the hills to gather acorns at the time when he passed through (Dietz et al 1979:18). Father Palou's journal entries are the last written descriptions about the San Pedro Valley until Mission Dolores came several years later and created a new valley landscape.

## II. The Mission Period Landscape:

Russian fur traders establishing outposts on the northern California coast and English ships terrorizing the Pacific influenced the Spanish decision to settle their neglected California coastal territory during the mid-eighteenth century. Settlement involved the establishment of presidios (military bases) and missions along the coast from San Diego to the northern San Francisco Bay Area. The previously mentioned 1769 expedition led by Gaspar de Portolá was looking for an overland route to Monterey Bay and became the first known non-native group to visit San Pedro Valley. As well as providing written descriptions of the valley, the Spanish also started providing written names to the predominant landscape features. Thus, the large point of land on the south side of the valley that jutted out into the Pacific Ocean became *rincón* (or *la punta*) *de las Almejas*, which translates to Mussel Point, for Portolá's men found an abundance of mussels along the beach here. This point is now known as Pedro Point and there is point of land just north of Pacifica that is now called Mussel Point. The valley itself became known as *cañada de las Almajas* or just *las Almajas* (Brown, A. 1975:66).

Portolá's men set up camp along the valley's main creek on October 31, staying in the valley through November 3. The expedition rested while a hunting party, searching for food in the surrounding hillsides, sighted a large estuary (later to be named San Francisco Bay) from the heights of a ridge to the northeast of the valley (Sweeney Ridge). Finally realizing they had gone past Monterey Bay, Portolá's expedition turned around and went back to San Diego. Upon receiving news of the large estuary, the colonial Spanish government immediately sent other expeditions to learn the extent of San Francisco Bay. Captain Fernando Rivera's 1774 expedition with Father Palou was one of these.

The first Spanish settlement occurred in the Bay Area a couple of years later. The Presidio of San Francisco and Mission Dolores, founded by Father Palou, were established in 1776 at the north end of the San Francisco Peninsula. In order to sustain a thriving community, Spanish missions controlled immense land holdings for cattle grazing and depended on a large



native work force, a good supply of wood and water, and good soil and climate for growing crops. Although Mission Dolores controlled lands from what is now all of San Francisco County south to San Francisquito Creek, containing most of present day San Mateo County (figure 3), the site of Mission Dolores and the Presidio was in response to the need for a military garrison at the Golden Gate to defend the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Thus the mission itself was built in an area that would not prove suitable for growing food crops.

By the 1780's, Father Palou needed to find other areas to grow crops because of the mission site's poor soils and climate and its inability to provide food for the growing Ohlone population at the mission. He looked south to *cañada de las Almajas* to build a mission outpost. He had passed through the valley back in December of 1774 while accompanying Rivera's expedition and some of the Ohlone living at the mission were from there, their chief having been baptized in 1783. A second reason for establishing a mission outpost was that most of the native population that had not yet converted to Catholicism lived more than a day's journey from the mission. A mission outpost at *cañada de las Almajas* would make it easier to convert more Ohlone. Palou returned to Spain before he could build the outpost, and his successors, Father Cambon and Father Biribet, established the mission outpost in 1785 along the valley's main creek. They named the outpost after the Saints Peter and Paul, calling it the *Asistencia of San Pedro y San Pablo* (from which the name San Pedro Valley is derived) near the valley's larger village, which the Ohlone called *Pruristac*. (Dietz et al 1979:18-23, Brown, A. 1975:64, Hynding 1982:9-22, and Stanger 1963:1-48).

By 1786, the padres from the mission, using Ohlone labor, had built a granary, a chapel with a presbytery and altar, two living quarters, and a tool room. The buildings formed two sides of a square surrounding a plaza that contained a twenty-foot tall wooden cross. The early outpost structures were built using the wattle technique of wooden poles and sticks set upright in the ground, plastered with mud and white washed with lime from a quarry located in Calera Valley just to the north (the current Rockaway Beach neighborhood of Pacifica). The roof was

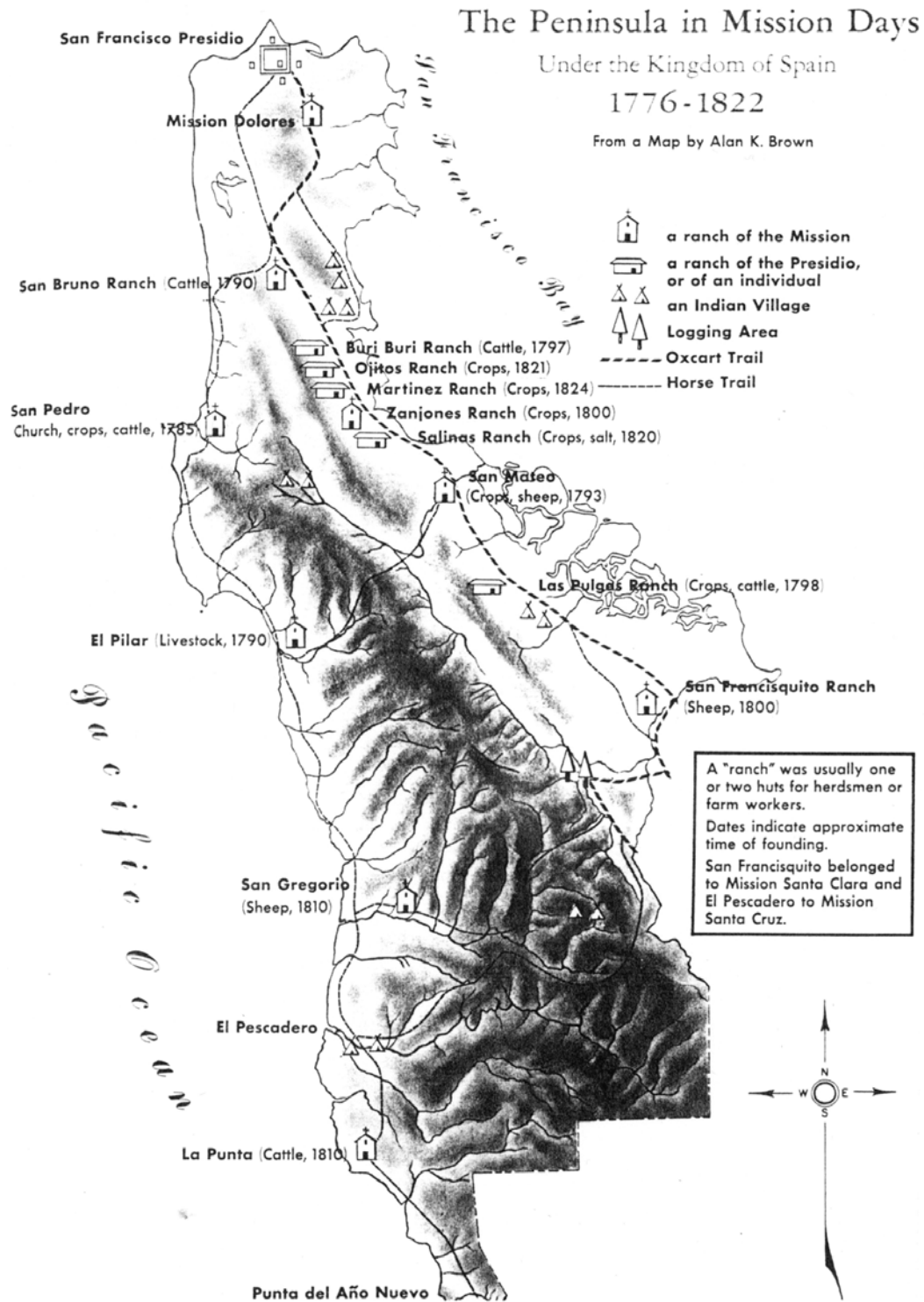


Figure 3. Farming and cattle ranching outposts operated by Mission Dolores in San Mateo County (Stanger 1963).

covered with thatch. Later structures were built with adobe brick, the standard Spanish building material (Dietz et al 1979:8,23).

Yearly records about the mission outpost activities were kept at Mission Dolores. Reports for 1786 indicate that extensive planting was done during the first year the outpost was established. The report noted that, "Land was open, and the virgin ground was ploughed after being cleared."(Dietz et al 1979:23). Four *fanegas* and five *almuds* of small corn and eight to nine *almuds* of beans were planted<sup>3</sup>. Land was cleared for 7 *fanegas* of wheat and 2 ditches were dug to irrigate the fields and another ditch to supply drainage (Dietz et al 1979:23).

Mission reports from 1787 note that three new rooms had been built, making up the third side of the quadrangle. Also, a live willow fence was planted, along with a ditch to supply water, along the north edge of the fields. This fence and ditch would extend 8280 feet from the North Fork of San Pedro Creek all the way to the small lake just inland from the beach. The fence was built to protect the fields from cattle owned by the mission. Cattle were allowed to graze in the hillsides above the valley, taking advantage of the abundant rangeland created by the Ohlone burning practices. The lake on the west end of the valley and the steeper mountains on the east and south sides of the valley helped protect the fields from intrusion. Near the lake, a small orchard of peach and quince trees was planted and a vineyard was started. Land was cleared and plowed for an additional 5.5 *fanegas* of corn and 23 *fanegas* of wheat, which was planted on the hillsides where the drainage was better. Several more drainage ditches were also dug in the valley. The end of the year report indicates that part of the corn harvest was lost to grizzly bears and the wheat suffered frost damage. Despite these setbacks, San Pedro Valley fully supplied Mission Dolores and yielded an excess of harvested crops. Father Cambon acknowledged the importance of the outpost when he wrote in 1787, "Experience has shown us that without this establishment, the individuals of the Mission could not be sustained." (Dietz et al 1979:24-30 and Chavez, Dietz, and Jackson 1974:8).

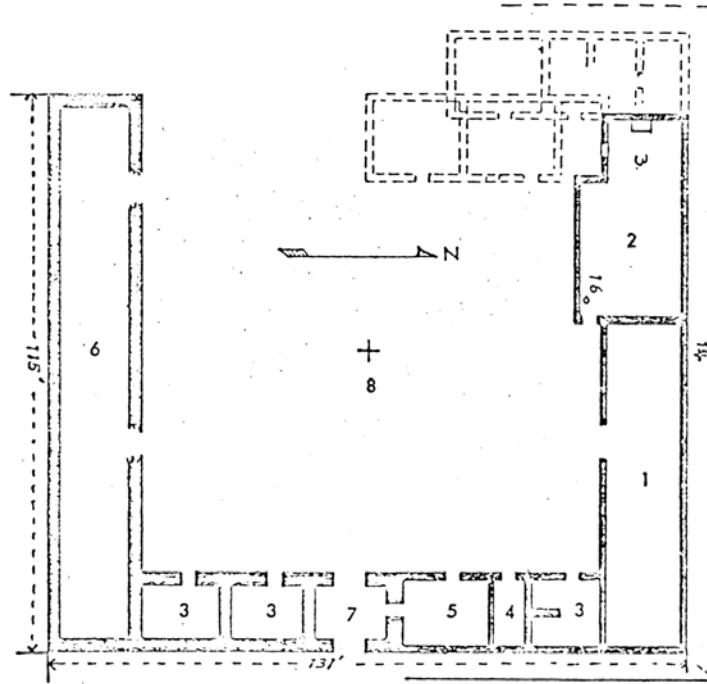
Two more buildings were added to the compound in 1788 and rosemary was planted in the valley. Crops that were grown included wheat, barely, peas, kidney beans, and corn with a

total of 51 *fanegas* and 34 almunds of seeds planted, which would be at least 64 acres using the *fanegas* conversion. 1789 saw the construction of a new, larger grannery, measuring 16 x 110, feet and two other buildings. These building were constructed with adobe brick and were built along the south side of the quadrangle. Except for a gap along the west side, the plaza was now enclosed (figure 4). 1790 was the last year any construction in the valley was reported, and this consisted of an additional 1375 feet of drainage ditches dug somewhere on the outpost land holdings. There may have been up to 300 people living in San Pedro Valley by this time, most of them having come from Ohlone villages south of the valley and persuaded to come to live at the mission outpost. The Ohlone would have worked as farm laborers and ranch hands for the Spanish (Dietz et all 1979:31-36 and Chavez, Dietz, and Jackson 1974:9).

Mission records for *Asistencia of San Pedro y San Pablo* all but ceased during the 1790's. Records of Ohlone deaths went from a dozen or so a year to 47 in 1791, while baptisms dropped to almost zero (Stanger 1963:20). In 1792, 50 deaths were reported (Dietz et all 1979:33). It is most likely that an epidemic, inadvertently brought by the Spanish, killed a large part of the Ohlone population of San Pedro Valley. Those who did not die from disease probably fled the area in fear of the epidemic. Other contributing factors to the demise of the outpost may have been hostilities with other Ohlone farther down the coast and the establishment of a new mission at Santa Cruz in 1791. The new mission may have taken over the missionary duties of converting the Ohlone that was formally done by the outpost in San Pedro Valley (Dietz et all 1979:33). After 1794, little is noted in the Mission Dolores records about San Pedro Valley, for the Mission had moved its farming operations east toward San Francisco Bay.

Although Mission Dolores no longer officially grew crops or kept records of events in San Pedro Valley, there was still some small scale farming being done. However, there was a major shift in land-use as the area now became part of the large grazing lands for mission cattle. Friar José Espi a Arguello noted in a June, 1797 report that barley was still being grown in the valley (Dietz et all 1979:10). A report on mission grazing lands compiled by the commander of the Presidio that same year lists San Pedro Valley as one of a half-dozen good grazing areas of

MISSION BUILDINGS THAT ONCE STOOD AT THE SITE OF THE PRESENT SANCHEZ ADOBE



KEY

- |                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. GRANARY           | 5. KITCHEN                       |
| 2. CHAPEL            | 6. GRANARY                       |
| 3. PRIEST'S QUARTERS | 7. ENTRANCE                      |
| 4. STORAGE           | 8. REDWOOD CROSS<br>27 FEET TALL |

Figure 4. Plan view of the mission outpost buildings at San Pedro Valley (from Dietz et al 1979).

Mission Dolores controlled lands (Pacifica History File 1999b). A letter written by a Father Martin de Landaeta in 1800 makes reference to 6,000 head of cattle at San Pedro, as well as to "much beans and corn" ripening (Dietz et al 1979:11). In 1801, Landaeta reported 8,000 head of cattle at San Pedro Valley, with the major herd extending from "the hills in front of San Pedro Valley to the border of the mountain range and the coast" (Dietz et al 1979:11). An 1828 document by Vallejo refers to cattle and planted fields at San Pedro Valley, with 26 Indians living at the outpost.

By 1835, it appears that the valley was unoccupied and two people were petitioning the recently formed Mexican government for land grants that included San Pedro Valley. Guadalupe Barcena, as part of his petition, drew up a *diseño* that may be the first map of San Pedro Valley (figure 5a). This crudely drawn map shows the location of the mission outpost and the lake at the mouth of the valley, as well as a large *sausal* or marsh area just east of the lake and surrounding part of it. Francisco de Haro, the other petitioner, noted that the "tract of San Pedro is vacant and unoccupied" (Dietz et al 1979:11). De Haro also drew up a *diseño* that included San Pedro Valley (figure 5b). The map makes reference to ruins at the site of the mission outpost and also a large *sausal* just east of the lake.

Also shown on de Haro's map is *cañada montosa* or 'wooded valley' heading from the South Fork of San Pedro Creek. The labeling of this valley may be where the name for Montara Mountain originated. Surveyors in 1854, misinterpreting the meaning of *cañada montosa*, labeled the mountain at the head of the valley "Montora Mountain" and an 1866 Coast Survey map further changed the spelling to "Montara Mountain" (Brown A. 1975:65). Although the outpost may have no longer been occupied, an 1835 inventory of mission properties in the Pacifica region listed 4,109 head of cattle, 87 horses, and 5 burros in the area (*La Peninsula* 1961a). Cattle were firmly established in the valley and were to play a dominant role in the next of San Pedro Valley's landscapes.

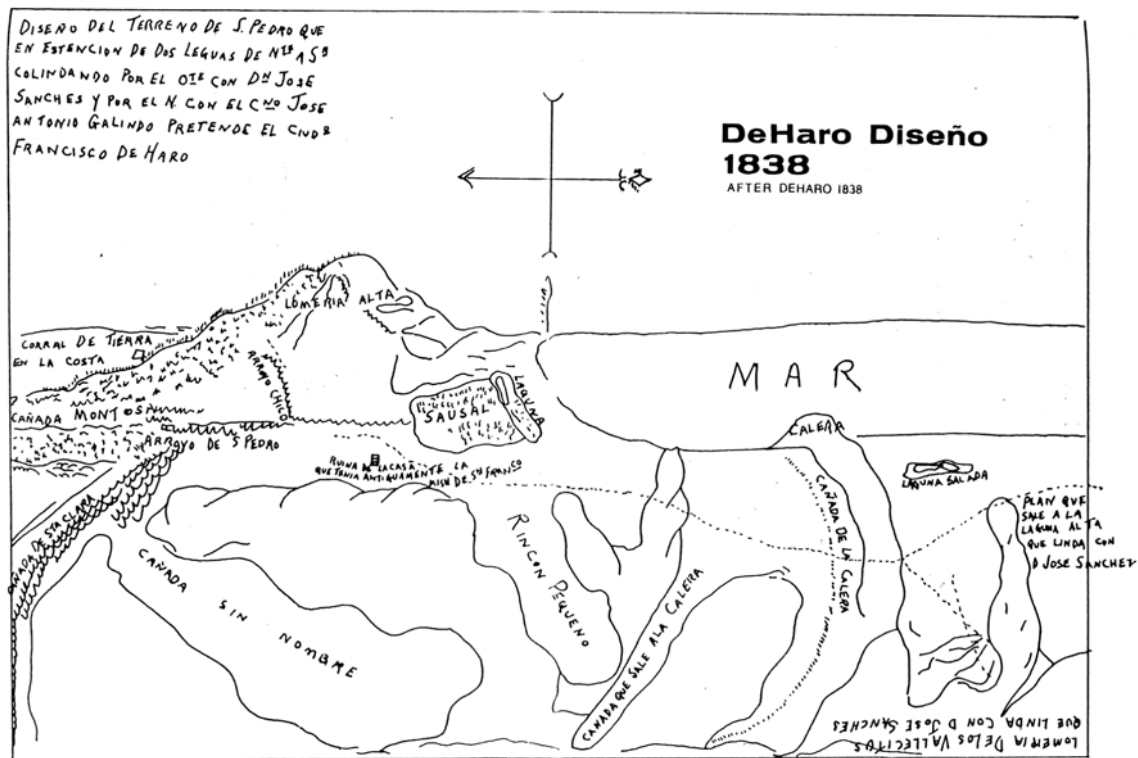
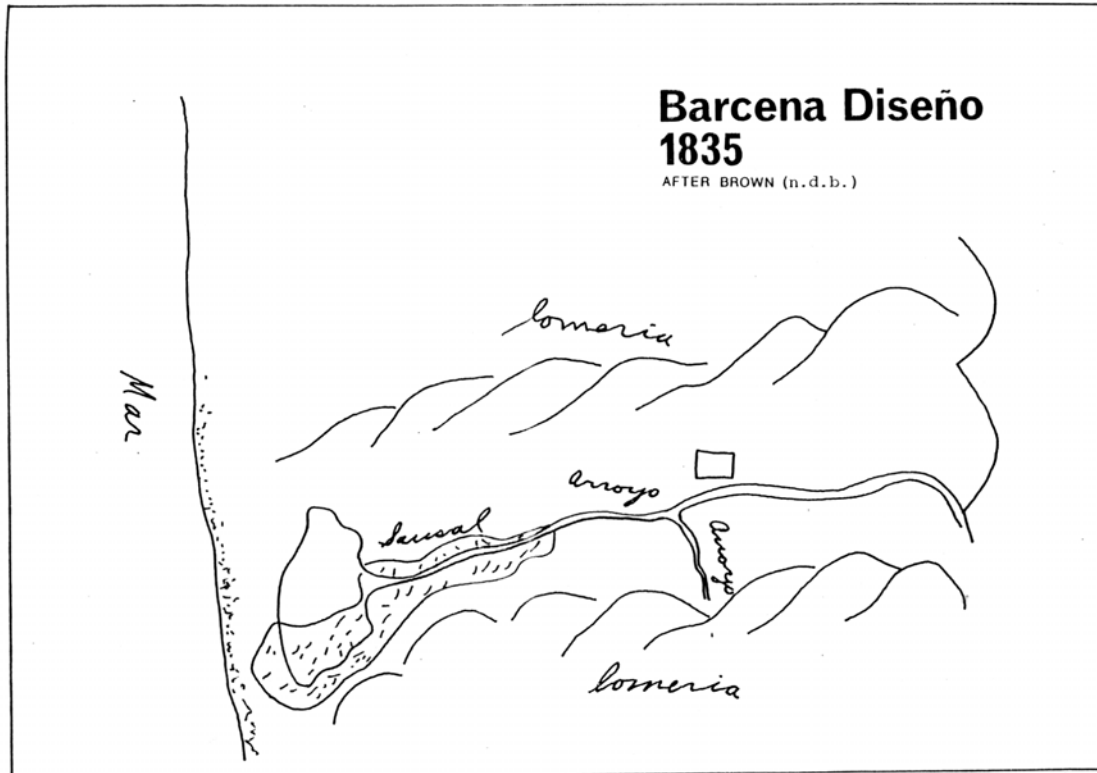


Figure 5a and b. Copies of the Barcena and DeHaro Diseños (Dietz et al 1979).

### III. The Rancho Landscape:

The mission system came to a close when Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821 and the territory of California, along with the missions, came under Mexican rule. The power and wealth of the former Spanish missions was resented by the new Mexican government, leading to the secularization of the missions. Large tracts of mission lands were granted to settlers for use as ranchos and the grazing of cattle (figure 6). Francisco Sanchez, who had been a captain in charge of the Presidio of San Francisco and later served as Alcalde (a post similar to mayor) of San Francisco (Drye 1985), was granted the 8,926 acre Rancho San Pedro in 1839, the same area that Barcena and de Haro had been petitioning for. The rancho occupied most of what is now the city of Pacifica. Sanchez built his home on the site of the old *Asistencia of San Pedro y San Pablo* ruins along San Pedro Creek, possibly using some of the adobe bricks and foundation from the abandoned mission outpost (Dietz et al 1979:38 and Stanger 1963:39).

Little detail is known of the day-to-day life on Rancho San Pedro. However a picture can be drawn from descriptions of life on other ranchos in San Mateo County. The major rancho industries were the production of cowhides, tallow, and wool. Hides were considered the most valuable part of the cow and along with tallow were second only to gold and silver in terms of economic importance (Burcham 1957:11). Hides were used to make shoes, saddles, bags, pack harnesses, and strapping, while tallow was used in soap, candles, cooking, and as a lubricant (Burcham 1957:49).

Fences were not built to demarcate rancho boundaries and cattle grazed freely on the open hillsides, frequently falling prey to roaming grizzly bears. Once or twice a year, *rodeos* were held by each rancho. Cattle were rounded up, branded, and animals from neighboring ranchos returned. The *matanza*, held in spring-time, saw the slaughtering of cattle out in the fields with skinners going from carcass to carcass and removing the fat and hides. Meat was not a major product and, except for what was to be consumed on the rancho or sold to San Francisco, was left in the field to rot (Miller 1971:53). After skinning, hides were staked over the ground





to dry in the sun. Tallow was made by melting cattle fat in hides stretched over a fire. As the fat cooled and congealed, the hide was bundled up, creating a tallow filled pouch. Grizzly bears, lured by the scent of the cooling tallow, eagerly stole what was left unguarded (Miller 1971:132). Mexican control of California brought an end to the Spanish trade restrictions with the United States and bundles of hides and tallow were loaded on U.S. ships at beaches along the coast in exchange for American goods. Because these items were bartered and not sold, the rancheros were not monetarily wealthy; rather their wealth resided in their land and large property holdings.

Mexican rancheros, like the Spanish before them, took advantage of the grassland landscape they found and parts of the coast appeared as one large pasture according to travelers during the 1820's. A surgeon aboard a British ship in 1826 likened the coast between San Francisco and Monterey to an English nobleman's park where herds of cattle, horse, and sheep grazed on rich pasture. An 1827 passenger traveling between Santa Cruz and San Francisco described the coast as one continuous pasture, again commenting on the immense size of grazing herds (Burcham 1957:48).

Several decades of roaming cattle and sheep led to over-grazing of the hillsides and the introduction of non-native plant species, further altering the landscape created by the Ohlone. Wild oat, wild mustard, and wild radish were the most abundant of these introduced species and their presence was most noticeable in the spring, when the fields and hillsides turned yellow with flowering wild mustard and pale-purple with flowering wild radish (Miller 1971:56). It is probable that the cattle deteriorated stream banks and damaged riparian vegetation along the coastal creeks as well. Both siltation of streambed gravels from bank deterioration and loss of shade from damaged riparian vegetation would have had a negative impact on the steelhead that used San Pedro Creek and its tributaries to spawn.

Crops were grown mostly for rancho use and not as trade commodities. Coast ranchos grew grains and vegetables, including wheat, corn, beans, pumpkins, flax, peas, onions, peppers, and possibly fruit trees such as apple, peach, plum, and cherry<sup>4</sup>. As with the cattle in the

hillsides, large numbers of alien plants accompanied the cultivation of these crops (Miller 1971:54-55).

The Rancho Landscape of the San Pedro Valley probably looked like other coastside ranchos described by Miller (1971:58). On the site of a former Ohlone village and mission outpost, a large two-story adobe home and accompanying outbuildings now stood. The house was constructed with an overhanging roof to provide shade in summer and to protect the easily eroded adobe walls from rain in winter (figure 7). Fields of corn, beans, and other crops might have been planted in the bottom lands along the creek, and wheat on the hillsides, protected by fences made from live willow posts. Sanchez allowed some of his friends to settle and farm in some of the smaller valleys of his rancho (Brown 1961). A small check dam may have been built upstream from the fields, along with a system of ditches, to provide irrigation and drainage for the fields. When Sanchez built his house, the creek meandered "a few feet" below ground level (Drake 1952:28-29). While Sanchez's thousand head of cattle and hundreds of horses and sheep freely grazed the treeless hillsides above San Pedro Creek (Brown 1961), the grasslands were subtly changing in appearance as European annual grasses replaced native bunch grasses.

Although Americans had been slowly drifting into California since Mexico gained political control of the area, they did not have a major impact on San Pedro Valley until after the United States' war with Mexico, the incorporation of California into the union in 1848, and the Gold Rush of 1849. Land was a prime commodity and although the United States promised to guarantee Mexican land claims, it was up to the Mexican property owners to legally prove ownership. Rancho boundary lines had never been accurately surveyed and recorded. Rather, features such as rock outcroppings or large trees were used as boundary markers. Squatters staked out claims on rancho lands. Defending property rights required the Mexican rancheros to hire lawyers, resulting in long court battles in a legal system hostile to them. Because the rancheros were land rich but cash poor, American bankers and lawyers often took title of rancho lands in exchange for "helping" the Mexicans prove their property ownership. Despite these



Figure 7. Sanchez's Old Adobe house as seen today at the Sanchez Adobe County Historic Site (photo by author).

barriers, Francisco Sanchez managed to keep Rancho San Pedro intact until his death in 1862 (Stanger 1963:48).

With United States control of California came surveyors and for the first time reasonably accurate maps of San Pedro Valley were produced. The earliest of these maps is the *Map of Part of the Coast of California from Point San Pedro Northward* done by the U.S. Coast Survey in 1853. San Mateo County historian Alan K. Brown used this 1853 Coast Survey map as the basis for a map recreation he produced while researching the history of San Pedro Valley (figure 8a)<sup>5</sup>. The major map features are the unnamed lake at the mouth of the valley; a large area of dashed lines surrounding the lake and heading up San Pedro Creek almost to the site of the Sanchez's adobe; and a slightly smaller area of curved line work that extends east of the lake. The dashed lines are possibly the extent of the marsh (or sausal) that the Spanish explorers had noted in their diaries. The curved lines are labeled a willow swamp by Brown. However, the early Spanish explorer's diaries and reports from Mission Dolores do not mention a willow swamp covering such a large extent, but only make reference to a small willow wood close to the lake. It is possible that the willows (and most likely alders) grew after the outpost was abandoned (Brown 1962). Curtailment of frequent grass fires set by the Ohlone and the lack of extensive farming in the valley after Mission Dolores moved its farming operations east might have allowed the willows to establish themselves. Collins et al (2001:42) also reports that increased sediment deposition into Lake Mathilde and the sausal as the result of agricultural practices may have created the formation of a small delta, aiding in the spread of the willow swamp. Brown's map also shows the road that led out of the valley to San Francisco as well as a trail that heads up and over San Pedro Mountain.

Alan Brown also made a detail from his recreated Coast Survey map on which he shows the locations of some of Sanchez's rancho features in relationship to current street positions (figure 8b). There are two irrigation or drainage ditches shown exiting/entering San Pedro Creek east of the adobe. Also of note is Brown's rough sketch of the present day location of San Pedro Creek, showing that the creek has been straightened and forced into a more southerly course

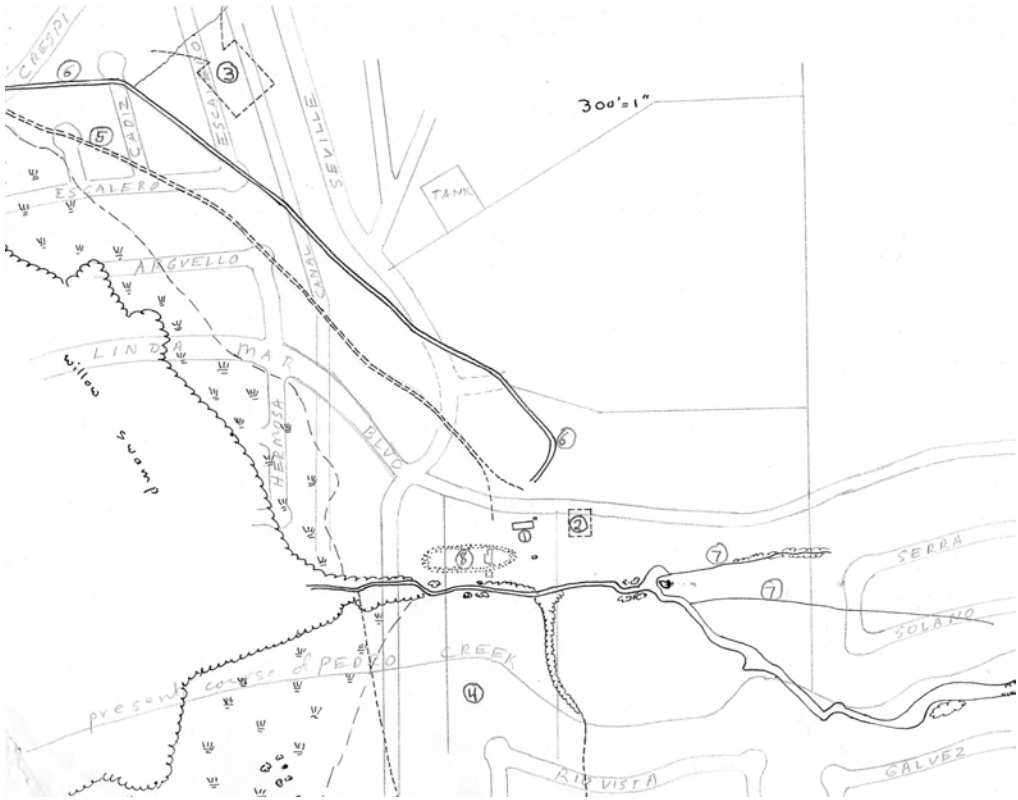


Figure 8a and b. Portion of Brown's recreated 1853 US Coast Survey Map and a detail of the Sanchez Adobe Site he produced from that map with present day streets added (Brown 1962).

since the 1850's. He also shows the location of the major Ohlone shell mound found at the site, remains of the village *Pruristac*.

#### **IV. The Truck Farming Landscape:**

Francisco Sanchez's death ushered in the next of San Pedro Valley's landscapes. Thousands of immigrants from the east coast of the United States and farther abroad had arrived in the Bay Area as a result of the Gold Rush. Gold mining was lucrative for only a small minority of miners. Many newcomers returned to the Bay Area looking for land and a way to survive. With a huge demand for food and a growing market in San Francisco, truck farming and dairy ranching became the predominant coastside occupation<sup>6</sup>. The raising of cattle for hides and meat, which required large tracts of land to be profitable, could not compete financially and died out on the coast (Miller 1971:67-68).

When Sanchez died in 1862, the rancho went to his wife, Theodora Higuera de Sanchez. She retained possession of the rancho but leased it to Francis Sievers who in turn, subleased small tracts of land to newly arriving immigrant farmers. In 1871, in order to settle Sanchez's debts, Theodora Higuera de Sanchez sold the rancho to James Regan, who had gone into a partnership with some San Francisco bankers and financiers, including Richard and Robert Tobin, founders of Hibernia Bank. A quick review of old deed maps<sup>7</sup> shows that land in San Pedro Valley switched hands a number of times, but eventually the Tobins acquired most of the western part of the valley. The new San Pedro Valley land-owners subdivided their holdings into long narrow plots that ran perpendicular to the creek and continued leasing the land to the dairy ranchers and farmers (Brown 1961 and Savage 1983). Sanchez's adobe house and its surrounding land was bought by General Kirkpatrick in 1878. Kirkpatrick died in 1908 and his wife, Baroness Marguerite Kirkpatrick, who did not stay living at the adobe, kept the property until eventually selling the land and adobe house in 1946. The Kirkpatricks made some modifications to the old adobe house, including adding a second story balcony, wood framed additions on the east and west ends of the house, and an interior stairway. They laid out a garden along the traces of the old mission outpost quadrangle (Brown 1961, Dietz et al 1979:41-48, *La Peninsula* 1961, Savage 1983, and Stanger 1963:48).



Sometime during the 1880's, the adobe became a hotel called Hotel San Pedro. The building was a mix of older Mexican and newer Victorian architectural styles. Advertisements for the hotel were placed in San Francisco newspapers and highlighted the nearby attractions to be had in the valley: sunbathing, hunting and fishing, horse stable rentals, and an unsurpassed climate. An old photo of the hotel shows a second floor balcony wrapping around the building. There are what appear to be tall pines or possibly cypress around the building, giving the appearance that the hotel is in a forested setting. Over the entrance there is a large sign with the words "Hotel San Pedro"; the name is also painted on the roof (Svaneviki and Burgett 2001:45).

Agricultural activities in San Pedro Valley during the later part of the nineteenth century are undocumented, but probably similar to events throughout San Mateo County. During the 1850's, the Irish were the largest immigrant group settling in the county, although Chinese, Italians, and Portuguese came as well (Hynding 1982:163). When Irish farmers came to San Pedro Valley, they grew potatoes, cabbage, and grains (Savage 1983). Potatoes were grown in abundance in the Half Moon Bay area and may have been the largest vegetable crop in San Pedro Valley as well. Of the grains, oats and barley proved to grow better than wheat in the moist, coastal climate and oats became the most widely planted grain. Grains were planted after the first heavy rains in the late fall and harvested in June. The residual straw from harvesting was left in the fields to dry over the summer and would be burned in the early fall, sending thick clouds of smoke over the farms, and the ash tilled back into the ground (Miller 1971:68-73). Over time, the moist climate took its toll and doomed potatoes and wheat as viable cash crops (Savage 1983).

Typically, Coastside valleys had a mixture of truck and dairy farming. Dairy farming was also important in San Mateo County, as well as other counties in the Bay Area, because of the high demand for milk, butter, and cheese in San Francisco. The Coastside's climate allowed grasses to stay greener for more of the year, making the region prime dairy land. Dairy farms within a few hours of the city usually produced milk, while those a full day's travel away produced butter, and those even farther away produced cheese. Given the poor road to San

Francisco and lack of a Coastside railroad, the early dairy farms in San Pedro Valley most likely produced butter and/or cheese for the San Francisco market (Miller 1971:69-75).

During the 1880's and 1890's, Italian and Portuguese immigrants became the largest groups settling in San Mateo County. Italians worked as cheap field laborers, replacing Chinese farm workers as new laws restricted their employment. Some of these immigrant laborers were able to save enough to buy or lease property and start their own farms and by 1910, foreign-born immigrants rented or owned 60% of the county's farms (Hynding 1982:164,189).

Italian truck farmers introduced new crops on the coast to replace the failing potato, which suffered a blight in 1870 and ceased to be cultivated in San Mateo County during the 1920's (Brown J. 1961, Gehre 1968:68). One of these crops was the artichoke. There seems to be some disagreement about exactly where the first artichokes were planted, however. Stephen Gehre reported that in 1890, the first commercial artichokes in the county were planted just south of San Pedro Valley (Gehre 1968:39). However, June Morrall, in reprinting portions of an unpublished *National Geographic* article from 1927, stated that around the turn of the century:

"Experiments (with artichokes) first took place in Pedro Valley, a score of miles from San Francisco, where equitable temperature, a certain humidity produced by the visitation of sea fogs, and a rich, moist soil all contributed to make the venture a success. Thus encouraged, the growing of artichokes began in earnest in Pedro Valley and soon extended a few miles south in Half Moon Bay." (Morrall 1989).

Paul Azevedo, a *Pacifica Tribune* columnist and member of the Pacifica Historical Society, wrote:

"In one of the little valleys poking its way back into the coastal hills, it may have been Guiseppe Silicani who experimented with a cutting of a plant brought from Italy. The gray-green *Carciofo* thrived in the rich San Pedro Valley and the plant (in English translation) would give its name to the whole region of 'Artichoke Gulch'" (Azevedo 1982).

Regardless of where they were first planted, artichokes proved to be an ideal Coastside crop, as they prefer a cool, moist climate, especially in summer, and do well in a variety of soils. By

1912, there were 500 acres planted in San Pedro Valley and Salada and Brighton Beach valleys just to the north (Coastside Comet 1912). Even in the late 1940's and early 1950's, the Truck Farming Landscape saw the valley floor covered with long rows of artichokes and Brussels sprouts, creating a patch-work effect on the land, dotted with the occasional cluster of ranch buildings (figure 9).

Artichoke plants are grown in rows spaced 8 feet apart with 6 feet between plants in each row, allowing for approximately 900 plants in an acre field. Plants take 3 years to reach maturity and remain productive for several years, after which they are pulled and new ones re-planted from cuttings from mature plants. During the early part of the twentieth century, the old plants were stacked, dried, and later burned. Artichoke plants need fertile soil and manure, shipped into San Pedro Valley from San Francisco, and ashes from the burned plants were tilled back into the soil. They also require frequent irrigation during the summer; new plants require watering at least once per week, while older plants can get by with watering 4-5 times during the summer months (Gehre 1968:46 Miller 1971:122 and Parker, P. 1915). Flood irrigation was first used and metal pipes were laid in the fields to transport water from creeks and wells. Sprinklers were introduced in the late 1940's, possibly for the first time in San Pedro Valley, and although viewed with skepticism by some, proved to increase crop yields (Azevedo interview 1999 and Hoedt interview 1999). Some farmers would also grow tomatoes, peas, corn, and beans in the rows between the artichoke plants (Parker, P. 1915). The artichoke buds are harvested before the petals start to open and harvest time extends over a 4-5 month period, at which time field laborers would walk the long rows with a sack slung over one shoulder. At each plant, he or she would stop to stoop over and pluck the ripe artichoke from the plant and fling it into the sack (Debenedetti 1997).

The San Mateo County artichoke industry grew rapidly. By 1911 as many as 2,000 acres in the county were planted in artichokes and by 1912 this number had grown to 3,000 acres (Miller 1971:121). With the arrival of Italian immigrants, San Pedro Valley became the center



Figure 9. San Pedro Valley looking east, 1950 (courtesy of Mike Fritz).

of the artichoke industry in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century (Azevedo interview 1999). In order to compete with other vegetables on the market, the Italian farmers altered the artichoke's growing habits by cutting off newly developing buds in late spring and forcing the plants to instead set buds in early fall to late winter. Thus, there would be an abundance of artichokes on the market in the winter months when there was a scarcity of other green vegetables. In order to educate retailers and the general public about artichokes, brochures that described 33 ways to prepare artichokes were sent along with shipments of the vegetable. Artichokes were sent to east coast markets, especially in New York City, by refrigerated train car. In order to lower shipping costs, San Mateo County growers formed the Half Moon Bay Coastside Artichoke Growers Association in 1917 and established a central packaging and shipping facility at Moss Beach, several miles south of San Pedro Valley (*Coastside Comet* 1920 and Parker 1915).

Brussels sprouts were the other major crop grown on the Coastside, with the first commercial plantings in San Mateo County being done in San Pedro Valley (Miller 1971:123). Brussels sprouts require similar conditions to artichokes, including frequent irrigation, but unlike artichokes, are re-planted every year (Debenedetti 1997). Fields are rotated every two years in order to allow the soils to recover, and barley, peas, and spinach are used as rotation crops. Thus, farms that grew Brussels sprouts would have some fields planted in sprouts while other fields grew barley, peas, and spinach (Gehre 1968:62). These crops provided some diversity to the appearance of the landscape by breaking up the monotony of row upon row of artichoke plants.

During the Truck Farming era, the grass covered hillsides of San Pedro Valley changed in some highly visible ways. American settlers imported trees and the valley bottom and hillsides were soon dotted with small groves of blue-gum eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, and Monterey pine (VanderWerf 1994:58). Eucalyptus trees were first brought to the Bay Area in 1853. It was thought the wood could be used for furniture building and firewood and that the dense groves of the fragrant trees would help repel disease. By 1870, eucalyptus could be found

throughout the Bay Area. Monterey pine and cypress were brought up from Monterey and were planted in the San Pedro Valley during the mid-to-late 1800's. All of these trees were used as wind blocks, to delineate property lines, and to provide shade at ranch home sites (figure 10). It is also probable that some of the coastal scrub and chaparral vegetation that we see today started growing in the hillsides, once there were no more frequent grass fires set by the Ohlone and no more large numbers of grazing cattle.

The lake at the mouth of the valley and San Pedro Creek also underwent drastic changes during this period. At some point, the lake was named Lake Mathilde. The name does not appear on the 1853 Coast Survey map or on an 1866 Coast Survey Map<sup>8</sup>, but both maps show a marsh and willow swamp covering approximately the same extent (US Coast Survey 1853 and 1866). An undated map titled *Map of the Rancho de San Pedro Finally Confirmed to Francisco Sanchez*, produced sometime in the late 1860's (figure 11)<sup>9</sup>, shows a reduced willow swamp and San Pedro Creek splitting into two branches just east of the swamp. One branch continues on the south side of the valley and disappears into the swamp, while the other branch is clearly shown as draining into the north part of Lake Mathilde. The map also gives the appearance that the swamp is being filled and cleared of willows, as indicated by the tracts labeled 17, 18, and 19.

Lake Mathilde is shown on 1896 and 1899 USGS maps (figure 12a and b) as two smaller lakes with the stream from the hills on the north side of the valley emptying into the beach between them. San Pedro Creek has been straightened and drains directly into the ocean south of the shrinking lake. The earlier Coast Survey maps of 1853 and 1866 do not show the creek draining directly into the ocean, but rather into the east edge of the willow swamp where it assumedly empties into Lake Mathilde. Also missing from the USGS maps is any indication of the large marsh and willow swamp. However, because the USGS maps do not indicate any vegetation patterns, one cannot interpret this to mean that these features were totally gone from the valley, but with the straightening of the creek and diminished size of Lake Mathilde, it can be assumed that these lands were being used for agricultural purposes by this time. Maps are subjective, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions.



Figure 10. Artichoke field and trees, San Pedro Valley u.d. (San Mateo County History Museum).



Figure 11. Portion of *Map of the Rancho de San Pedro finally confirmed to Francisco Sanchez*, u.d. (courtesy of the San Mateo County History Museum).



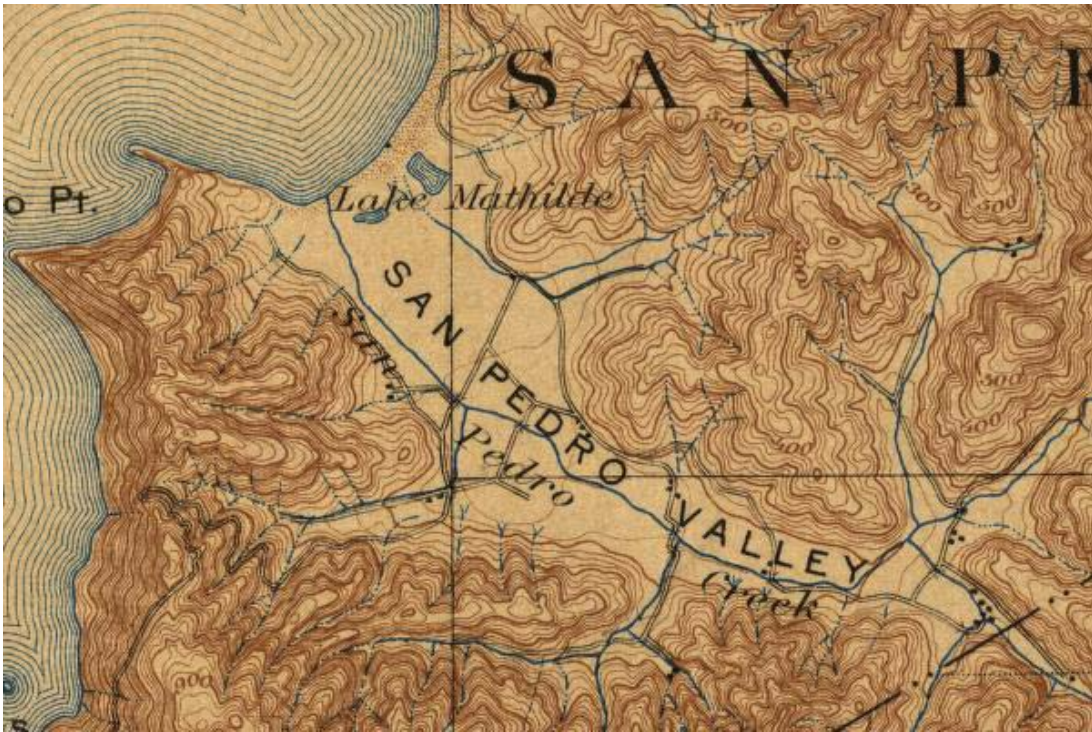
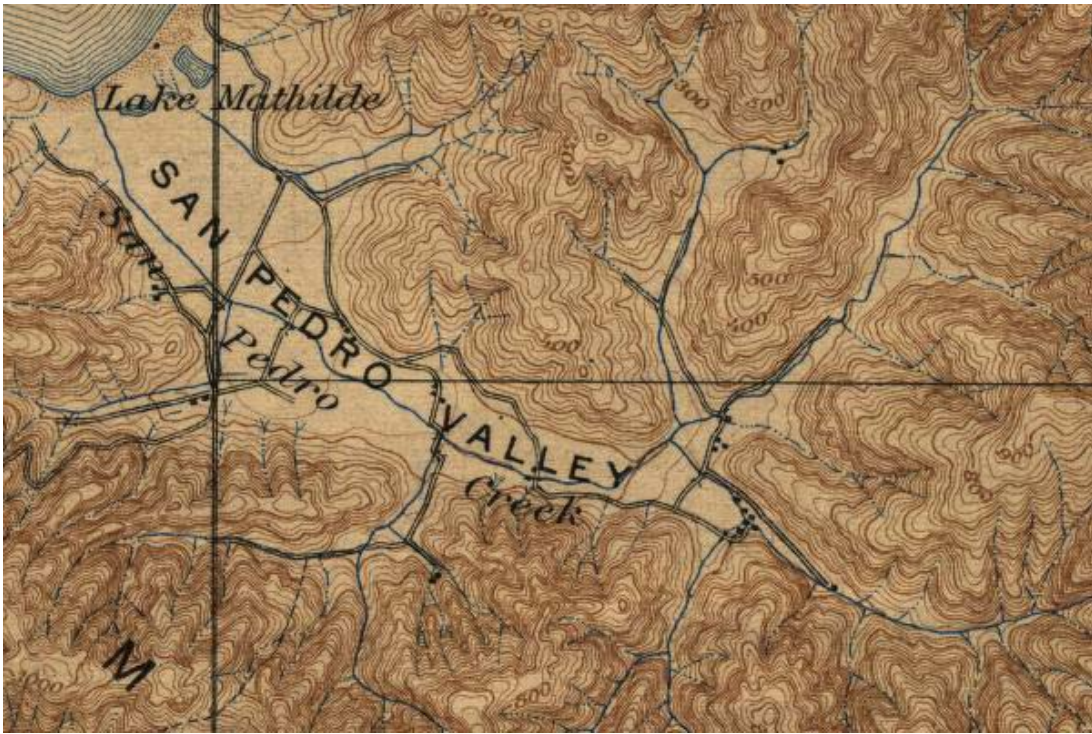


Figure 12a and b. Portions of the 1896 and 1899 USGS 15 minute *San Mateo County* maps showing San Pedro Valley (USGS 1896 and 1899).

By 1915 the lake no longer appears on maps, although the stream from the hills on the north side of the valley that empties into the beach is still shown (figure 13). In 1939, this stream is mapped as emptying directly into the ocean, but by 1949 it is no longer shown (figure 14a and b). During the Truck Farming era, the lake and stream were drained and filled to create more fields. Due to the pumping of ground water and the diversion of creek water for irrigation and for personal use, there may have been decreased flows from San Pedro Creek emptying into Lake Mathilde, especially during the summer and fall months. These decreased flows could have helped facilitate the drying out of the lake. The paths of the various creeks were still delineated by a corridor of riparian vegetation during the Truck Farming era and it appears that the western end of San Pedro Creek's channel was shifted south over the years. Brown's recreation of the 1853 Coast Survey map shows the creek's channel by the Sanchez Adobe closer to the hills on the north side of the valley. The USGS maps of 1886 and later show the channel in this area closer to the hills on the south side of the valley. Brown also notes this shift on his detail map. From just west of the adobe, where the creek enters the willow swamp on Brown's map, the channel now takes a straight course without any meandering bends as it heads to the ocean. This can be clearly seen on the USGS maps from 1886 on and is quite noticeable on a 1946 aerial photo (figure 15). Jeffrey Mount in his book, *California Rivers and Streams*, states; "The scarcity of perfectly 'straight' channels is widely believed to indicate that meandering is the more preferred state of single channel rivers" (Mount 1995:60). It was a common farming practice to place creeks in ditches in order to maximize land use and approximately .8 miles of the lower reach of San Pedro Creek was straightened, sometime between the 1870's and early 1900's. Straightening of the creek channel and providing a direct entrance for the creek into the ocean would also have facilitated in the drying out of Lake Mathilde (Collins et al 2001:8 and Scully 2000).

Another new addition to the valley in the Truck Farming era is the appearance of roads. The 1853 and 1866 Coast Survey maps only show one road in the valley, the old Mission Trail that led from Sanchez's adobe north up the coast to San Francisco. In 1848, a second road was

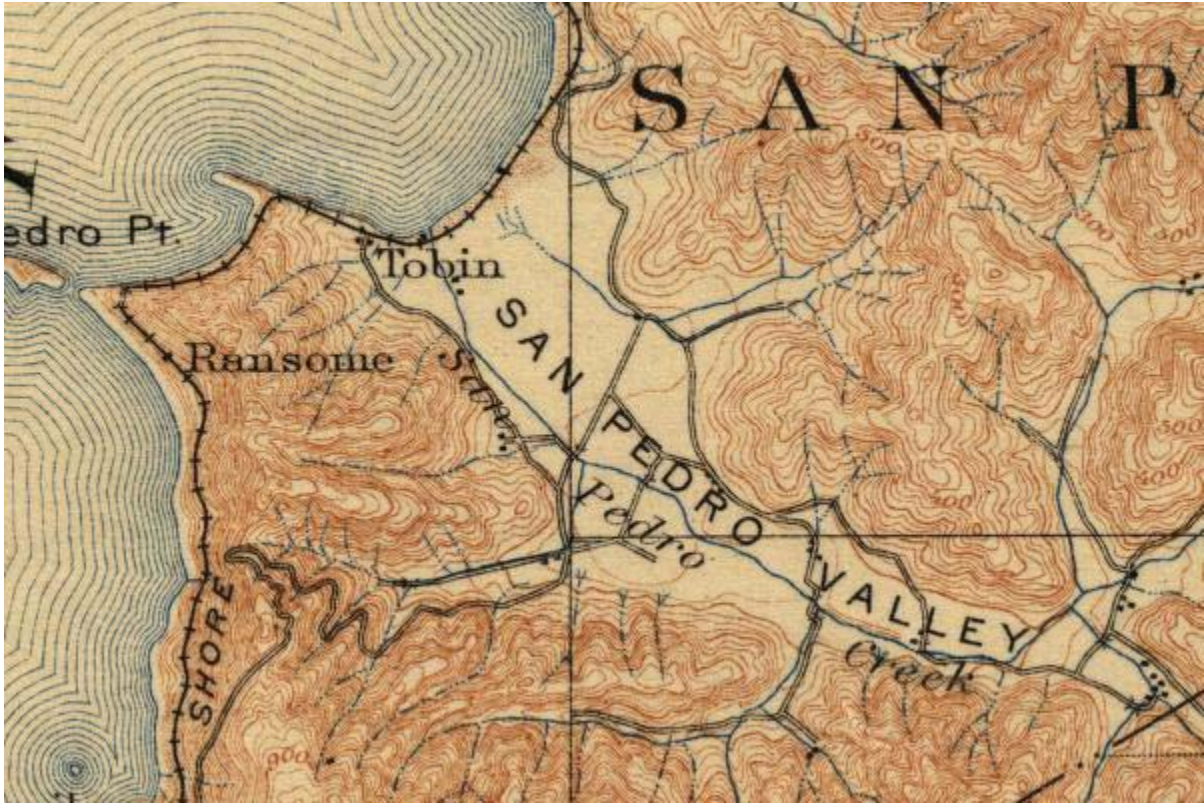


Figure 13. Portion of the 1915 USGS 15 minute *San Mateo County* map showing San Pedro Valley (USGS 1915).

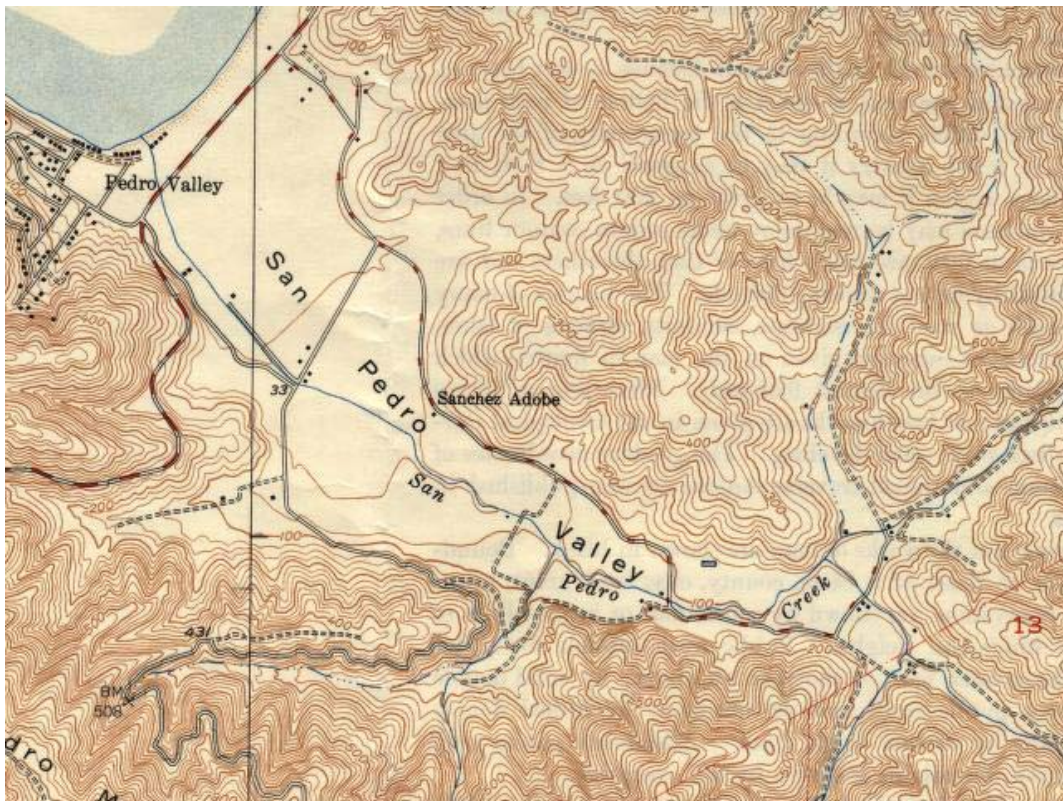
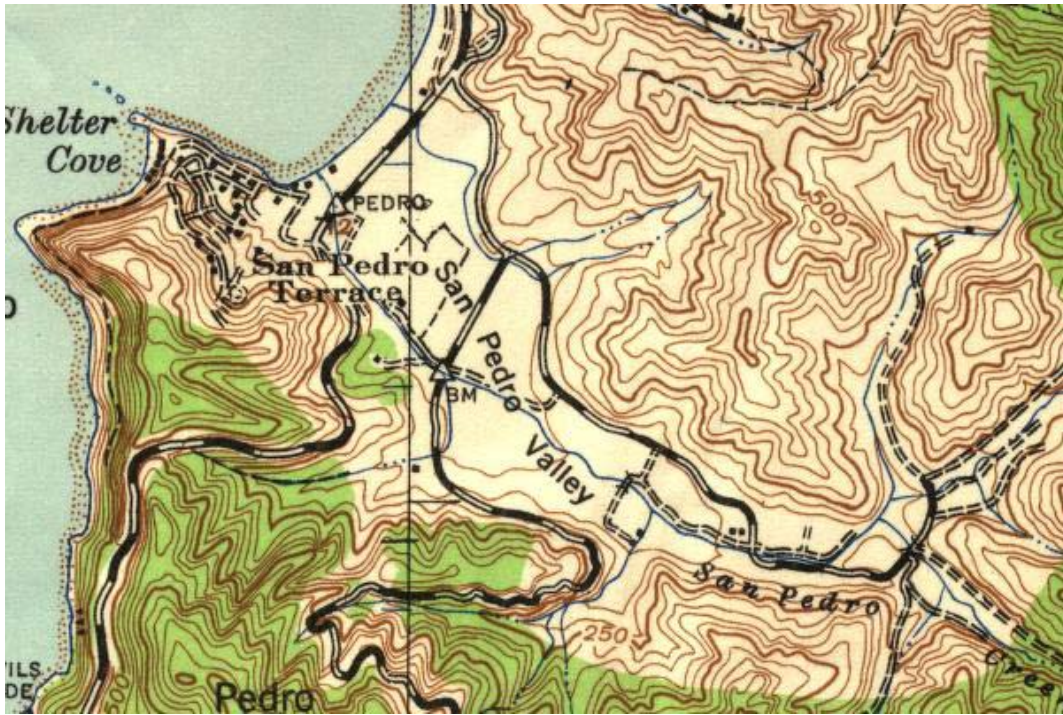


Figure 14a and b. Portions of the 1939 and 1949 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* maps showing San Pedro Valley (USGS 1939 and 1949).



Figure 15. 1946 aerial photo showing San Pedro Valley. San Pedro Creek is visible in the lower left corner (USGS 1946).

built that ran south from Sanchez's Adobe up through the saddle between San Pedro and Montara Mountains to another rancho on Martini Creek. Americans considered this road unusable and adopted to build docks at Half Moon Bay and ship goods to San Francisco rather than travel the rugged overland route. During the 1870's, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted in favor of building the Half Moon Bay/ Colma Road. Coming from Half Moon Bay, this new road would follow the ocean bluffs south of San Pedro Valley and then, through a series of switchbacks, make its way over the top of Devils Slide and San Pedro Mountain and down through a small valley into what was to become part of Shamrock Ranch (figure 16). The new dirt road officially opened in 1879, but because of its steep grades, some as much 24%, poor construction, and bad maintenance, locals were unhappy with it (VanderWerf 1994:121-123). The 1896 USGS map also shows that a system of roads had been built within San Pedro Valley and roads now led up into all of the smaller valleys. (A further discussion of roads will be undertaken in the Early Suburban Landscape section).

Although sometimes viewed nostalgically, life on the valley's artichoke ranches was hard. Julia Gervais' family moved to San Pedro Valley, known also as 'Babilonia' by locals, from San Francisco because of the 1906 earthquake and spent her childhood in there and in Salada Beach (just to the north) during the 1910's and 1920's (Gervais 1984). Her family's ranch was located in the valley of the Sanchez Fork, part of the area that was to be Tobin Park. Julia remembers the valley as an isolated place where coyotes freely roamed, often coming up to the Gervais' back door. The only work in the valley was on the artichoke ranches. Artichokes were harvested by hand and brought to packing sheds where they were graded by size and boxed for shipment. Every few years, the old plants were picked, piled, and burned, turning the whole farm into a "mass of smoke" (Gervais 1984:118). Ranches had their own reservoirs and dams on the creek. Julia remembers ranch life as hard work and her mother, who in her later years was always stooped over, took in outside laundry to generate extra income. Despite the hardship, Julia writes fondly of this period, mentioning the bocci ball court her parents built to entertain visitors

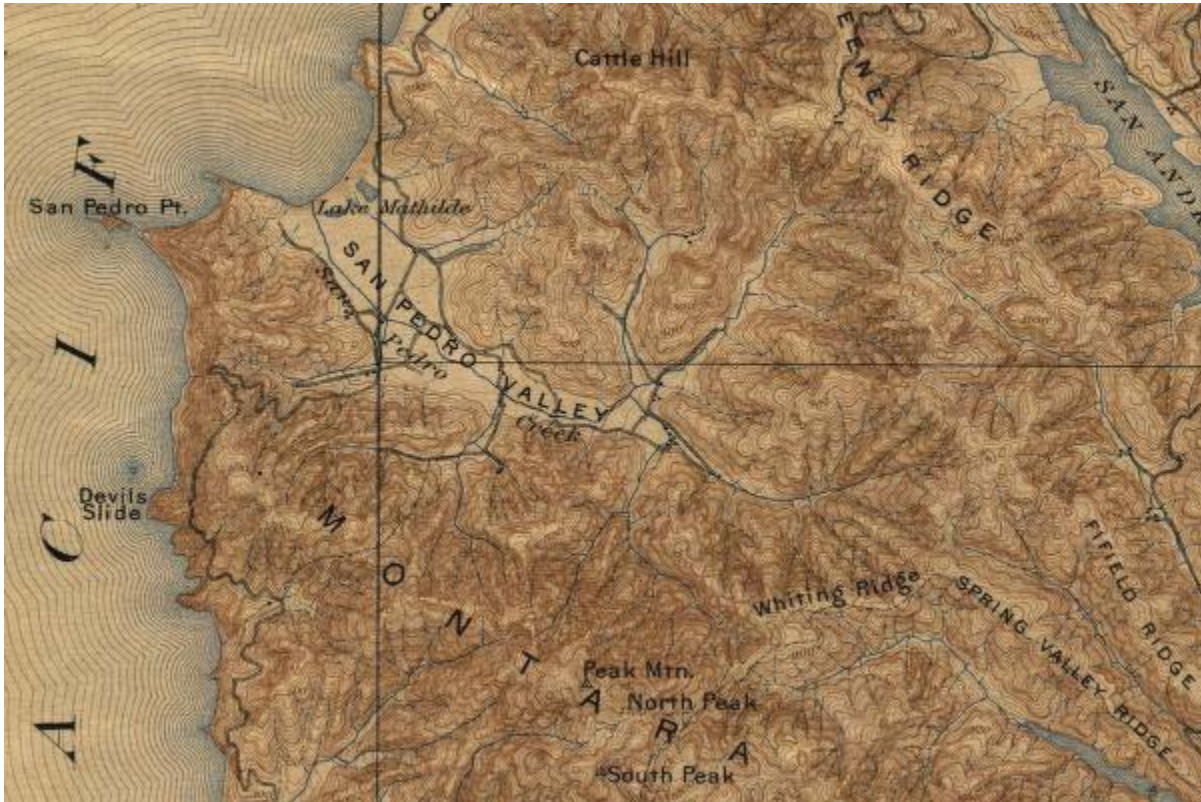


Figure 16. Portion of the 1896 USGS 15 minute *San Mateo County* map showing San Pedro Valley and surrounding hillsides (USGS 1939 and 1949).

and the home-made wines, from grapes trucked into the valley, that were served to the work crews who would drink and carry-on late into the evening.

Gloria Hoedt spent her childhood weekends and summers during the 1930's on several of the valley's artichoke ranches (Hoedt interview 1999). Her father, a valley artichoke rancher, moved the family to San Francisco but returned to the valley each weekend to deliver groceries from the city to his friends on the ranches. There were a dozen or so ranches during this time and each contained a cluster of buildings built close to the road with little or no setback. Buildings included a main house, a barn for livestock, sheds for equipment and packing, and workers' quarters. Even though some ranches had wells and plumbing, outhouses were still used and some were built directly over the creeks. Early ranch houses were constructed of wood. During World War II, many ranchers made bigger profits because of the higher demand for foodstuffs and some rebuilt larger homes, often using stucco. The fields, until the advent of sprinklers, were criss-crossed with metal pipes that carried irrigation water pumped from the creeks and wells. The drained Lake Mathilde never really dried out; ocean water would seep through the beach's sand dunes to form a small tule marsh. A duck farm was established there, but otherwise the area was not used for much. Vegetables for domestic consumption were grown in small garden plots and peach, apricot, fig, and apple trees, along with wild strawberries, provided fruit. Chickens, rabbits, goats, sheep, and hogs were common farm animals, and hogs would occasionally be seen strung up and slaughtered in the open air, their meat being used for sausages and salami. Lambs were roasted outside at Easter time, with children taking turns rotating the spit. During harvest time, men, women, and children worked in the fields and packing houses. Vacations were rarely taken.

Gabriel and Frances Malavear arrived in San Pedro Valley in 1932. Gabriel's first job was tending 50 acres of artichokes near Sanchez's old adobe. They knew nothing about farming, having moved from St. Louis, but, as he put it, "I worked hard and learned to love it." Frances worked picking peas for 50 cents a hundred pound sack and can remember being so tired that Gabriel had to carry her home at the end of the day. Eventually they earned enough that they



started acquiring their own land and shipped artichokes with the label "G. Malavear Artichokes, Pedro Valley, California". They built their farmhouse in 1948 on land east of the adobe at the base of one of the valley's north side hills (figure 17)(Drake u.d.).

The story of Rina Pacini, who was born in 1911 and lived in the Half Moon Bay area during the Great Depression, also exemplifies what life was like on the Coastside artichoke ranches. The ranch her father owned grew mostly artichokes, peas, and beans. There was a vegetable garden where they grew their own tomatoes. She can remember her mother and aunt cooking for as many as 20 men who worked on the ranch, mostly Italian immigrants but with some Filipinos. Rina and her mother would launder the men's dusty cloths on a scrub board and mend them as needed, all for \$3.00 a month to help supplement the ranch income. There was no hot water and she remembers heating kettles of water on the stove and taking hot baths sitting in front of the stove. Despite the lack of conveniences and money, there was more friendship and people visited more before the advent of television. When there was a party, pot covers, an overturned washbasin and an old accordion were used to make music. Her uncle made his own bread and other neighbors made their own wine and salami. When her father butchered a pig, he would share it with the others on the ranch. When neighbors were sick, people came to help them out. She summed things up by saying, "Life was hard, but people were happier and more friendly. It was hard because you'd be out there in the fields, sometimes all day." (Harrison u.d.).



Figure 17. Malavear house on Linda Mar Boulevard (photo by author).

## **V. The Early Suburban Landscape:**

The Early Suburban Landscape developed concurrently with the Truck Farming Landscape and it was not until the later half of the twentieth century that the Modern Suburban Landscape was fully realized. Since the death of Francisco Sanchez in 1862, land speculators and financiers had been working to shape the valley landscape. During most of the nineteenth century, their contribution to the landscape consisted of subdividing the former Rancho San Pedro and leasing land to truck farmers and dairy operators. Of the wealthy landowners, only the Tobins built a summer home in the valley. It was constructed in 1872 along the south side of the creek across the street from the present day Linda Mar Care Center convalescent home on San Pedro Terrace Road, also the site of another Ohlone shell mound and small village (Drake 1994). Access to the valley was difficult from all directions due to the steep hillsides and ocean cliffs, keeping the valley isolated and maintaining it as an agricultural area, but as the twentieth century began, land speculators started to more profoundly alter the valley's landscape.

Since the 1870's, investors and speculators had discussed plans for a coastside railroad from San Francisco to Santa Cruz, seventy miles down the coast and the most popular beach resort north of Santa Barbara<sup>10</sup>. Such a railroad could generate income by bringing settlement to the coast and hauling farm produce from the coastside to San Francisco. In 1905, the Ocean Shore Railroad was incorporated by a group of wealthy San Francisco financiers and businessmen and construction started on a double-track railroad along the beaches and coastal bluffs. The laying of track proceeded from both ends of the line with the intent of joining some place in the middle. The 1906 earthquake caused considerable damage to construction as landslides washed parts of the newly graded bed and track laying equipment into the ocean. Despite this financial set-back construction continued, but only as a single track.

The major obstacles to reaching Santa Cruz from San Francisco were San Pedro Point and Devils Slide, just south of the mouth of San Pedro Valley. A tunnel was excavated through the point and tracks were laid on the bluffs around Devils Slide. Although the railroad managed

to get past these engineering hurdles, financial support waned and the tracks were never connected all the way to Santa Cruz. Hoping to regain some of their losses, the railroad operated on the tracks that were laid and started carrying passengers and freight. Passengers trying to reach Santa Cruz from San Francisco were shuttled by steam car (known as a Stanley Steamer) across the 26 mile gap in the tracks (Wagner 1974:81). At the mouth of San Pedro Valley, an elevated rail bed ran along the beach, acting as a dike to keep ocean waters from flooding the mouth of the valley. A stone station house built on a small bluff above the ocean on the south side of the mouth of San Pedro Creek was named Tobin Station; the small bluff that the station was built on also became known by this name, although it would later be changed to Pedro Terrace. The course of the railroad is mapped on the 1915 USGS map (figure 18) where it can be clearly seen running along the coast. In an old photograph taken at the mouth of the valley, remnants of the elevated rail bed can be seen running just inland from the beach (figure 19).

The railroad investors hoped to profit from the sale of land along the route and created a sister corporation, the Ocean Shore Land Company. At each station stop new communities were planned and registered with the San Mateo County recorder's office. In San Pedro Valley, streets were laid out and house construction started in Pedro Terrace around Tobin Station, creating the valley's first subdivision. Another subdivision, Tobin Park, had streets mapped out in more or less grid fashion, ignoring the steep terrain. Streets or homes were never built. Tobin Park was to be located inland on the hills above the Sanchez Fork of San Pedro Creek. Even though the development never materialized, it did find its way onto maps, including a Rand McNally wall map of San Mateo County done many years later (Drake 1994a, Fritz interview 2002, and Pacifica Planning Department 1999).

The Ocean Shore Railroad operated weekend excursion trips to lure potential buyers to the Coastside. The investors hoped that the 1906 earthquake would motivate residents to flee the congestion of San Francisco and buy coastside property. This did not occur and land sales were slow; only 6 houses had been built at Pedro Terrace by 1920 (Gervais 1984-93:59). During the 1920's, Pedro Terrace house lots were given away as premiums in 'bank night' drawings at San



Figure 18. Portions of the 1915 USGS 15 minute *San Mateo County* map showing San Pedro Valley and surrounding hillsides (USGS 1915).



Figure 19. Mouth of San Pedro Valley sometime in the early 1900's (photo courtesy of the San Mateo County History Museum).

Francisco theaters (Larsen 1989a). Despite the slow pace of development, city passengers did cram the trains to enjoy a trip along the coast and spent their weekends at the new hotels at the beaches. Rail freight service carried artichokes and other produce to San Francisco and fertilizer, in the form of manure from the city's stockyards, back to the farms. Passenger and freight service were not profitable enough to offset the construction costs and the railroad stopped running in 1920.

During the last years of its operation the railroad faced another threat in the form of the automobile. People preferred to drive their cars to the beaches and on scenic tours. Trucks were able to out-compete the railroad for hauling produce to market and local farmers started to pool their resources in order to purchase them (Miller 1971:117). Automobiles allowed for greater access to the Coastside and a demand for new and improved roads ensued during the early twentieth century. The county raised funds to build the gravel and oil paved Coastside Boulevard in 1915, replacing the dangerous Half Moon Bay/Colma Road. Coastside Boulevard used the saddle crossing between San Pedro and Montara Mountains instead of going over Devils Slide, allowing autos to travel from San Francisco down the coast, to the mouth of San Pedro Valley. The road then turned into the valley, towards Sanchez's old adobe and the Sanchez Fork, where it then went up and over the saddle and back out to the coast and on into Half Moon Bay. Coastside Boulevard is visible on the 1939 USGS map as the more inland route that heads south out of San Pedro Valley (figure 20). One 1916 afternoon saw 4,000 cars crawling up the twisting dirt grade through the saddle, following an old path first used by the Ohlone. Trucks, hauling heavy loads of artichokes, created ruts in the road and heavy rains generated landslides causing temporary road closures during the winters. Coastside residents soon demanded an even better road with a gentler grade.

Prohibition legislation in 1919 made the San Mateo Coast a haven for rum-runners and speakeasies. The isolated coves of the coast, surrounded by high bluffs, provided ideal places for Canadian ships to unload and in 1923, up to 75,000 cases of whiskey were brought ashore around Half Moon Bay and San Pedro Valley. Moonshine was distilled in farmhouse basements



Figure 20. Portion of the 1939 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* map showing San Pedro Valley and surrounding hillsides (USGS 1939).



and at outdoor sites tucked away in the isolated valleys, with most of the illegal liquor going to local speakeasies (Hynding 1982:212). During the 1920's, Sanchez's old adobe, which had been Hotel San Pedro, and the Tobin's summer home, now known as the Hermitage Inn, became "roaring bootleg roadhouses" complete with "party girls" (Gervais 1984:188) and were frequented by people from San Francisco. Hotel San Pedro became known as 'Adobe House' and had a beautiful bar made of mahogany. After Prohibition, the adobe was used as a bunkhouse for field workers and finally as an artichoke packing shed. The Hermitage Inn burned down in 1929 (Hoedt interview 1999, Gervais 1984-93:188, and Svaneviki and Burgett 2001:46).

Although Bill Miramontes lived in Half Moon Bay during Prohibition years, his experiences are indicative of Prohibition life in the isolated Coastside valleys. Artichoke prices were down and he worked day and night delivering gas for the bootlegger's stills. Bill talked about how men came from San Francisco and paid the farmers as much as \$500 to keep a still on their property and another \$500 a month if the farmers would operate it. Eventually, hijackers started coming to the coast to extort and rob the farmers-turned-distillers at gunpoint. Some farmers paid protection money to the hijackers, but there was still a lot of shooting and killing. High-speed boats carrying Canadian liquor would anchor offshore and people would row out in skiffs to bring the cases of liquor in. It was dangerous work and bodies would often be found washed up on the beaches (*San Mateo Times* 1985).

In 1937, Highway 1 was built using parts of the old Ocean Shore Railroad right of way. However, the old railroad tunnel through Pedro Point and a section of the rail bed that led to it had been demolished during Prohibition to prevent rum-runners from using it. Highway 1 followed an alternative route that turned inland at Pedro Terrace, crossed the saddle between San Pedro Point and San Pedro Mountain, returned to the old Ocean Shore Railroad route at Devils Slide and then followed the ocean bluffs southward. The older Coastside Boulevard was pretty much abandoned shortly after World War II, although its remnants are still used as a hiking trail which starts at the end of Higgins Way (VanderWerf 1994:145-155). Highway 1 is the road on the 1939 USGS map that follows the beach and is the more western route south out of the valley.

In 1939 Truman "Doc" Denman, a furrier from San Francisco, established the 300 acre Shamrock ranch on the south side of San Pedro Creek, not far from Sanchez's old adobe. The property included a couple of small valleys on the north flank of San Pedro Mountain, one with a small perennial stream. Since the 1920's, the property (part of the Tobin's land holdings) had been known as Happy Hollow Ranch. The site of the Tobin's summer home and whatever remained of the shell mound were ploughed over to raise vegetables. The oldest buildings at the ranch, including the main house and the barn, date back to the 1830's and are of historic significance as defined by the National Park Service (Drake 1994b). Over the years the old buildings were added onto and covered with plywood sheathing and asbestos tiles so that their appearance belies their age. The ranch property was mostly void of trees when Denman purchased it, but his wife, Marie, started a tree planting campaign. Denman operated a number of diverse enterprises, growing vegetables and flowers, raising dairy cows and chickens, and later operating a dog kennel and horse stable. He opened his own store at the ranch to sell milk from his couple of hundred dairy cows. Eventually he sold his milk to the Sun Valley Dairy, which leased his store in 1953. The Sun Valley Dairy store was the first market in San Pedro Valley and provided a place for local residents to purchase milk and other staples and for children to buy ice cream in the summer (Drake 1994a, 1994b, and 1994c, Azevedo interview 1999, and Hoedt interview 1999).

Despite the automobile and the rum-running activities of Prohibition, San Pedro Valley still maintained its rural agricultural landscape with rows of artichokes and Brussels sprouts crowding the valley floor. The rural feel of the valley was promoted as an asset during the 1940's. *Do You Know Your Coastside*, a regular column in the *Sharp Park Breakers* (a local weekly paper concerned with North Coastside life) featured San Pedro Valley in a number of columns. San Pedro Terrace was described as a "picturesque fishing village nestling along the beach" with shops to buy fish, crabs, and abalone and boats to rent for fishing. One could fish for seatrout, ling cod, and red tail perch right from the shore and boats could be rented to catch

salmon, but reservations were suggested during the salmon season, when "many fish are brought in." (Halling 1944a).

The valley itself was described as "one of the most beautiful valleys in Northern California" by C. Halling. He further wrote: "You may roam for miles through shady lanes and glens along the banks of Pedro Creek, where trout and steelhead may be taken in season." and that "Picturesque farms and homes may be seen that cannot be equaled anywhere." Game in the valley included wild pigeons, doves, cottontail, rabbit, and deer. A highly recommended place to stay was Rees Dude Ranch, where horses could be rented to ride the valley trails and the barbecue was not to be missed. The dining room was planked on the floors, walls and ceiling in redwood and wagon wheels and game heads adorned the walls. An Italian chef from San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood presided over the kitchen (Halling 1944b). In another piece, Halling wrote: "The North Coastside and Montara Mountains constitute one of the most picturesque regions to be found anywhere on the Pacific Coast." Halling implored: "With Hetch Hetchy water near at hand, the North Coastside is going to go ahead with leaps and bounds, so save your gas and rubber and see the North Coastside first." (Halling 1944c).

One sign that San Pedro Valley was shifting away from being an isolated agricultural valley was the opening of the Trout Farm in 1950 by John and Mary Gay. The farm was originally located on the Middle Fork San Pedro Creek just east of the junction with the South Fork on land the Gays leased from Weilers near their house and barn. The Trout Farm consisted of an earth-lined pool that was stocked with fish trucked in from outside the valley. Families could come and rent poles and fish in the pond, prices for the fish being dependent on size. There was no charge for bait or for use of the picnic tables and fire-pits. In 1955, the Gays moved their operation to 21 acres of land a short distance away on the lower reaches of the South Fork where they built several large, round tanks for rearing fish as well as a fishing pond, picnic tables, and other amenities. They also built a house for themselves just up the hillside west of the fish farm. Photographs from the period show families standing and sitting on logs along the

edge of the small pond, poles in hand, waiting for fish to bite. On weekends and holidays, capacity crowds showed up at the farm (Fritz interview 2002, *Sharp Park Breakers* 1953b).

Although development of the North Coastside remained slow, families were starting to move into the valleys and water was becoming a problem by the early 1940's. Farmers had dug wells and used the region's creeks to irrigate their crops, but there was no central water agency to supply new homes as they were built. The Salada Beach Public Utility was formed as a public agency to supply water to the North Coastside from a series of private wells but some North Coastside residents sought to buy water from the city of San Francisco, which operated Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park. From Hetch Hetchy, water was piped across California's Central Valley and stored in Crystal Springs Reservoir, just east of the Coastside. North Coastside residents wanted to connect to this system and pump water over the coastal mountains. A fund was established to pay for an independent engineering feasibility study and in 1944, after a contentious campaign, residents voted to incorporate the North Coast County Water District (NCCWD) with a mandate to construct a pipeline and purchase Hetch Hetchy water. The vote also dissolved the Salada Beach Public Utility (*Sharp Park Breakers* 1944a, 1944b). Pipes were laid during the winter of 1944-45 from South San Francisco and followed the approximate course of present day Sharp Park Boulevard before heading south to Pedro Point. Due to war shortages caused by World War II, there was not much metal to use for fabricating the pipes and they had a life expectancy of only a few years (*Pacifica Tribune* 1960a).

By early 1950, realizing that development was at last coming to the North Coastside, the NCCWD looked to San Pedro Creek to help augment the Hetch Hetchy water supply and proposed a filtration plant along the creek. Although San Pedro Valley farmers were using more water than the creek could supply, it was hoped that when farmers sold their land to developers the excess water could be converted to domestic use. The NCCWD was given limited rights to San Pedro Creek water and started diverting water from the creek, but it was not enough to justify the expense of building a filtration plant. However, even limited control of creek water

by the NCCWD forced the farmers to ration irrigation water, making it less profitable to farm in the valley. 'Doc' Denmans dairy operation at Shamrock Ranch soon closed (Drake 1994b, Hill u.d., and Hoedt interview 1999).

## **VI. The Modern Suburban Landscape:**

The Depression, which prevented people all across the country from being able to afford property, and the pre-occupation with wartime activities during World War II helped maintain San Pedro Valley's isolation and slow growth through the 1940's. However, with the end of the war, things began to change. Returning G.I.'s and their families needed places to live and the rural farmlands south of San Francisco became a magnet for developers. In the late 1940's, Henry Doelger started the Westlake development on the outskirts of Daly City and provided a model for developments farther south on the coast (Hynding 1982:284).

In 1953 Andy Oddstad came to San Pedro Valley and with the help of Ray Higgins, a prominent San Francisco real-estate man, bought seven of the largest ranches in the valley in one weekend (Azevedo interview 1999). Ray Higgins was already familiar with the valley, having bought parcels of old Ocean Shore Land Company land back in 1927 in anticipation of the construction of Highway 1. Ray Higgins had also bought Sanchez's old adobe from Baroness Marguerite Kirkpatrick in 1946. He later sold the adobe and its immediate surrounding land to San Mateo County in 1947 and preservation of the by now deteriorated adobe started in 1953 (Hynding 1982:284-286 and Svaneviki and Burgett 2001:46).

Oddstad, whose uncles had built the Stonestown development in San Francisco, had written his engineering thesis on low cost housing and had always aspired to be a builder. He built his first house in 1946 in San Francisco and in less than twenty years, had the third largest building firm in the Bay Area with over 11,000 houses and apartment buildings bearing his name. Oddstad's building philosophy was to "reduce building to its lowest denominator, to provide good homes within reach of many." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961b). While doing his military training as a navy scuba diver, Oddstad became familiar with the North Coastside beaches and realized that after the war, people who could not find affordable housing in San Francisco because of the housing crunch would need someplace else to go. His first development plan for San Pedro Valley took shape in the western half of the valley and was given the name Linda

Mar<sup>11</sup>. Oddstad recognized that San Pedro Valley was the "largest and best residential area within commuter range (of San Francisco)." Word of Oddstad's purchasing San Pedro Valley land was big news and Dick Harris, a reporter for *The San Francisco News*, sat on the story until Oddstad was able to complete his initial valley acquisitions. The Linda Mar development was the first big post-war development outside of San Francisco and was to be the "creation of a new community out of the beautiful but raw coastal hills and plains." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961b).

To introduce longtime Coastsides residents to the new development of Linda Mar, Pedro Valley Day was held in June of 1953. The purpose of the event was to "acquaint our citizens with the tremendous possibilities of the area - recreational, residential, and commercial - and with the impact it will have on our present mode of living" and to raise funds for a new committee that hoped to incorporate the North Coastsides into a new city and no longer be wards of the county (*Sharp Park Breakers* 1953b). Events included tours of six model homes, tours of Sanchez's Adobe, and fishing at the Gay's Trout Farm. Promoters of development maintained that the rural feel of the landscape would be preserved; "the rapid growth and development of the North Coastsides appears most promising, but nevertheless this North Coastal area will always present a rural atmosphere with the hills always in view to the east and south and on the west the broad expanse of ocean, stretching out to meet the horizon" (*Sharp Park Breakers* 1953a).

San Pedro Valley, nostalgically described as a "serene, spectacularly beautiful spot where a few ranches were the only indication of 'progress' so far" (Drake 1982c) during its artichoke growing days, was transformed with the construction of 3,000 inexpensive homes by Oddstad's Sterling Homes. Houses outpaced the infrastructure, however, and when the first Linda Mar residents arrived on December 16, 1953, they had to dig their own wells or buy brackish water from nearby pumps until the NCCWD started laying pipes in the valley and delivering water. For Linda Mar's first two years the only food market was the Sun Valley Dairy at Shamrock Ranch and the region grew so fast that the phone company could not keep pace with connecting phone lines. There were many North Coastsides residents who did not like what Oddstad was doing in Linda Mar and there were a number of angry planning board meetings as Oddstad, in

his words, "struggled to start a community - with no sewage, water, schools, streets, or anything." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961b). Capitalizing on the need for a supermarket, Henry Doelger, who Oddstad once worked for, came to the valley in 1955 and started construction of the Linda Mar shopping center on the east side of Highway 1. The Purity Supermarket was the main attraction, along with a pharmacy, ice cream store, donut shop, shoe repair, Wells Fargo Bank, and camera store. In 1961, the Purity Market was remodeled, almost doubling its size and making it the largest Purity in Northern California (Drake 1967, 1982b, and 1982c; Evans 1999, Hynding 1982:284-286; Gervais 1984:197; and *Pacifica Tribune* 1961).

San Pedro Valley changed rapidly after 1953, as did the rest of the North Coastside, as developers bought up land and started construction of housing developments (*Sharp Park Breakers* 1953a). In 1955, 1,200 new families moved into the North Coastside with 700 of those moving into Linda Mar alone. In August of 1955, family number one thousand had moved into Linda Mar and, as a special bonus, was given \$4,000 in gifts by Andy Oddstad.

Talk soon began of incorporating the various North Coastside hamlets into one city (*Pacifica Tribune* 1977, 1980c). The North Coastside up to this point had always been unincorporated county land and was not fully represented on the county board of supervisors. It did not have its own library, recreation facilities, or police force. Residents had to rely on the county sheriff's office with the nearest substation over the coastal mountains in Burlingame. Some residents believed that a better community could be had by incorporation and self-government. However it was water and garbage dumps that finally stirred the North Coastside residents into action.

In 1955, Oddstad, growing weary over battles with the NCCWD to supply water to Linda Mar, asked the city of San Bruno to annex Linda Mar. A furious campaign ensued in San Bruno as the matter was put to the voters. North Coastside residents sent pamphlets against annexing Linda Mar to the San Bruno voters, who rejected Oddstad's proposal. North Coastside residents then recalled the publicly appointed NCCWD board and set in motion new policies that would



ensure an adequate water supply to Linda Mar. This victory was the first step towards incorporation (*Pacifica Tribune* 1977).

Garbage became the next hot topic for North Coastside residents. In 1956, Daly City wanted to annex part of the Bernardi Ranch deep in San Pedro Valley for the Coastside Scavenger Company to use as a dump. The Bernardis owned some 600 acres in the back of the valley, having formed a syndicate back in the 1920's in order to purchase land (Plunkett 1960). The Pittos, founders of the Coastside Scavenger Company, had purchased land along the Sanchez Fork in 1942 and wanted an inexpensive supply of garbage to feed their hogs; they also raised cattle and horses, farmed, and had a productive fruit orchard. (Azevedo interview 1999, Davenport 1977). The county rejected the plan.

As suburbs in the county grew so to did the garbage problem. In 1957, Daly City annexed Mussel Rock at the northern most end of the North Coastside for a dump and San Bruno attempted to annex land along Sharp Park Road and Skyline Boulevard for another dump, land in plain sight of the Westview housing development. The Coastside Scavenger Company finally got county approval to convert part of the Bernardi Ranch into a dump, so angering valley residents that they hung an effigy of county supervisor Tom Callan at the entrance to Linda Mar. North Coastside residents in favor of incorporation used the garbage issue to push their cause. Papers were filed petitioning the county supervisors for incorporation to delay the annexation attempt by San Bruno and North Coastside residents were given a chance to vote on the issue. Many of the area's young, new families were in favor of incorporation arguing that they were "people motivated by the spirit of growth . . . a healthy growth for ourselves, family and community." and that they were "pioneers" in a region that until recently was "largely artichoke patches" (*Pacifica Tribune* 1977). In the election on October 28, 1957, the move to incorporate won by a narrow margin. The new city was christened Pacifica (Drake 1982c, *Pacifica Tribune* 1977).

The ensuing two and a half decades saw the Truck Farming and Early Suburban landscapes of San Pedro Valley give way to the Modern Suburban Landscape of today. Linda

Mar streets were laid out in a curvilinear pattern, with a number of cul-de-sacs. The main artery, Linda Mar Boulevard, was given a slightly sinuous path parallel to, but several blocks north of the creek and once east of Sanchez's old adobe, followed the old road that led into the back of the valley. Development occurred on a parcel-by-parcel basis. As can be seen on the 1956 USGS map, produced shortly after development started (figure 21), some streets end abruptly or turn sharply at property lines, with only a few streets running the length of the valley. For a while, blocks of tract housing shared the valley with artichoke ranches. As adjacent lots were bought and developed, new streets continued on the presumed path of, but not always connected to the older streets.

By 1956, housing stretched the length of the valley to the confluence of the Middle and South Forks. Most of what used to be Lake Mathilde was occupied by the Linda Mar Shopping Center on the south and by housing of the Anza-Arguello neighborhood on the north. The Linda Mar Elementary School, on the south side of the valley across from Shamrock Ranch, was built by this time. The hillsides and valley of the North Fork San Pedro Creek had not been developed, and farming still existed in the fields that lined the creek. However, grading on the hilltops just north of Sanchez's Adobe, indicated that housing was soon to follow (Figure 22). Pedro Point also saw a boom in house building. Compared to the 1939 USGS map, the 1956 map shows a number of new streets dotted with houses climbing up the north slope of Pedro Point. Land was still cheap and fifty square foot lots could be had for \$1,500 in the late 1950's (Larsen 1989a). A 1957 photo taken from the hills above Sanchez's Adobe, possibly from around the water tank shown on the USGS maps, shows Linda Mar in its infancy. The photograph looks toward the ocean, showing row after row of new single story homes. There are no trees in the valley, at least nothing of any height, helping create a stark sense of newness to the scene (*San Francisco Examiner* 1957).

By 1968, most of the valley and the hills to its north had been developed (figure 23). The largest area of post-1956 development is in the hills just north of Linda Mar Boulevard, with some infilling in the valley as more of the artichoke ranches were bought out. The North Fork

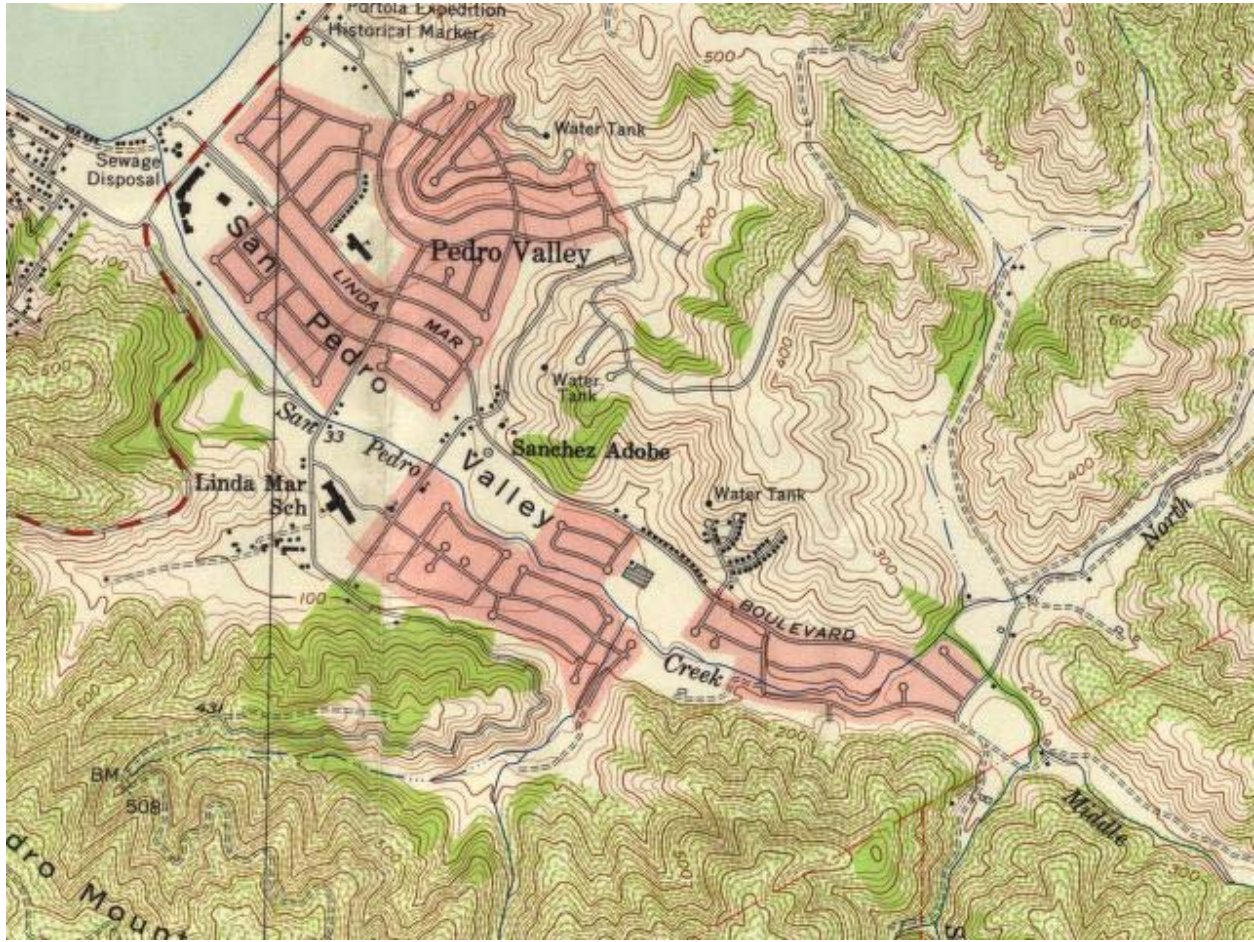


Figure 21. Portion of the 1956 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* map showing San Pedro Valley (USGS 1956a).



Figure 22. 1956 USGS aerial photo showing the eastern half of San Pedro Valley. The grading on the hilltop can be seen just to the left of center (USGS 1956b).

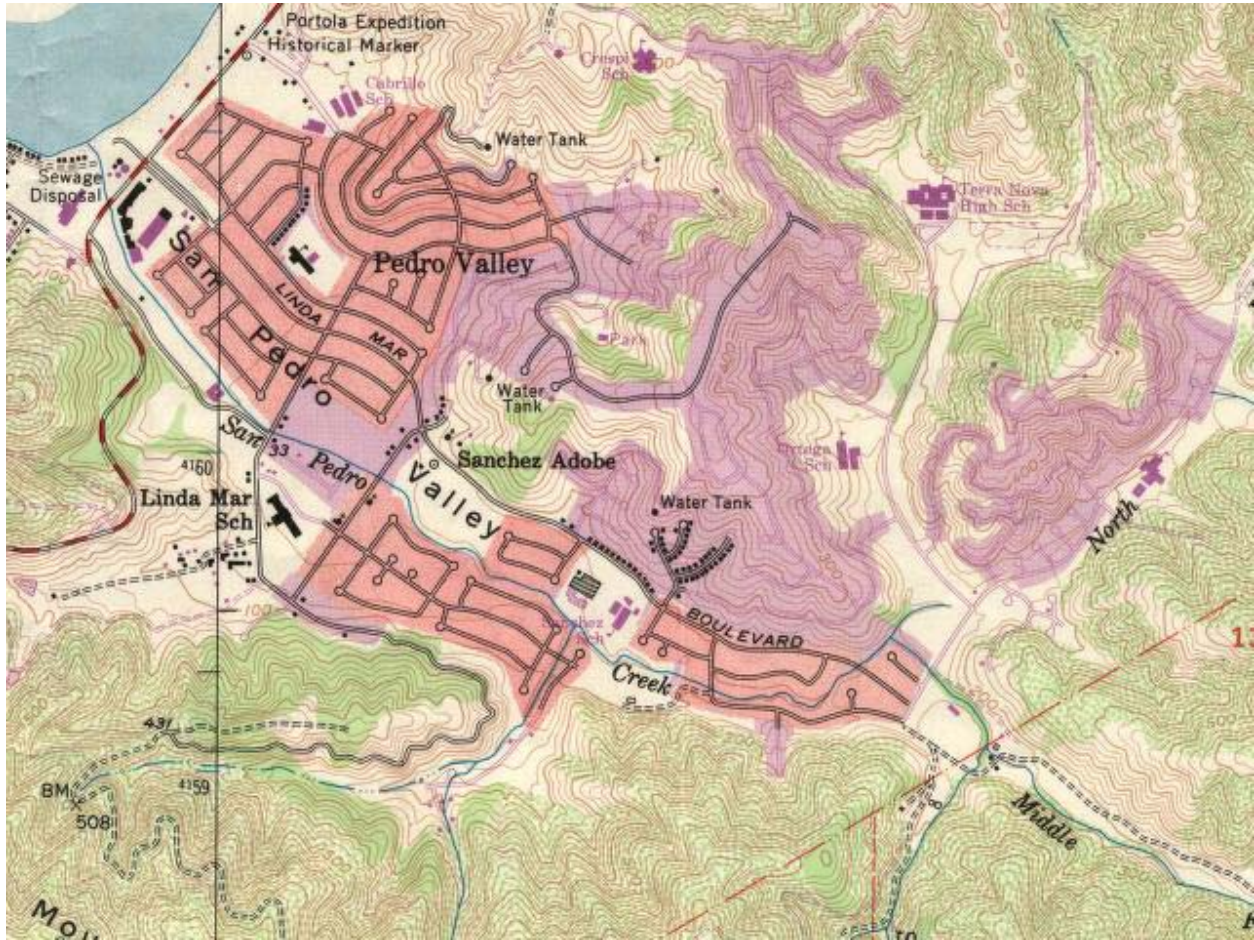


Figure 23. Portion of the 1968 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* map showing San Pedro Valley (USGS 1968a).

San Pedro Creek had all but disappeared from the map. During the early 1960's almost its entire reach was buried in a culvert, most of it under Oddstad Boulevard. By 1966, a large part of the Park Pacifica development had been constructed in the valley of the North Fork along Oddstad Boulevard and on the hills to the northwest by Challenge Development Corporation, the new moniker for Oddstad's building company; Oddstad had died in 1964 (Azevedo interview 1999, Drake 1982a). In 1960, a second shopping center, Sea Village Shopping Center, was built in Linda Mar on the south side of San Pedro Creek across Highway 1 from the Linda Mar Shopping Center. Pacifica's second super market, a Safeway, opened here in 1962 (*Pacifica Tribune* 1960c).

Five new elementary schools and Terra Nova High School had been built in the valley and its surrounding hills by 1968. An adequate number of schools was always a problem in the early years of Linda Mar; high school students traveled to Daly City to attend double sessions at a school there. Oddstad School was built adjacent to the site of the old dump at Bernardi Ranch along Oddstad Boulevard and the smell of trash and swarms of flies greeted the new students (Hoedt interview 1999). The new high school was built in 1961 on a site that once had grazing sheep (Barnard 1982b). The school's architect, Corwin Booth, designed the building with a Moorish feel and incorporated the topography of the site into the design, rather than just leveling the ground. Booth did not want the school to have an institutional feel and used graceful arches to "lend a playfulness to the school." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961h). Andy Oddstad took out a full-page advertisement in the *Pacifica Tribune* praising and congratulating the new high school. In the ad, he invites Linda Mar residents to "cheer our new Terra Nova Tiger football team to victory" and states "people of Pacifica have every right to be filled with pride. Together, we have all created a new, progressive influence on our whole community." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961h). Despite the growing development, two of San Pedro Valley's smaller valleys continued to be farmed in 1968; the Weiler Ranch property in the valley of the Middle Fork and the last remnant of the Picardo Ranch behind Terra Nova High School.

A 1980 USGS map shows development in San Pedro Valley as all but complete (figure 24). There had been a small amount of infilling in the main part of the valley just south of Sanchez School and Park Pacifica at the south end of Oddstad Boulevard had expanded into some of the hills to the southeast while further development spread up the length of the North Fork's valley. Two-story townhouses had spread along Terra Nova Boulevard south of the high school and a third shopping center, Park Mall Center (with another Safeway) had been built at the junction of Terra Nova and Oddstad Boulevards. At the mouth of San Pedro Valley on land that was once the north edge of Lake Mathilde, the Bell Telephone Company built a long distance phone operations center at the junction of Crespi Drive and Highway 1 in 1972. The building was later shut down due to ground water problems and poor drainage. Also in 1972, Park Pacifica residents planted 850 tree seedlings on the hill slopes above Oddstad Boulevard as part of a community planting project (*Pacific Tribune* 1972a). In 1988, the people of the state of Catalonia of Spain gave to Pacifica a statue of Gaspar de Portolá to place by an historical marker at the intersection of Highway 1 and Crespi Drive, the approximate location where Portolá's expedition turned inland after leaving their camp along San Pedro Creek and started the uphill march to Sweeny Ridge and their view of San Francisco Bay. The statue was dedicated on November 4, on the 219th anniversary of Portolá's 'discovery' of San Francisco Bay (Murphey, D. 1988).

Comparison of the areal extent of development as shown on the 1980 map to USGS maps made in 1993 and 1997 (figure 25a and b) is somewhat misleading. On the later maps the USGS changed its map style and urban areas are shown with a gray fill instead of the pink and purple fills used previously. These maps show all of San Pedro Valley and the north side hills in a gray fill, giving the impression that housing covers areas shown as undeveloped in 1980. However, some of these areas have no streets and no homes. The spread of housing had mostly ended by 1980.

Despite the rapid transformation from farming community to suburb, the valley still maintained some elements of a bucolic rural landscape into the 1980's. Housing advertisements

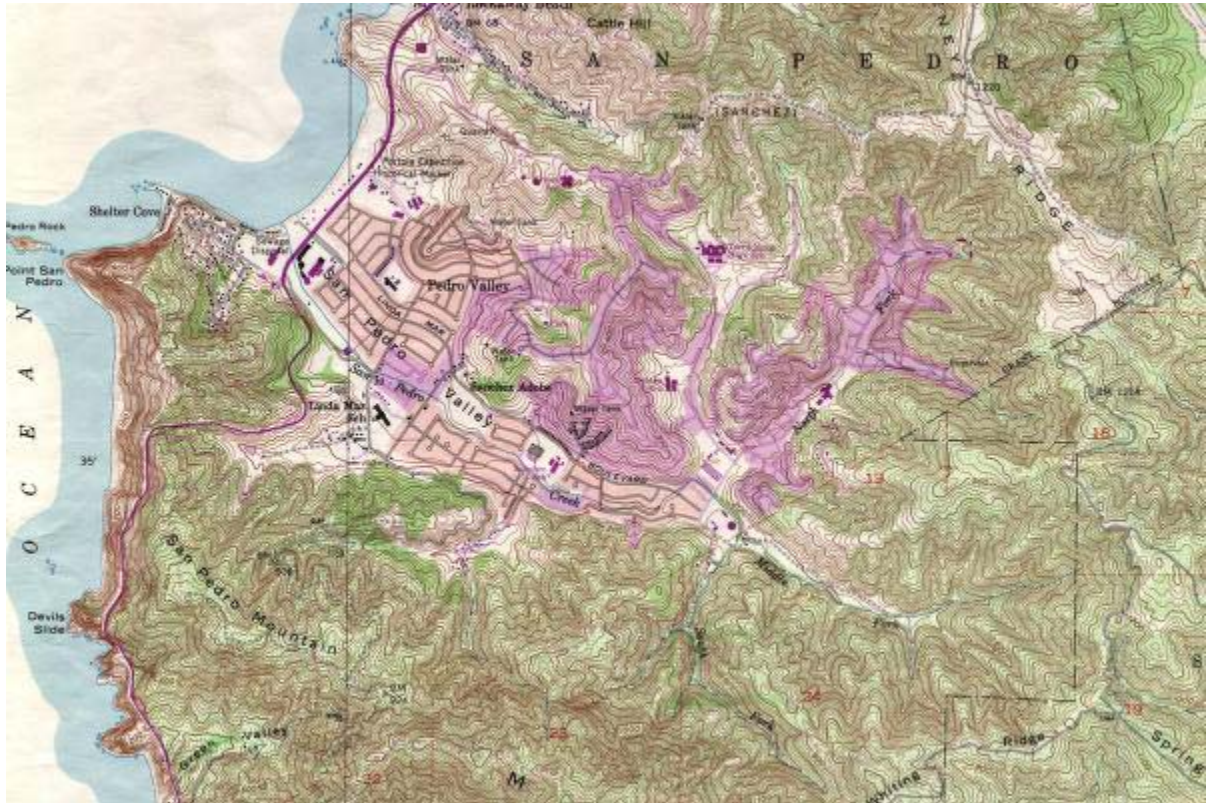


Figure 24. Portion of the 1980 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* map showing San Pedro Valley and surrounding hillsides (USGS 1980).





Figure 25a and b. Portions of the 1993 and 1997 USGS 7.5 minute *Montara Mountain* maps showing San Pedro Valley and surrounding hillsides (USGS 1993 and 1997).

offered "wooden lots", "smog free fresh clean air", and "the pretty valley where the sun shines" with outdoor amenities that included horseback riding, hiking, golfing, and picnicking (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961, 1962). Such descriptions had been in use since at least the 1940's to lure people to come to the valley to visit. Now they were being used to help sell homes.

Horses figured prominently in the early Linda Mar landscape, with riders trotting down the neighborhood streets on their way to the trails in the surrounding hillsides. Riding was "fast becoming one of the city's most popular outdoor recreations" (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961c). Along with the horses came manure and complaints from Linda Mar residents. One resident commented that the streets looked like a cow pasture because of all the manure and that neighborhood children rode their bikes through it, walked in it and even fell in it. It was tracked it all through her house when her kids came home. She enjoyed living in Linda Mar and liked horses, but did not understand why people rode their horses on the streets instead of on the trails that led up the valley (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961g). Horses were so popular in the early 1960's that Linda Mar merchants held a contest to give a free horse to the child who came up with the best name for it during Western Days, a festival started by the merchants of the newly constructed Linda Mar Shopping Center and was complete with store clerks dressed in western garb (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961e). Western Days was later renamed Frontier Days, was financed by local businesses and an independent citizens committee and became an annual weeklong event held in the summer. It culminated in a rodeo held at various locations in or near the valley, including the Rockaway Quarry just to the north. Frontier Days ended in 1984 when the quarry owner withdrew use of the property (Drake, B. 1989).

To help promote Frontier Days, the *Pacifica Tribune* ran a special edition during the festival titled the *Artichoke Gulch Gazette*. "Artichoke Gulch is a state of mind..." writes C. Urchin in an op-ed piece and "The *Artichoke Gulch Gazette* is a newspaper invented after the fact to relive history, poke fun, and in general help create an aura of the 'old west' during Frontier Days." (Urchin 1983). Paul Azevedo was even more nostalgic when he wrote:

"The railroad died and Artichoke Gulch slumbered until wars and better roads and expanding suburbs ended Artichoke Gulch forever . . . except once a year when again we ride horses, pretend to brand our calves, and look back with nostalgia on a day long gone, a day when a few score immigrants from many different countries across the sea formed a community, helped each other, sent for wives from the old countries, raised their children, and became Americans, each in his turn." (Azevedo 1982)

The 'western' theme was further promoted by Frontierland, a western theme park built in 1960 "in the natural setting behind Pacifica's hills and mountains" towards the back of the North Fork valley, with a rifle range for a neighbor; property previously owned by the Bernardis (*Pacifica Community Service Directory* 1962, *Pacifica Tribune* 1961c). The developers wanted to create "a true view of the Old West for the children of today and tomorrow." (Plunkett 1960). The park's master plan included a human-made lake with a reproduction of San Francisco's Barbary Coast, camping areas, stables, a roping area, a square dancing platform, and a frontier-style hotel complete with chuck wagon facilities. The developers hired Frank James to be the park's superintendent; he later became Pacifica's number one public relations person. James was originally from the mid-west, but "despite the non-western background, that man is today acclaimed far and wide as Pacifica's genuine cowboy and fast gun." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961f). He performed gun-shooting shows at the park's rodeo ring on Sunday afternoons where he preached a message of gun safety and responsibility. Rodeos were planned at the park and even when it was only in partial operation, the park received as many as a thousand weekend visitors (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961c). It was hoped by Frontierland boosters that the park would be a "Disneyland-type asset to the Coastside." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961f).

In counterpoint to Frontier Days, Indian Heritage Day was held at San Pedro Valley County Par in 1986. Upwards of 200 people attended and were taught traditional games, wicker basket weaving, and how to make spear and arrowhead points. Malcolm Margolin spoke; he had devoted his life to studying and writing about the Ohlone and the richness of wildlife that was once present in the Bay Area. The event culminated with a traditional dance by the Pomo-

Miwok Indian Dancers (Perez 1986). Despite the more realistic portrayal of the valley's historical landscape, Indian Heritage Days did not elicit the nostalgia or enthusiasm as Frontier Days.

A more enduring link to the valley's agricultural past has been Shamrock Ranch. The ranch remains county land and has resisted development pressures over the years. When 'Doc' Denman was forced to give up raising dairy cows, he started a dog-boarding kennel at the ranch that was soon one of the Bay Area's largest kennels. The building that housed the Sun Valley Dairy store was converted to an animal feed and dog grooming supply store. Cabins were built at the ranch over the years and could be rented for short or long term stays, offering a sanctuary for people who wanted a place a step out of the nineteenth century, although some of the tenants also used the place to hide from the law (Drake 1994). By the late 1970's the ranch was slipping into decay and 'Doc' Denman died in 1979.

One of Shamrock Ranch's residents was Jim Evans, who moved there as a child in 1953. When not helping out around the ranch, Jim spent his youth playing. He liked to make tunnels and rooms in the barn's hay bales and jump into piles of hay from a rope swing. He and other children also built rope swings on over hanging willow branches along the ranch's creek and explored the creek's length, starting from its headwaters at a small spring at the head of the valley above the ranch on the north flank of San Pedro Mountain. The creek, which could have dangerously high flows in winter, passed through a culvert under Linda Mar Elementary School and emptied into San Pedro Creek. Evans' other childhood pastimes included wading in San Pedro Creek up to the old Trout Farm and walking to the dump at the old Bernardi ranch to look for "treasure" and use old coffee can lids as tin Frisbees (Evans 1999).

The transition period from the Truck Farming Landscape and Early Suburban Landscape to the Modern Suburban Landscape was met with mixed response. Spanish architects visiting the Bay Area in 1961 were given a tour of Linda Mar and admired the new homes with their all-electrical appliances. They thought they were still in San Francisco as they gazed out over the expanse of hills and homes (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961j). Long-time Pedro Terrace resident, Mrs.

Grace Ray, who remembered Linda Mar as an "artichoke patch", liked the new housing developments, commenting that the hillsides should be covered with homes for they offered magnificent views of the ocean and a great place to live (*Pictorial News* 1961). Although she had fond memories of her childhood years on the artichoke ranches, Gloria Hoedt is happy that homes were built in the area because it allowed her and her husband to move back to a place that she always thought was beautiful (Hoedt interview 1999).

Some of the ranchers, although not necessarily wanting to sell their farms, respected Andy Oddstad -- referred to as "such a nice man" by Frances Malavear -- and accepted it as fate that the valley's landscape was to change. Oddstad reassured the Malavears that they were helping to house thousands of people and offered to name one of the new residential streets after them. Gabriel Malavear commented, "We liked the way it was." but added, "We had no choice but to sell. Taxes were already going up. We didn't really want to sell, but . . .". They kept the ranch house and a small portion of their property and started growing heather on the hillside in 1955. They sold this last piece of their property in the late 1950's to the Bedinis, who started a flower nursery and constructed a greenhouse across the street from the house (Hoedt interview 1999). The Malavears bought one of the new Linda Mar homes and continued living in the valley (Drake n.d.). Whatever their feelings, it appears most ranchers did well financially when they sold their property (Hoedt interview 1999).

Others were more critical of the changes. Despite the heat of summer, flies swarming in the kitchen, and the pig's slop bucket just outside the kitchen door, Julia Gervais still wanted to visit her family's artichoke farm as it used to be (Gervais 1984). Her family's ranch had become part of the Pitto Ranch and in the 1960's the land became part of Willowbrook Estates. In 1962, homes were advertised in this exclusive area as having the best climate in Pacifica (*Pacifica Tribune*). The developers of Willowbrook Estates, realizing that the "community is starved for something besides mass housing", planned to construct homes that would preserve the beauty of the valley and not disturb the creek (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961i). Although Willowbrook Estates

continued the suburbanization of the valley, its developers sought to avoid the aesthetic shortcomings built to date.

The Brynjolfssons, escaping from San Francisco in the late 1940's, bought two acres in San Pedro Valley with an old 1920's house and a creek in the front yard. Mr. Brynjolfsson spoke nostalgically of the old dirt road, later oiled to keep the dust down, that led up the valley; of riding for miles around the area without running into a single house; and of barbecues with friends from San Francisco. They sold the property to Oddstad in the early 1960's and their old house was set ablaze as practice for the local fire department. Mr. Brynjolfsson lamented that "sometimes I'd like to see it all back like it was when we first came here." In what is an ironic symbol of the conflicting feelings regarding the changing valley landscape, Mr. Brynjolfsson, who was a brick layer for Oddstad Homes, helped build many of the houses in Linda Mar - - probably including the houses on his old property (*Pacifica Tribune* 1961h).

Along with houses and people, the Modern Suburban Landscape brought new concerns over natural disaster. Before large numbers of people began living there, little had been written about the frequency and impacts of floods and debris flows in the valley, although there was documented incidence of flooding in 1940, 41, 52, and 56 (San Pedro Flood Control Committee 1985)<sup>12</sup>. Flooding and debris flow events most likely occurred at regular intervals during the wet winter months since before the arrival of the Ohlone, but because most of the land was either agricultural or uninhabited, the financial costs were low or nil and people took such occurrences as a matter of course. With new homes and stores, some built adjacent to the creeks or on the old lakebed or at the mouths of the numerous small draws in the hillsides, the financial costs were to change.

The first major natural disaster to Linda Mar occurred on Saturday, October 13, 1962. It had been raining for the past few days throughout the Bay Area with totals over a four-day period for Pacifica ranging from over 11 inches up to 22 inches. Debris flows let loose in a number of San Pedro's smaller valleys, inundating Frontierland at the top of the North Fork, the Gay's Trout Farm on the South Fork, and several other homes and a barn with mud and water.

Floodwaters surged through all of the small creeks and converged in the main stem of San Pedro Creek. Street storm drains that emptied into the creeks had not had their annual cleanout by the city and water quickly backed up onto the streets. The end result was major flooding at the Linda Mar Shopping Center and in the Anza-Arguello neighborhood, where Lake Mathilde once stood. Water in some places was chest deep and up to 200 people were evacuated. At two locations along the beach, pumps had been constructed to help with street runoff in anticipation of such an event, but these pumps were quickly overwhelmed and stopped operating as creek waters rose.

The flood damaged 85 homes and 5 businesses in the shopping center and destroyed the Trout Farm and Frontierland. In less than an hour, water and mud crumpled the farm's metal fish rearing tanks, filled in the pond and the creek channel, and killed over 25,000 young fish, many of them being spread over the meadows just downstream from the farm. Frontierland was "almost wiped off the map." Mud flowed into stables, forcing the evacuation of horses, and filled the riding ring with so much mud that the once chest-high fence could easily be stepped over. Ten tons of hay was washed away and the owners were left looking for people to board the park's horses. Fortunately, no one was killed or seriously hurt by the mud and water. Some residents blamed the city for not cleaning out storm drains, providing better drainage, or building better pumps, while others attributed the flood to an "act of God." Everyone agreed, however, that the storm produced an unusual amount of rain (Drake 1982a, *Pacifica Tribune* 1962).

Floods came again to Linda Mar on October 11, 1972, thirty-six hours to the day of the 1962 flood. In the months prior to the flood, the capacity of the pumping stations had been increased and a backup power supply added. Frank Sampson of the Department of Public Works said the improvements would "virtually negate the possibility of another major flood". In the edition printed the night before the flood, the *Pacifica Tribune* wrote for residents to relax; a flood in Linda Mar was not likely to happen (Barnard 1982a). However, as the rains intensified during the night and early morning hours, water again overwhelmed the pumping stations and they stopped operating. Floodwaters once again rose and just before dawn the Linda Mar

Shopping Center and homes in the Anza-Arguello area again were flooded. Further confusion ensued when the telephones went out and residents were not aware of flood warnings until water was at their doorstep. However, the flood was not nearly as bad as the 1962 flood, with only a half dozen homes being flooded on Anza Drive and damage estimates to homes and businesses did not exceed \$100,000 (*Pacifica Tribune* 1972b, 1972c).

On January 4-5, 1982, flooding came for a third time to Linda Mar. Rainfall figures for a twenty-four period exceeded totals from the 1962 storm with 4.47 inches falling at San Pedro Valley County Park from Monday to Tuesday. Again, the pumping stations were overwhelmed and stopped operating and by early Tuesday morning the Linda Mar Shopping Center and the Anza-Arguello neighborhood again were flooded. One Anza-Arguello resident claimed that once the pumps stopped working, flood waters rose as fast as one foot in 15 minutes. Eighty residents were forced to seek temporary overnight shelter at Terra Nova High School. Water in the shopping center was waist deep in places. Schools were closed Tuesday due to flooding and a "carnival atmosphere" came over the shopping center, temporarily called 'Lake Linda Mar', as teens converged with rafts, bikes, boats and four-wheel drive vehicles. One picture in the *Pacifica Tribune* shows teenagers driving four-wheel drive pick-up trucks, shouting and laughing as their trucks plow through water up to the tops of the wheel wells in the shopping center parking lot. Another shows two people in a rowboat floating past partially submerged pumps at a gas station. Floodwaters surging through San Pedro Creek seriously damaged the Adobe Drive Bridge and destroyed the Peralta Road Bridge. (Barnard 1982a, *Pacifica Tribune* 1982a, 1982b).

The 1982 storm, considered a hundred year event, also brought the deadly potential of debris flows to the valley. Three children were killed when a debris flow raced down a narrow 400-foot long draw, pushing a neighbor's house off its foundation and into the Velez home at 1249 Oddstad Boulevard. Another debris flow on Valdez Way sent tons of mud, branches, small boulders and gravel down the street, pushing aside cars and leaving a 3 foot deep pile of debris at the end of the street where it intersects with Rosita Way (Verdeckberg 1982). The potential for such debris flows was known. A 1970 San Mateo County Map done by the Engineering firm of



Howard Donley Associates shows that a debris flow could happen at the draw above the Velez home, as well as numerous other areas throughout San Pedro Valley (Howard Donley Associates, Inc. 1970). However, Donley, who was hired as a geology consultant by the city of Pacifica, stated that the debris flows caused by the storm "caught the professionals by surprise, as did some 200 other mud or landslides throughout Pacifica" and that the storm was "of monumental proportions, putting it in the 'act of God' category in Pacifica". He defended the builders and engineers who built the homes, stating "they could not have known or challenged the stability of a nearby hill that had survived storms and earthquakes for thousands of years." (Drake 1982a). Damage totals for Pacifica from the storm was in the millions of dollars with 300 homes damaged and 4 destroyed and 60 businesses damaged (Noack 1982).

Three major floods in two decades and the deadly debris flows of 1982 started to make some residents wonder if houses belonged in San Pedro Valley and Pacifica. Bill Drake, a *Pacifica Tribune* reporter, wrote a month after the 1982 storm:

"It's a new kind of shadow for Pacifica as residents there protect their homes from a frightening menace hidden somewhere in the skies and the hills. They are the very same soft and scenic hills that helped attract us all here in the first place, and which now, as one Pacifican put it last week, 'have seemed to turn upon us.' Should Pacifica collectively have a guilty conscience? Did this city, just moving into its 25th year as a corporate entity, do something wrong, or fail to do something, that could have prevented the deaths of three children in a crushed home? Why did Anza Drive suffer for the third time in two decades a damaging flood?" (Drake 1982a)

The photograph accompanying Drake's article shows a Park Pacifica resident sweeping sand on Grand Teton Drive. Sand had been dumped on the street and used to fill sandbags, which now line the curb three bags high. The sandbags were an attempt to protect the homes from a potential slide area farther uphill.

Other residents, years later, were able to smile about having to evacuate their homes and about the marina-like ambiance that overcame their neighborhoods. However, the floods forced a number of others to move away. Long time residents of the Anza-Arguello neighborhood, who

despite the floods still felt that Linda Mar was a great place to live and bring up children, regretted that so many people left after the 1982 floods. The Godso's, who bought their house on Balboa Way in 1954, acknowledged that most of the homes on their street were still owner occupied. On Anza Way, one block west and a little lower in elevation, however, it is mostly all newcomers and renters. Some of the Anza Way homes were submerged up to their ceilings when the 1982 floodwaters came (Curry 1992).

In response to the floods, the San Pedro Flood Control Committee, working with the Army Corps of Engineers, released its Feasibility and Recommendation Report in 1985. The report acknowledged that the pumps were not adequate to handle floodwaters from San Pedro Creek and identified a series of potential mitigation measures. The measure finally recommended involved creating a low levee on the north bank, a sacrificial flood plain on the south bank along the lower reaches of San Pedro Creek, and replacement of the Highway 1 Bridge. The pilings built when the road was constructed obstructed high water flows from the creek. A photograph in the *Pacifica Tribune* taken during the 1962 flood shows creek waters just below the bridge's roadbed and a large crane reaching over the bridge lifting buckets of water and debris. The caption reads, "Opening Up Pedro Creek . . . this equipment helped save the day" (*Pacifica Tribune* 1962). Excavation for the flood plain was planned for west of the new Peralta Road Bridge and a diversion channel within this flood plain would be added starting west of the Linda Mar Care Center convalescent hospital. The mouth of the creek would be widened west of Highway 1 as it emptied out into the ocean. The additional flood plain and channel widening would give floodwaters a place to go and slow flood velocities down, decreasing the erosion force of the waters. The levee on the north bank was recommended to help protect the shopping center and homes on the north bank of the creek. The major obstacle in the way of implementing the project was money and several years later the project was still not funded (San Pedro Flood Control Committee 1985, Curtis 1991).

To counterbalance the spread of homes across the valley during the 1960's and 70's, a new type of development was proposed: a regional county park. San Mateo County had started

purchasing land for the park back in the 1970's. Although the park preserved part of the valley's more rugged landscape, its establishment also reflected a desire to secure a local water supply. Back in the early 1950's the NCCWD had been interested in using water from San Pedro Creek and wanted to build a filtration plant to "make practical use of the millions of gallons of Pedro creek water now splashing into the ocean" (*Pacifica Tribune* 1967). It was awarded limited water rights on the South Fork, but had to divert water downstream from the Gay's trout farm where it was too contaminated for domestic use. The NCCWD calculated that in order to make using water from the South Fork feasible, it needed to control about 410 acres of watershed land. During the 1960's federal programs were instituted that made it financially possible for the NCCWD to apply for grants and loans. The Gays, whose trout farm had been wiped out in the 1962 flood, still owned 21 acres of land and were leasing some of it for growing watercress for San Francisco markets. They were resistant to selling and were opposed to the NCCWD's plans, but the NCCWD purchased the Gay's land by eminent domain and by the end of 1967 had more than 410 acres along the South Fork. The District built its filtration plant near the confluence of the Middle and South Forks where the Gays had their first trout farm.

The NCCWD was also talking to the county about purchasing 478 acres of watershed land along the Middle Fork to be used as a wilderness park. If the county agreed to do this, the NCCWD would lease its lands along the South Fork to the county to be incorporated into a larger park. Using the watershed lands as a park would protect the water quality and prohibit development. The NCCWD was also considering building two dams on the Middle Fork in 1968, but the projects proved not to be cost effective. The county started purchasing land from a variety of property owners in the 1970s and a ninety-nine year lease with the NCCWD was signed, creating San Pedro Valley County Park (Hill, u.d., *Pacifica Tribune* 1967). The Weiler Ranch, which was some of the last land in the valley still being farmed, growing artichokes and a small fruit orchard, was converted over to park use. The old ranch house and outbuildings were torn down and the home site was used for the Walnut Grove group picnic grounds. The ranch's agricultural fields that spread along the Middle Fork were allowed to become grassy meadows,

although the grasses are mostly non-native annual species. The county built the park's visitor center and parking lot on parts of the old trout farm and the Gay's house was converted into a ranger's quarters.

The creeks and hillsides of the park were in a deteriorated state. County rangers had to remove large appliances from the creeks and do erosion control along the stream banks to counteract the effects of using them as a dump (*Pacifica Tribune* 1980b). The Coastside Sportsman's Association, which was run by "good ol' boys", owned 75 acres of land about half way up the north side of Montara Mountain. In 1966, the Association rented bulldozers to clear a road up to the property. This was done without permits and left a wide swath of disturbed land, clearly visible in a 1968 aerial photograph (figure 26), for years after its construction. The county was eventually able to purchase the land to incorporate into the park. Off-road motorcycles also used the hillsides as a recreation ground and the sound of their engines could be heard echoing off the hills when kids were out from school (Azevedo interview 1999, EDAW 1974, Fritz interview 2002, and Parker, J. 1977).

In 1973, Christine Case, a Skyline College biology instructor, started studying the park's creeks and in 1977 applied for grants to develop a video and teaching materials about the ecology of the creeks to be used at the new park's visitor center. For Case, the creeks and their surrounding watersheds were a rustic area filled with "ecological treasures". She acknowledged that to children the park's creeks seemed nothing "but a dirty, polluted stream, a place to throw a handful of trash or an empty beer can." Her goal was to work to help change people's perceptions of the creeks through education (Parker, J. 1977). By 1980, as the park opened, Ranger David Moore felt that the creeks within the new park were probably cleaner than they had been in 60 years; "There's no man-made debris in it." After several years of cleanup preparing the park for opening day, the area had "been restored to a healthy condition after many years of use as a free dump." (*Pacifica Tribune* 1980b).

San Pedro Valley County Park was planned as a low intensity use park and about 97 percent of the approximate 1,000 acre park is undeveloped. Hiking and riding, picnicking,



Figure 26. 1968 USGS aerial photo showing San Pedro Valley. The Sportsmen's Association land and the road leading to it are shown below and right of center (USGS 1968b).

informal field sports, and social gatherings were the types of activities intended for the mostly flat valley section of the park. Because close to half the park is on NCCWD watershed land, uses within the park must be compatible with protecting the watershed (EDAW 1974, Fritz interview 2002). There are about 10 miles of hiking trails within the park, although not all the trails were constructed when the park opened. The trails were designed by Harry Dean, the county's park planner. At the time of construction, some of the chaparral was so thick that rangers used chain saws and their uniforms were blackened by the heavy oil from poison oak (Svaneviki and Burgett 2001). In late 1979, a short, self-explanatory nature trail opened that was also handicapped-accessible. The trail has 20 trail posts that are keyed to a handout with descriptions of trailside vegetation (*Pacifica Tribune* 1979). In October of 1990, the 2.5 mile Montara Mountain Trail opened, which took 4 months to hack out of the chaparral and poison oak covered mountain side. The trail was "carefully designed to draw hikers up and away from civilization." (Hunter 1990).

Over the years, numerous articles have praised the park and recommended it as a destination. Chris Hunter of the *Pacifica Tribune* perceived the park's entrance as "a gateway to a forested Shangri-la" and further noted, "The impressive reality of so much natural, unspoiled landscape so close to San Francisco is heartening in this age of asphalt and steel." During the winter and spring months, after the rains have started, a long thin waterfall known as Brooks Falls develops over one of the steep escarpments on the north flank of Montara Mountain. Hunter described the falls as "creating even more of a lost jungle atmosphere (Hunter 1990). Tom Stienstra wrote, "Just 20 minutes south of San Francisco is a secluded setting where visitors are few, the coastal beauty is divine, and hikers can carve out their own personal slice of heaven" and that the park "is a backyard wilderness that is often overlooked." (Stienstra 1994). Ranger Denis Hanley mentioned seeing mountain lion, bobcat, coyotes, fox and deer. The Weiler Ranch Trail is handicapped-accessible and Hanley observed, "Children in a wheelchair love it because they can get down and feel the grass in the meadow, and often see deer and other animals." (Stienstra 1994). The *Pacifica Tribune Tourist and Resident Guide* describes the park as

"Virtually a tiny Yosemite, the park offers respite from harried urban life." (*Pacifica Tribune and Resident Guide* 1994).

The City of Pacifica built other parks and smaller recreation facilities in San Pedro Valley. In 1960, the city council awarded a grant to start construction of Oddstad Park on Crespi Drive at the top of the hill above Sanchez's Adobe. The park was built with a concrete block restroom building, some picnic tables, and a children's playground (*Pacifica Tribune* 1960b). In 1972, plans were drawn up for a park to be built behind Oddstad School at the end of Yosemite Drive, on the old Bernardi Dump site. This park was given the name Frontierland Park, in memory of Frontierland that used to be located just north of the site. Facilities for the park included group and individual picnic sites, volleyball and tennis courts, an outdoor theater, horseshoe pits, a nature center, a small pond, and an animal farm to be sponsored by the local 4-H Club; most of which was never built (*Pacifica Tribune* u.d., *San Mateo County Times* 1972). September of 1987 saw the opening of Pacifica's Community Center. The city purchased the Bell Telephone building on Crespi Drive, which had been abandoned due to seeping ground water (*Pacifica Tribune* 1986). In 1994, COACH (City's Organized Athletes Coalition to Help) started raising funds to buy the old Sanchez school site from the Laguna Salada Union School District. They wanted to demolish the buildings and convert the site into playing fields for football/soccer and little league baseball (Curry 1994). The old school buildings were instead converted to the Sanchez Art Center and a Montessori school.

Other projects, even though well intentioned, never came to pass. In 1962, the Laguna Salada Union School District took by eminent domain 43 acres of Pitto Ranch that "abounds in glens and marsh areas where a small stream trickles through" (*Coastside Chronicle* 1975). Part of the ranch property had become the Willowbrook Estates and the school district wanted part of the property in anticipation of needing more classroom space. However, a school was never built and some of the old farm buildings were used to store Park Division equipment. By early 1975, a totally different plan was created for the property, the school district wanted to get a grant to convert the property to a nature classroom with museum facilities. The plans called for

80 small plots to be built for community organic gardening, a summer day camp for 8-12 year olds, a family hiking program, and an educational program where students could learn about natural history and people's role in the environment. While waiting for funding, some of the land and buildings were loaned to the local 4-H Club. By the end 1977, the club was complaining of vandals killing or stealing their animals and even of someone taking rifle shots at the animals from a nearby hill. The buildings were in a dilapidated state and the site had become a headache for the school district, which, if it could not fund the nature programs, would try to sell the property (*Coastside Chronicle* 1975, Bik 1975, and Davenport 1977).

As noted earlier, by the 1980's all of the major Modern Suburban Landscape elements were in place. Houses and other development had pretty much reached contemporary areal extent, although cosmetic changes have occurred over the years. Residents were drawn to Linda Mar and other valley developments partly for affordable houses, but also because of the open space and beauty of the hillsides and coastal mountains.



## VII. Today:

What does the Modern Suburban Landscape of San Pedro Valley look like today? It includes relicts of previous landscapes, although in some instances one has to look carefully and with a knowledgeable eye to see them. Remnants of the Indigenous Landscape are all but gone. No Ohlone live in the valley and the most significant acknowledgment of the Ohlone's past can be found at the Sanchez Adobe County Historic Site on Linda Mar Boulevard. Archeological excavations have unearthed evidence of Ohlone settlement and interpretive displays describe Ohlone culture. The creeks, flowing since before the Ohlone came, retain their corridors of riparian vegetation, but they have been highly altered by intensive human settlement. The tule filled lake at the mouth of the valley has long since been drained and filled, but its ghost is still prevalent, as the Floods of '62, '72, and '82 will attest. The hillsides, no longer regularly burned, are covered with chaparral, coastal scrub and groves of eucalyptus and other non-native trees. What grasses remain are mostly invasive annual grasses brought by Europeans, not the native perennial bunch grasses. Much of the wildlife is gone. Deer, the occasional mountain lion, bobcat, quail, possum, raccoon, skunk are the most noticeable reminders of the numerous animals, birds, and fish that populated the valley area.

Almost no visible signs of the Mission Landscape remain, aside from physical artifacts at the Sanchez Adobe County Historic Site. These can only be seen if one takes the time to leave the road and enter the museum. The buildings of *Asistencia of San Pedro y San Pablo* are no longer standing, although some of the foundations may have been used for later structures, and there are no fields of corn, wheat, or other crops growing. The ditches and live willow fence along the north boundary of the outpost's fields have long since been filled in or removed and are covered with housing. Some of Linda Mar's streets bear the names of the early Spanish explorers and missionaries.

The most prominent relic of the Rancho Landscape can again be found at the Sanchez Adobe County Historic Site. The old house still stands and has been faithfully restored. The

interior is dedicated to displays of artifacts from rancho life and literature describes rancho history. The site is surrounded by tract homes, making the adobe a conspicuous landmark. A mural on the wall of the Sanchez Art Center just down the street contains images of historic Mexican cultural activities, as well as a small portrait of Sanchez himself. There is little evidence that thousands of cattle, sheep, and horses once roamed freely over the valley hillsides.

Vestiges of the Truck Farming Landscape can still be found, but they are few. Many ranchers stayed in the valley after they sold their land to developers and some of their old stucco ranch houses still stand, surrounded by 1950's suburban tract housing. The Malavear home on Linda Mar Boulevard, just east of Sanchez's old adobe, and the Del Rosso's ranch house on Peralta Avenue are architecturally different from their neighbor's houses, but one needs to take the time to pay attention to the details to notice. Some of the new streets built during the 1950's and 60's were named after the old artichoke ranchers, such as Malavear Court and Picardo Court. Only a few of the heather plants that the Malavears started growing on the hillsides behind their ranch house survive, but the greenhouses that the Bedinis built are still standing, a more visible link to the valley's agricultural past. There is one last remnant farm left, part of the old Picardo Ranch, tucked away in the head of a small valley behind the Terra Nova High School football stadium. The land is still farmed and the "No Trespassing" and "Beware of Dog" signs at the top of the drive leading down to the farm give the impression that this place is a last holdout against suburbia. However, even here farming may soon cease. The National Park Service is in the process of purchasing the property so that it can become part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (Davis conversation 2002, Vasey conversation 2002)<sup>13</sup>. The only evidence that artichoke plants once dominated the valley's landscape can be found in the occasional tiny row of pale-green plants in home gardens and the interpretative display at the San Pedro Valley County Park visitor's center.

Even the Early Suburban Landscape has only a few reminders of its formative years. The elevated Ocean Shore Railroad grade can still be seen in stretches along the shore at Pedro Terrace and the old Pedro Terrace station house still stands, but is now a private residence. The

would-be Tobin Park development can still be found on some maps, including land ownership maps created when San Pedro Valley Park was planned in the 1970's. The dirt road/hiking trail that used to be Coastside Boulevard can still be traveled, but now only by foot or bicycle. However, as with the other landscapes, most of the Early Suburban Landscape was paved over with the construction of Linda Mar and later developments.

The houses themselves are the most prominent element of the Modern Suburban Landscape (figure 27). The streets of Linda Mar are as Andy Oddstad laid them out and many of the homes probably look as they did when built, except for paint. On a drive through the streets of the Anza-Arguello neighborhood, one will find mostly treeless streets with small front lawns, many yellowing in the late summer sun. Telephone poles are the tallest element in the neighborhood and the lack of trees allows one a view of surrounding hills. The houses are mostly non-descript, low, single story "ranchers" with a two-car garage door, a small porch entryway, and a small picture window facing the street. Here and there a taller house stands above the crowd, the result of more recent renovations. Some houses are wood sided, others have been clad in stucco, and for the most part all are painted in pastel colors. Many have not been well maintained over the years. The flat terrain, lack of street trees, faded pastel colors, and criss-crossing overhead telephone wires creates a somewhat drab scene, even on a bright sunny summer day. There is the occasional well-maintained brightly colored house with more lush landscaping, but in this part of the valley they are few. Pick-up trucks appear to be the vehicle of choice and boats on trailers can also be found in many drives or on front lawns.

Most of Linda Mar resembles the Anza-Arguello neighborhood, although as one drives back into the valley, one will notice more and larger trees, both along the street and looming out over the low houses from the back yards. The back end of Linda Mar feels less expansive as the hillsides narrow the valley. A drive up Perez Road, which follows the Sanchez Fork back into the valley on land that used to be part of the Pitto Ranch, reveals a different landscape than the homes of the valley floor. Many are newer, some just completed in the last year or so. They are mostly two story and much larger, the newest ones following the current trend of filling property



Figure 27. Linda Mar and San Pedro Valley today looking east from San Pedro Point (photo taken by author).

lots with the house footprint. There are a variety of architectural styles, from classical east coast styles to modern 1960's to the postmodern suburban home that is so prevalent today. In terms of architectural style, this is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in San Pedro Valley. At the back of the narrow valley, Perez Road branches out into several streets with names such as Spring Wood, Valley Wood and Oak Wood. It is greener here than in other parts of Linda Mar, with large eucalyptus groves and Monterey pines covering the hillsides and riparian vegetation following the creeks. In some places, the hillsides rise just behind the houses and a few homes are built up on the steep slopes themselves. The small streets end in tight turn-arounds where the steep, scrub covered terrain prevents them from going any farther. The plan to create a nature learning center and community garden out of the old school district property was never realized.

The Park Pacifica neighborhood is also architecturally different from Linda Mar. Here, Oddstad Boulevard and the other side streets wind their way up valley of the buried North Fork. The houses are mostly two-story with the requisite two-car garage and entryway on the ground floor. As in Linda Mar, house styles are uniform, but more reflective of the 1960s with plate glass living room windows and a slightly more modern look. Again, the color palette is mostly pale pastel hues, although more of the homes have been well maintained over the years. The front yard landscaping is greener, with a greater number of shrubs and low trees. Again, there are not many formal street trees and the hillsides that rise steeply behind the homes are mostly scrub and chaparral covered.

San Pedro Valley still has the three shopping centers. Linda Mar Shopping Center, the first to be built, has been the most successful and today looks nothing as it did when built. The Purity Supermarket is now a Safeway, and there are over 25 stores in the complex. The entire center recently had a major facelift with creamy stucco exteriors and blue roofs. There is a MacDonald's and even Starbucks Coffee has opened a franchise here, a positive indicator of having "made it". On a recent mid-week visit, the parking lot was mostly full and despite a few empty storefronts, Linda Mar Shopping Center appears to be the major complex for the valley.

The other two centers have fallen on harder times. There have been a number of plans to revitalize the Sea Village Shopping Center. A plan in the late 1980's called for transforming the center with environmentally orientated specialty shops and restaurants, with the Nature Company as one of the anchor stores. Restaurants would have primarily served California nouvelle cuisine. An outdoor pavilion, ponds, footbridges, aviary, and rock garden would have been key landscape elements (Larsen 1989b). Such grandiose plans have yet to come to fruition, partly due to the independent nature of Pedro Terrace residents who want to maintain the more rural feel of their neighborhood. Today, the original Safeway supermarket is the Pacifica Athletic Center. There is also a beauty salon, a couple of restaurants and cafes, an equipment rental agency, and an Ace Hardware across the street. The center looks weathered and slightly run down, with faded paint and weeds growing in the parking medians. However, as at the Linda Mar Shopping Center, the parking lot was full on a recent visit.

Park Mall Center has been the hardest hit. The Safeway has recently shut down and the space has been partitioned out to a couple of different business. One of these is a smaller market called Sun Valley Fine Foods, a name harkening back to the past. Except for a liquor store, a bagel shop, and a couple of restaurants most of the other storefronts are empty. The *Park Mall Center* sign on Terra Nova Boulevard, which lists all the stores in the center, is out of date and does not reflect the changes that have recently taken place. There is one other abandoned supermarket in the valley, a Central Food Market built on Crespi Drive sometime in the 1960's or 70's, judging by the architectural style. It stands empty with its plate glass windows staring out onto the street, although is scheduled to reopen soon (Davis conversation 2002).

Although shopping centers have not had the most success, parks have. San Pedro Valley Park has become a huge asset to the valley's landscape and users have spoken favorably of the park. According to Ranger Fritz, the majority of park users are Pacificans, especially during the week. The park receives about 300 visitors a day and the most used trail is the Weiler Ranch Trail. Parents with strollers, young children, and the elderly all enjoy the flat mile-long trail that follows the Middle Fork. The next most popular trails are the Montara Mountain and Brooks

Creek trails, although these are steep in sections and used more by serious hikers. On weekends, picnicking is the major activity at the park, especially for large groups who rent out sites at the Walnut Grove picnic area (Fritz interview 2002). An informal survey of users showed that the park was valued as a special place. Responses such as "natural", "beautiful", "clean", "a place to unwind", "get away from things", "to get close to nature", and "to get back to nature" were given when users were asked what they liked about the park and why they came there. One user even considered the park the epitome of man and nature communing together (Culp 1999).

Frontierland Park, at the end of Yosemite Drive, is also a well-attended park, although for different reasons. The nature center, pond, and small animal farm that were called for in the original plan were never built, however the park does have a large, grassy, bowl-shaped meadow lined with newly planted trees. In the park's northwest corner, just uphill from the dirt parking area and adjacent to the meadow, an immense new playground has recently been constructed. It features a large, two-level wooden climbing structure with ladders, slides, ramps, green roofed towers, swings, and all the other accoutrements of the modern playground structure. The formal entry has low walls lined with tiles hand painted by children. There are picnic tables next to the play area. On a mid-week summer afternoon, the dirt lot was filled to capacity, mostly with minivans, and the playground was crowded with yelling, running children. The original play structure set at the back of the park, next to the bunker like bathroom building, sat unused. There is little indication the park was built over a dump.

A connection to the 'western' theme that was a part of the Modern Suburban Valley's landscape for so many years is the riding center at the end of Cape Breton Drive, where one of the original buildings from Frontierland can be found. The remnants of Frontierland after the 1962 storm became Saddleton Stables and then later Coastside Corral. In 1969, Coastside Corral was relocated on 19 acres farther up the valley to make way for Park Pacifica homes. Most of the original buildings were burned down at the time of the move. However, the "western style" hotel was kept and the Coastside Corral played host to Frontier Days for a number of years. Today Coastside Corral is known as Park Pacifica Stables and is a riding center and boards

horses; for a monthly fee, one can rent a horse and stable and the responsibility of grooming and exercising the animal. The old hotel building is used as a cafe (Azevedo 1999, *Pacifica Tribune* 1980a).

Shamrock Ranch is still operating, both as a full service horse stable and dog kennel. After Doc Denman died in 1979, his daughter, Dana, along with her then-husband Tyler took over operations. Dana grew up on Shamrock Ranch but moved away to attend college. She returned upon the death of her father with a mission to keep Shamrock Ranch alive. She and Tyler considered themselves environmentalists and began to update the deteriorating ranch buildings and took measures to reduce waste runoff into the creeks. The soil at the ranch was rated "better than average" by the Department of Agriculture and Tyler started growing organic vegetables for some of San Francisco restaurants and hotels. Liza Brown leased land on the ranch and started *Brown's Greens*, growing lettuce, peas, herbs, and flowers to sell in San Francisco's markets. Another tenant used some of the ranch's pastures to train sheep dogs. In the mid-1990's, Dana built both a riding arena and a Olympic size dressage arena, made plans to host rodeos, and had hopes of revitalizing Western Days.

Over the years, Dana has fought to keep out development from homes to highways and maintain the ranch in its historical capacity. In a letter to the editor of the *Pacifica Tribune*, Dana defended the need for Shamrock Ranch and its role in the community:

"Shamrock Ranch is a beautiful viewshed for many people that live in Linda Mar. . . . My husband Tyler and I choose to keep it functional open space and **not** develop it into condominiums. There is probably more native wildlife, flora and fauna, on Shamrock Ranch, than almost any other place in Pacifica. There are cows for the school children to see when they come on field trips, as well as chickens, ducks and horses; there are also dogs and cats that we board in our kennels." (Denman 1983).

She has rebuffed the pressures of developers and critics, although she has received lots of advice over the years about what her property could be better used for. During the 1990's, Caltrans (California's highway department) proposed to build a Highway 1 bypass through the western



portion of the ranch in order to avoid the passage around Devils Slide. Dana and many others in the area fought hard against the proposal, opting for a tunnel that would go under San Pedro Mountain. The bypass proposal was defeated. Although Shamrock Ranch has remained intact, homes are built right up to the edge of her property on Adobe Drive; homes that are serenaded by the yelps of barking dogs that come to stay at Dana's kennels.(Drake 1980, 1994a, 1994b, and 1994c).

The Modern Suburban Landscape, however, is not just the built environment. In 1990, residents still found Linda Mar a nice place to live, but were concerned about the natural space around them, as well as the concerns for a safe neighborhood, schools, community, etc. They actively used the open space in the hills above their houses as places for quiet recreation and were concerned about its well-being. John Murphey and his wife Susan Grandfield lived on Bower Road, "a bucolic, tree lined street, crowded with tract housing built in the early 1960's". John, originally from San Francisco, stated his reasons for moving to Linda Mar: "I moved here because of the open space. I like the trees and clean air. And I love the hiking on Montara Mountain." Susan added, "There's a real mix of people here." "There's plenty of white-collar people, but there's also welders, plumbers, electricians, and constructions workers" observed John, who enjoys the annual July 4 neighborhood block parties that have been a tradition since the 1960's. John and Susan, as well as other residents of Bower Road, are scared of further development, feel that the area's schools are under-funded, and are worried about the health of the environment (Murphey 1990).

Residents like the Murpheys appreciation of the valley's open spaces and use of terms such as "nature" and "natural" to describe San Pedro Valley County Park reflect residents' desire to be connected with the natural world. However, the landscape of San Pedro Valley has been impacted by human intervention since the time of the Ohlone and has been seriously degraded over the years. Today invasive plant species crowd out the remnant native flora. Although places like San Pedro Valley Park may be "natural", they are not pristine. A 1990 *Pacific Tribune* photograph that accompanies Chris Hunter's article about the park shows Pampas Grass

covering a hillside. The caption reads "The vegetation is lush and green along the trails" (Hunter 1990). Pampas Grass may be "lush and green", but it hardly represents a pristine environment. It was introduced to San Pedro Valley during the 1950's to help control erosion and is an invasive species that spreads rapidly. Pampas Grass is now one of the scourges of the park and grows wherever there is disturbed land, such as along the road to the old Sportsman's Association property, as well as on the property itself. According to Ranger Fritz, County Sheriff's work furlough teams were used to grub out many of the plants where the terrain permitted, but there are still patches of the grass visible. The policy now is one of containment.

Much of forested area of the park is composed of extensive groves of blue gum eucalyptus trees, another invasive species that has come to dominate parts of San Pedro Valley since its introduction during the early years of the Truck Farming Landscape. Eucalyptus trees drop a heavy leaf litter that prevents other vegetation from growing. Removal of trees is not only an expensive option, it is also a politically-charged one. San Mateo County requires a review process for proposals to remove any tree with a trunk more than 12 inches in diameter. The ordinance was passed to protect old trees in residential neighborhoods, but has affected tree removal throughout the county. Applying for a review for every old eucalyptus in the park is not feasible, so the park rangers are only able to minimize the spread of the existing groves as time and budgets permit (Fritz interview 2002, VanderWerf 1994).

Even with invasive plants spreading throughout the park and other parts of the valley, there are areas that may represent the pristine landscape of San Pedro Valley. These are the areas covered with coastal scrub and chaparral and include various species of manzanita, poison oak, ceanothus, coyote brush, coffeeberry, California sage, and red elderberry. These plant communities are climax communities where they occur (EDAW 1974), but were never allowed to establish themselves in the past. As mentioned, the Ohlone frequently burned the hillsides to preserve the perennial grasses and maintain grasslands. Although both coastal scrub and chaparral require fire to regenerate, they prefer a fire frequency of 10-40 years so that the plants can grow and mature. When fire does come and the plants are burned away, forbs and then

grasses grow in burned-over areas. Chaparral plants require a few years after fire to germinate, grow, and start to out-compete the grasses and forbs, again regaining dominance (Christensen and Muller 1975, Hanes 1971, and Minnich 1983). The frequent burnings by the Ohlone would have prevented plants of the scrub and chaparral communities from overtaking the grasses. During the Mission and Rancho Landscape periods, cattle grazing also prevented scrub and chaparral communities from reaching a mature state, except maybe in very steep terrain where the cattle could not have grazed. This is evidenced by the historical reports through the early part of the 1800's of grass-covered hillsides throughout the Coastside, with little to no mention of other plant types. With the cessation of extensive grazing and fire-setting and the suppression of accidental fires, coastal scrub and chaparral communities have been able to take hold and grow to maturity.

The creeks in San Pedro Valley County Park and throughout the valley are still adjusting to changes introduced by successive human uses of watershed lands. The main stem of the creek and its tributaries have become deeply incised over the years. Creek channel straightening, reduction of flood plains, increased storm run-off due to urbanization, and bank stabilization attempts have accelerated stream water discharge and velocity during periods of high flow. Increased stream velocities create stronger erosive forces that allow creek waters to cut farther down into their channels, especially when confined to the creek channel, and to erode behind the upstream side of bank stabilization structures. Culverts and narrowly spaced bridge piers also create localized areas of faster water velocity, causing undercutting at bridge piers and the formation of deep pools at the base of culverts. These structures can also trap debris, such as tree branches and logs carried by floodwaters, exacerbating flooding (Booth 1990, Collins et al 2001, Riley 1998, and Ritter 1979).

When Francisco Sanchez gained title to his rancho, San Pedro Creek meandered a few feet below ground level at the adobe site and Collins estimates that the creek level was less than 5 feet below ground level along the lower reaches of the creek. When the Linda Mar subdivision was started, the channel was as much as 15 feet below ground level. Straightening the lower

reach of the creek by placing it in a ditch was the most significant cause of channel incision. The ditch had a steeper channel gradient than the original channel and also disconnected the creek from Lake Mathilde. These factors would have allowed for faster stream velocities. As the channel incised, more of the surrounding water table would have drained into the creek, also increasing flows and incision. Increased urbanization and accompanying high levels of storm water run-off has only furthered incision and this is exacerbated still more by haphazard attempts at stream bank stabilization by property owners along the creek (Collins et al 2001:42 and Drake, R. 1952:28-29).

Cheaply built sewer lines, storm drains, and public apathy have created water pollution in the creeks that has impacted not only wildlife, but also area residents. By 2002, Linda Mar had 6,000 homes and about 20,000 people. The original sewer lateral pipes from the homes to the street were fabricated from tarpaper and have been leaking over the years. San Mateo County, the Environmental Protection Agency and private citizens led by Dr. Bernie Halloran, a member of the San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition, have all conducted tests monitoring the bacteria levels of the creek. At the mouth of the creek, the level of *E. coli* bacteria, which is found in fecal matter, was in some instances 11 times the state standard for safe levels. A thesis study by Vivian Matuk, a San Francisco State University geography graduate student, showed that *E. coli* levels are highest in the summer and fall (Matuk 2001:113-115). Surfers at the beach have acknowledged that the mouth of the creek smells of sewage at times, especially after major storms, and some claim to have gotten sick a couple of days after surfing there. The county has sometimes closed the beach when levels of bacteria are high in order to safeguard the public. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board has a list of classifications for watershed use and management. Although it has classified San Pedro Creek as a non-contact recreation creek (people in theory are not actively in the creek), people sometimes do go into the creek, especially at the beach, and thus risk exposure to diseases from *E. coli* (Matuk 2001, Linden 2001, 2002).

Dr. Halloran has also been conducting tests to determine the sources of the creek's pollution and has evidence connecting at least some of it to the leaking sewers. However, Scott Holmes, Pacifica's Public Works Director, contends that the E. coli levels are caused by the large numbers of raccoons and skunks that live near the creek and by people throwing their pet's feces from their backyards into the creeks. Attempts by the city to get homeowners to replace their sewer laterals have been met with resistance from both homeowners and the local real estate industry (Linden 2001, 2002).

Despite the poor state of the creek's channels and polluted waters, steelhead trout still manage to get upstream to spawn, but as the Environmental Impact Report for the park states, "That any steelhead at all persist in this creek is attributable to the remarkable tenacity and drive of this game fish and to the high quality of the spring-fed waters of the South and Middle Fork." (EDAW 1974). Steelhead hatch around May and by the following spring have migrated downstream to the ocean. Three years later, they will migrate back upstream to the same areas where they hatched in order to spawn. They begin their upstream journey in November and December, after enough rain has fallen to bring the creeks up to full flow. They require clean gravel beds in pools of slow moving water in which to lay their eggs. According to the EIR done in 1974, both the Middle and South Forks have clear, cold spring fed waters with good oxygen content, but neither has adequate gravels, although the Middle Fork is the better of the two. Ranger Fritz also stated that the Middle Fork was better for the steelhead; the South Fork has become too incised. The North Fork is no longer a viable option for steelhead, being under a culvert and the most polluted of the tributaries due to storm drains that empty directly into the creek (EDAW 1974, Fritz interview 2002).

The main stem of San Pedro Creek acts primarily as a travel corridor for the steelhead, although some spawning takes place there (Fritz interview 2002). When bridges and storm drains were built in the valley, little thought was given to the impacts these structures would have on flooding and on the steelhead. The bridge over San Pedro Creek at Highway 1 trapped debris during the storm of 1962, helping cause the flood. In the late 1960's, a fish ladder was

built at the Capistrano Drive Bridge. It was poorly engineered with boulders in the jump pool that acted as a barrier, too high a jump, and a long concrete lined channel at the top that created water flows that were too fast for the fish to navigate easily. In the winter of 1987, steelhead were having such a hard time navigating the jump that they were helped up the ladder by one of the rangers from the county park. Street storm drains empty directly into the creek and when Terra Nova High School emptied its hyperchlorinated pool water back in 1987, thousands of juvenile fish died, as well as other wildlife along the creek (Collins et al 2001:28, Davis conversation 2002, Fritz interview 2002, and Perez 1987). Some of the bridges in San Pedro Valley County Park also prevented steelhead from continuing their upstream migration. A new bridge on the Weiler Ranch Trail where it crosses the Middle Fork was constructed in 2001. The old bridge was nothing more than a culvert and as creek water passed through it over the years, had eroded a six foot drop into the channel on the downstream side (Hunter 2001).

In the fall of 2000, the Linda Mar Flood Control Project was started. The first phase, on the south side of San Pedro Creek between the Linda Mar Shopping Center and San Pedro Terrace Road, included grading and construction of a flood control plain with a new, meandering creek channel. The US Army Corps of Engineers, which is building the project, called it a "model environmental project" and State Assemblyman Lou Papan was quoted as saying, now that the project was finally underway, "People in the Linda Mar area don't have to wear their raincoats to bed". A new bridge will be built at Highway 1 where it crosses the creek and a dusty depression will be converted into a holding pond on the west side of the highway (Hunter 2000).

Two years later, there was still heavy equipment out in the fields just west of Shamrock Ranch along San Pedro Terrace Road, which is currently closed to traffic, and the new creek channel had just been opened. The four-foot-high earthen levee topped with a metal fence along the south side of the Linda Mar Shopping Center parking lot and extending east behind homes adjacent to the creek had also been built. The wall is covered with heavy plastic on the parking lot side to prevent erosion, while the creek side is covered with vegetation. The new bridge and holding pond have yet to be built. No solution has been found to the E. coli problem and there is

a sign posted by the county at the mouth of the creek on a path that leads out to the beach that reads "Warning: These Waters Are Contaminated And Are Not Suitable For Swimming Or Other Water Contact Activities".

The San Pedro Valley landscape is still evolving. The County of San Mateo, the city of Pacifica, and other organizations are working to reclaim some of the historical landscape of San Pedro Valley. The county operates the valley's largest park and the Sanchez Adobe County Historic Site. Both facilities provide glimpses of past landscapes through their physical settings and museums. The city of Pacifica has been working with the Pacifica Land Trust to purchase open space around Pedro Point so that the views from its heights can be enjoyed by anyone willing to hike up the bluff's trails, and to purchase property on the beach to help create a restored lagoon/estuary ecosystem at the mouth of San Pedro Creek (Curry 1993, McCabe 1993, and *Pacifica Tribune* 2001). The San Pedro Creek Watershed Coalition, established in 1999 to help mitigate damage to the valley's creeks, hopes to educate valley residents about the importance of the creek to the health of the valley and what can be done to help. Sanchez's old adobe, Shamrock Ranch, and Park Pacifica Stables are all reminders of the valley's historical agricultural landscape, which in the past 50 years has been transformed by the suburban development. The Picardo's small farm is in the process of becoming protected open space. Even the tract houses, originally built to provide affordable places for families to live but now with a median value of \$400,000, are slowly changing as people's tastes and needs change with the times. One can only wonder what the valley's landscape will look like fifty years in the future.

## **VIII. Conclusion:**

The cultural landscape of San Pedro Valley has undergone drastic change since the Ohlone first occupied the area. Yet, viewing the tract housing that dominates the landscape today, it would be easy to dismiss the scene as just a product of 1950's suburban development. To do so would leave one ignorant of the valley's rich history. In order to learn about and appreciate such landscapes, one has to take the time to explore them, to learn their history and to walk through them, taking time to notice relics of the past. This can be a time-consuming process, but the rewards are worth the effort. Cultural landscapes are always evolving, and even seemingly ordinary landscapes have unique stories to tell, as is evidenced by the evolution of San Pedro Valley.



## Notes:

1. The term "Coastside" is used throughout the paper and refers to the San Mateo County coast, which, prior to modern roads, was isolated from the rest of the county by the steep coastal mountains and has its own unique history and landscape. These mountains also produce a coastal microclimate that is markedly different from the bayside of the county. "Coastside" was coined to easily define this region during the boom times of the 1870's by San Mateo County newspapers. However, it was not until the arrival of the Ocean Shore Railroad that the term really took hold. The term "North Coastside" more specifically refers to the coastal areas from Pedro Point north, areas that have been incorporated into the city of Pacifica (Brown 1975:20).
2. Brown (2001) and Stanger and Brown (1969) translated and transcribed the journals of the early Spanish explorers. Although journals were written in the field, an edited version was rewritten sometime after completion of the expeditions. Brown (2001) has transcribed both the field and edited versions and I have quoted from both. Stanger and Brown primarily used the revised editions but included excerpts from the field journals that had been edited out and these are indicated by brackets [ ]. Stephen Dietz, in his 1979 report, also contains excerpts from expedition diaries and from Mission Dolores' records. These excerpts are based on Alan Brown's notes that he took while researching Mission Dolores' involvement in San Pedro Valley.
3. According to Dietz et al, fanegas and almuds are units of dry measurement and the number of seeds in one fanegas when planted would cover approximately one acre. These are antiquated units of measurement and I have not been able to find out how many almuds are in a fanegas, although one almud is less than a peck, which is a little less than a modern day quart.
4. This listing of crops, taken from Miller's thesis about the Half Moon Bay Area (1971), may include crops grown by ranchos throughout San Mateo County (he does not specify) and not all may be applicable to the coast. I hope to investigate whether or not Sanchez, or some member of his family, kept a diary about life on Rancho San Pedro, what activities took place there, and what types of crops were grown.
5. Alan K. Brown has did extensive research during the 1950' and 60's on the early history of San Pedro Valley. He created a map of the valley based on the 1853 Coast Survey map and other sources, possibly an 1866 Coast Survey map. The original 1853 Coast Survey map does not show contour lines for the southern part of the valley, but otherwise corresponds to Brown's recreation. The map figure I have included is from Brown's map, as it was not possible to obtain a copy of the original 1853 map. The detail map that Brown made showing the Adobe site and sketched in current day streets was also created from these sources, with notes by Brown attached describing the various features.
6. Truck farming has been defined as "agricultural produce receiving short haul transportation to market" (Gehre 1968:45). Crops in this category are perishable and do not store well for long time periods, thus requiring short transportation times, especially in the days before refrigeration. They are more profitable to grow per acre and this, in part, accounts for their greater popularity.
7. Dietz et al included copies of portions of various maps in their archeology report on the Sanchez Adobe. These maps show the boundary lines and property owner's names for various land tracts in the western part of the valley. I have not included reprints of these maps because

they mainly show property ownership and do not show other noteworthy features that are not shown on other maps included in this report.

8. As with the 1853 Coast Survey map mentioned in note 5, I was not able to obtain a reprint of the 1866 Coast Survey map. However, there are little to no changes between the features mapped on the two maps except that the valley of the Sanchez Fork, south of the adobe, has been labeled *Market Gardens*. I have not discovered why this was labeled as such, although it may be because truck farming had started in the valley and vegetables were being grown here for San Francisco markets. This map was produced after Francisco Sanchez's death and, as mentioned in the report, his wife had allowed the rancho to be leased out to farmers.

9. Although the *Map of the Rancho de San Pedro Finally Confirmed to Francisco Sanchez* is undated, I am able to make an educated guess as to its date. The county superintendent whose name appears on the map was in office between 1859-1870 and for a second term from 1877-1886 according to archivists at the San Mateo County History Museum. Given that this map makes reference to Francisco Sanchez, I would theorize that the maps had to be produced sometime before his wife sold the rancho in 1871. The map shows a reduced willow thicket and seems to show cleared tracts of land (labeled 17, 18, and 19). This would indicate that the map was produced after the 1866 Coast Survey, putting the production of this map sometime between 1866 and 1870.

10. History of the Ocean Shore Railroad was compiled from the following sources: Stanger 1963:142, Miller 1971:104-105, Hynding 1982:146, Gervais 1984:163, and VanderWerf 1994:131-133.

11. According to Paul Azevedo of the Pacifica Historical Society, Linda Mar is a contrived name with a "spanishy" sound and a rough translation that means "beautiful sea". Oddstad wanted a name that harkened back to San Pedro Valley's historical past with the explorations of Portola (Azevedo u.d.).

12. For the sake of simplicity, I am using the term 'debris flows' to describe the landslide events that have taken place in San Pedro Valley over the years. Debris flows is defined as landslides that involve both an initial slide followed by a rapid flow downhill of material and include mudflows, debris avalanches, and debris torrents. Mudflows are composed of more finely grained soils than the coarser materials designated as debris (Ellen et al 1988).

13. The Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) was established in 1972 and is administered by the National Park Service. The GGNRA encompasses over 74,000 acres and is comprised of both urban greenspaces and rural lands in Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties. Sweeney Ridge and Portola's San Francisco Bay Discovery Site are part of the GGNRA. In early 2003, bill HR 3632, which will extend the GGNRA boundaries to include the Picardo Ranch property, is expected to pass. It is uncertain whether farming will still be allowed on the property, but inclusion of the property into the GGNRA will preserve the small valley as open space (GGNRA 2002, Vasey conversation 2002).

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### **Interviews:**

Azevedo, Paul and Lydia. 1999. Pacifica residents and members of the Pacifica Historical Society. Interviews held on March 3 in Pacifica, CA. and on July 8 by phone.

Davis, Jerry. 2002. Pacifica resident and Geography Department professor at San Francisco State University. Conversations done by email during December.

Fritz, Mike. 2002. San Pedro Valley County Park ranger. Interview held on August 7 in Pacifica, CA. Mike Fritz was also able to provide me with copies of maps showing the park's previous land ownership.

Hoedt, Gloria. 1999. Pacifica resident. Interview held on April 13 in Pacifica, CA.

Vasey, Michael. 2002. Pacifica resident and Biology Department faculty member at San Francisco State University. Conversations done by email during December.