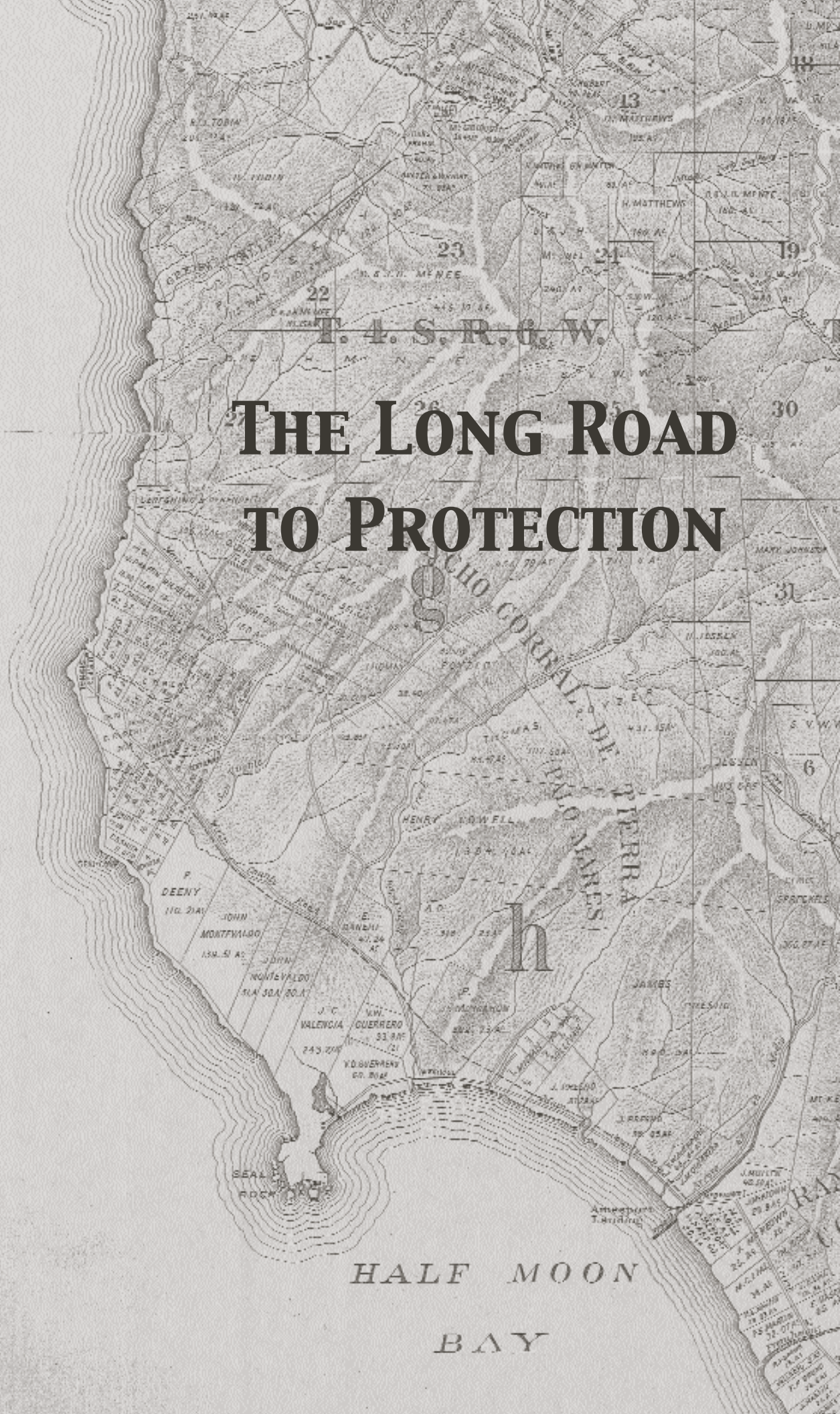


Rancho Corral de Tierra



RANCHO CORRAL DE TIERRA'S RICH HISTORY

Rancho Corral de Tierra is one of the most important properties targeted for protection in POST's "Saving the Endangered Coast" campaign because of its extraordinary natural resource value, recreation potential and panoramic views. This remarkable piece of land is equally rich in California history. The dramatic story of Rancho Corral de Tierra is, in many respects, the story of the entire coastside region.

THE ORIGINAL LAND GRANTS

Spanish explorers first claimed what is now the state of California for their king in the 1500s, but the Spaniards did not occupy the area until some 150 years later. Between 1769 and 1800, they colonized California by establishing a network of missions, *presidios* (military posts) and *pueblos* (towns) throughout the territory.

In 1776, the same year the United States was born, Mission Dolores was established in San Francisco, and the coastside became a grazing land for the mission's cattle, horses, and oxen.

The days of Spanish rule in California ended in 1821, when Mexico won its national independence from Spain, and "Alta California," as it was known then, was ruled by Mexican territorial governors. Before long, the new government ordered the official breakup of the mission system and, in its place, made grants of land, known as "ranchos," to Mexican subjects of good standing.

Three men who had served as officials of the Spanish government in San Francisco—Francisco Guerrero y Palomares, Tiburcio Vasquez, and Candelario Miramontes—all applied for and received grants in the Half Moon Bay area. Guerrero and Vasquez were co-grantees of Rancho Corral de Tierra, or "earthen corral," so named for the property's long ridges that formed a natural enclosure for cattle.

The original Rancho Corral de Tierra consisted of more than 12,000 acres. Mexican interim governor Manuel Jimeno granted the northern portion to Guerrero on October 16, 1839. His 7,766 acres extended along the ocean shore and included the present day communities of Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton-by-the-Sea, and El Granada. The southern

Photos, illustrations, and map courtesy of the San Mateo County History Museum



Pablo Vasquez, prominent Half Moon Bay businessman and youngest son of Tiburcio Vasquez



Above and right: Francisco Guerrero's son Victor homesteaded near Pillar Point, drawn here in 1877.



4,436 acres were granted to Vasquez on October 5 of the same year. His parcel extended south from El Granada along the ocean to Pilarcitos Creek and inland about two-and-a-half miles to the coastal range and included what is now the northern section of Half Moon Bay. The dividing line between the two grants was the Arroyo de en Medio just south of El Granada. The bulk of the 4,262-acre Rancho purchased by POST in May was part of Guerrero's land.

Miramontes' grant, known as Rancho de los Pilarcitos and subsequently renamed Rancho San Benito, was a 4,424-acre parcel extending south from Pilarcitos Creek and including much of present-day Half Moon Bay. Miramontes Ridge, purchased by POST in 1997, was originally part of this grant.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

Francisco Guerrero was a prominent San Franciscan who held a number of political offices, including administrator of customs, justice of the peace, *alcalde* (mayor), and sub-prefect. Guerrero Street in San Francisco is named in his honor.

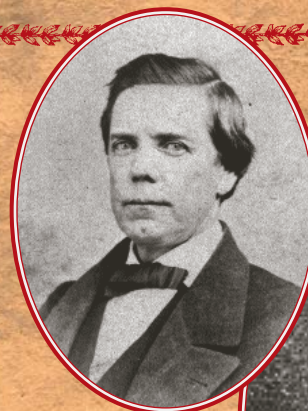
Tiburcio Vasquez, a relative of the famous bandit of the same name, was a soldier in the San Francisco Company and served as majordomo of the flocks and herds of the Mission Dolores livestock until the end of the Mexican regime. Miramontes was a military officer at the Presidio in San Francisco.

In the 1840s, soon after Guerrero, Vasquez and Miramontes received their land grants, tensions between the United States and Mexico began to escalate as American settlers pushed westward to California. With the two countries gearing up for war, Guerrero, Vasquez, Miramontes and other Mexican landowners in San Francisco sought the safety of their isolated ranchos on the coast.

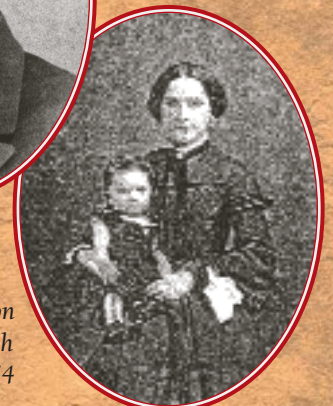
Vasquez, reportedly fearful that an American commander with whom he had feuded was planning to arrest him, moved his family to Rancho Corral and, after living in a temporary home for two years, built a small adobe house on the north side of Pilarcitos Creek in 1848. In 1854, Vasquez built the original chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar in the old Pilarcitos Cemetery north of town. The church was destroyed by a fire in 1876 and was later rebuilt at another location. Today, his grave marks the site of the original church.



This map, published in 1873, shows many of the ranchos granted within San Mateo County



James Johnston



Mrs. James Johnston
(Petra de Jara) with
James Jr., circa 1854

Miramontes arrived on his coastal rancho at about the same time and built an adobe on the opposite side of the same creek. As the first two rancheros to actually settle and build a home in what later became Half Moon Bay, Vasquez and Miramontes are generally recognized as the co-founders of the town. In fact, for several years, the tiny village was known as San Benito in honor of Miramontes' rancho.

While Guerrero moved his cattle to Rancho Corral and built a home for his employees, historians disagree over whether he settled on the coastside or remained in San Francisco; some claim he built an adobe home in what is now Princeton in 1839.

In a bizarre twist of fate, the two men who shared Rancho Corral de Tierra also shared the same tragic end. In 1851 Guerrero was murdered in broad daylight while standing at the corner of Twelfth and Mission Streets in San Francisco. His murderer was a Frenchman who followed him on horseback and struck him in the head with a slingshot. Twelve years later, Vasquez was murdered while sitting in a coastside saloon. His assailant shot him through a window and was never apprehended.

The two killings may have been related. Guerrero was scheduled to be a high-profile witness in a famous land fraud case, and many attributed his murder to the crooked claimants he was to testify against. Vasquez served as a witness in the same case.

Guerrero's youthful widow, Josefa de Haro, later married American James Denniston, for whom Denniston Creek (formerly Guerrero Creek) on Rancho Corral is named. Vasquez's widow, Alvira Hernandez, was left to raise the couple's ten children, the youngest of whom, Pablo, became a prominent businessman in Half Moon Bay.



Denniston Creek runs along the southern edge of the Denniston Valley, one of the most fertile fields in California.

CHANGING TIMES

When the United States took possession of California and other Mexican lands after the war ended in 1848, it was bound by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to honor the legitimate land claims of Mexican citizens residing in the captured territories. Over the next 35 years, the U.S. Surveyor General's Office in San Francisco reviewed 813 claims and patented 553, including Guerrero's (1866), Vasquez' (1873), and Miramontes' (1882). The territory of California became the 31st state in 1850, and six years later San Mateo County was established.

Prior to this time, other than raising horses and cattle or seeking sanctuary during the Mexican-American War, few people wished to live in the out-of-the-way coastside area. Hungry grizzly bears wandered freely through the untamed territory, and the mountainous barriers made access difficult. The few trails that existed were very treacherous. After Vasquez, Miramontes, and a handful of other rancheros moved to the coastside, the entire population of San Benito was only about 70, including the original families and Native Americans who helped build their adobe houses and worked as hired hands.

However, the end of the war, along with the discovery of gold in California, brought more settlers west. By the mid 1850s, as the new state continued to grow, the village of San Benito absorbed an influx of Anglo-American and European ranchers, farmers, dairymen, lumbermen and land developers. When the first Yankees arrived in San Benito, finding a small settlement of Spanish-speaking families, they called it “Spanishtown,” a name that stuck for almost 50 years.

One of the early settlers was James Johnston, a rancher from Ohio. In 1853, Johnston and his brothers, John, Thomas and William, purchased part of Rancho San Benito from the heirs of Candelario Miramontes. The Johnston brothers continued to make additional purchases, and by 1859, the Johnston Ranch comprised about half of the original Miramontes rancho.



The Montara Inn was built on Francisco Guerrero's portion of Rancho Corral de Tierra (photo circa 1911)

Other settlers soon joined the Johnstons on the coastside, establishing stores, saloons, and other businesses that made up the country town. By 1860, the English-speaking settlers owned most of the businesses in Spanishtown, and English replaced Spanish as the town's primary language. In 20 years, the village of San Benito had been transformed from a small settlement into a cultural melting pot. Soon, the first true roads were being built along the coastline, and two new public schools were opened in the area.

Although the official post office was designated Half Moon Bay (named for the crescent shaped bay north of town) in 1872, the name Spanishtown survived popular usage until the turn of the century, when Half Moon Bay became the more commonly accepted name. ■

*POST wishes to acknowledge the primary sources for this story—Half Moon Bay: The Birth of a Coastal Town, by Kathryn Gualtieri, Half Moon Bay: Memories of the Coastside's Colorful Past, by June Morrall, and several issues of *La Peninsula*, the official publication of the San Mateo County Historical Society.*



Protecting a National Treasure

The Campaign to Save Rancho Corral de Tierra

POST's acquisition of Rancho Corral de Tierra marked the beginning of what is expected to be a challenging, three-year process to permanently protect this spectacular 4,262-acre property as parkland. Our plan is to transfer Rancho Corral de Tierra to federal and state ownership within three years. To achieve that goal, we will need to clear a number of significant legislative and financial hurdles.

The legislative process involves two major steps. First, POST must obtain congress-

sional approval to extend the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to include Rancho Corral de Tierra, so that the property can become part of the national park system. After this enabling legislation is in place, we will seek federal funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to complete the acquisition and transfer the property to the GGNRA. Our hope is to secure an appropriation of \$15 million, roughly half of the \$29.7 million purchase price. To attract



this kind of funding, we must demonstrate widespread constituent support and raise funds locally to cover the other half of the purchase price.

Your support—both in making generous gifts to the campaign and in writing letters to Congress—will play a critical part in this effort.

POST spearheaded this type of public/private partnership in 1994 when we completed the purchase of the 1,232-acre

Phleger estate by raising \$10.5 million and securing \$10.5 million in federal appropriations. In 1998, we raised \$5 million and obtained \$10 million in state and federal funding to save Bair Island. We are confident that, with your help, we can do it again.

Here is a breakdown of what has transpired to date in the Rancho Corral de Tierra legislative process, and what we expect to occur from this point forward.

Photo: Robert Buelteman

BOUNDARY EXTENSION

In May, legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate to expand the boundary of the GGNRA to add more than 4,700 acres of land, including Rancho Corral de Tierra and two small parcels in the Devil's Slide area.

The House bill (H.R. 1953) was introduced by Congressman Tom Lantos and co-sponsored by Anna Eshoo, Nancy Pelosi and the rest of the Bay Area Congressional delegation. The Senate bill (S. 941) was introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and co-sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer.

"The San Mateo Coast is a national treasure that we have a responsibility to preserve for future generations to enjoy," Lantos said in urging support for his bill. "Adding these new lands to the GGNRA will provide greater recreational opportunities for the public, preserve the natural habitat of rare plants and wildlife, and protect these fragile areas from encroaching development.... The Congress should act now to make this vision a reality."

Lantos also cited POST's previous work in preserving the Phleger Estate and Bair Island, noting that "POST has a remarkable track record in working with and assisting the federal government with the protection of other important open space in the Bay Area."

In introducing the Senate legislation, Feinstein said, "This addition will protect the sweeping views of the San Mateo coast and ensure the protection of rich farmland, several miles of public trails, and an incredible array of wildlife and vegetation. It is this type of public-private partnership that Congress needs to support in our efforts to preserve open space."



Rep. Anna Eshoo, Rep. Tom Lantos, and POST President Audrey Rust following the introduction of House Bill 1953.

To become law, the bill named "Rancho Corral de Tierra Golden Gate National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Act of 2001" must work its way through Senate and House sub-committees, full committees, both legislative bodies, and then a conference committee to resolve any discrepancies in the final versions passed by the two houses.

In late July, Lantos, Eshoo, Feinstein, POST President Audrey Rust and John J. Reynolds, Director of the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service, testified in support of the bill before a hearing of the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation. A week later, on August 2, it was unanimously approved by the full Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Our hope is that the bill will move on to the Senate floor this fall.

The bill gained some important early momentum with the backing of the U.S. Department of Interior, representing the official position of the Bush Administration and the federal agency that oversees the maintenance of public lands.

"The Department of the Interior supports S. 941," John J. Reynolds announced at the Senate hearing. "These lands represent an unparalleled opportunity to include within the recreation area lands of exceptional natural, scenic, and recreational value."

Tom Lantos is working diligently to have the bill considered by the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands,



before going on to the full House Committee on Resources.

“We feel very optimistic that the bill will pass,” Rust said. “POST is very fortunate that in Dianne Feinstein, Tom Lantos, and our congressional co-sponsors, we have strong advocates who will pay attention to this project and make time for it.”



Brian O'Neill

Hickman's Cinquefoil
Potentilla hickmanii

THE APPROPRIATION

We are hopeful that the GGNRA boundary extension will be approved by the end of the year, so that the appropriations bill can be introduced in early 2002. To cover the \$29.7 million purchase price for Rancho Corral de Tierra, our goal is to secure \$15 million from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, raise \$10 million from POST donors and hopefully obtain \$5 million from California State Parks.

The appropriations bill must follow the same path as the boundary legislation—through interior sub-committees, full appropriations committees, and then the full House and Senate. If all goes well, the earliest the federal funding would be available is December, 2003, as two years usually are required to obtain an appropriation of this size.

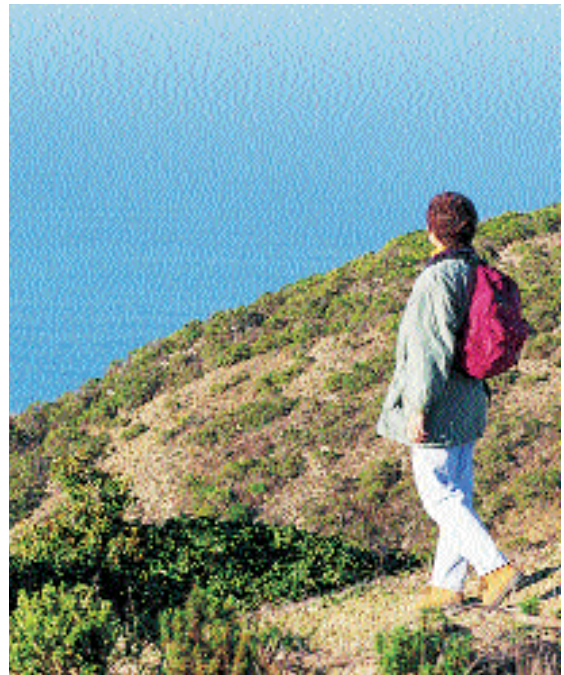
Once the bill is passed, there are several other steps to complete—finalizing the purchase contracts, appraisals, and inspections—prior to making the transfer of the land. Our goal will be to accomplish these steps as quickly as possible, as there have been instances where a new Congress has reclaimed appropriations that were allocated but not yet spent.

This timetable illustrates why it is so important for us to be successful in our fund-raising efforts. Not only does POST have to raise the matching funds to obtain the federal appropriation, but, in all likelihood, we will need to raise the entire purchase price

up front to cover the payments required to complete the purchase of Rancho Corral de Tierra. Upon signing the agreement with the sellers in January, we made an initial payment of \$1 million. We made an additional payment of \$9 million when escrow closed in May. In order to take title to all of the land, we must make payments of \$9.85 million in both January, 2002, and January, 2003—well before any federal appropriations are anticipated.

Our challenge is clear: we need to have enough money on hand to complete the payments to acquire Rancho Corral de Tierra, while we wait for the federal and state appropriations processes to run their course. That's why your help is so critical. Our fund-raising efforts must be successful, so that we have the money we need before the anticipated government funding comes through.

“We have no doubt that we will be successful in this regard,” Rust said. “With your help, we will ensure that this unique piece of land will remain untouched by development and remain part of the legacy we leave for future generations to enjoy.” ■



Robert Buckleman

If successfully funded and transferred, Rancho Corral de Tierra will become an important addition to the recreational opportunities offered on GGNRA lands

SAVING THE ENDANGERED COAST

Campaign Update

Thanks to the friends and supporters of POST and open space who have stepped forward to make an early commitment, POST's campaign to protect the open rural lands along the San Mateo coast is off to a great start! Over the next three years we will be working to complete the picture of protected open lands, rolling hills and sandy beaches.

The lead donors to the campaign, *Saving the Endangered Coast*, are The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. They generously pledged a total of \$100,000,000 toward our ambitious goal of \$200,000,000. Their leadership inspires us to take on the challenge to raise the additional \$100,000,000 over the next three years. We are pleased to announce that 143 of you have contributed a total of \$14,707,165 towards

matching the Packard and Moore foundations' gifts. So far, we have protected five properties totaling 6,471 acres of coastal land.

We still have a long way to go. During the next three years of the campaign we will be asking every member of POST's community to invest in this rural coastal landscape, a place for us and for the next generations to experience and enjoy.

During the coming months, watch for regular reports on progress toward our financial and land protection goals.

This issue of *Landscapes* tells about the history of 4,262-acre Rancho Corral de Tierra just north of Half Moon Bay. Rancho Corral represents the extraordinary open vistas and natural resources that are still available to be protected on the coast.

Completing the Picture (as of September 1, 2001)

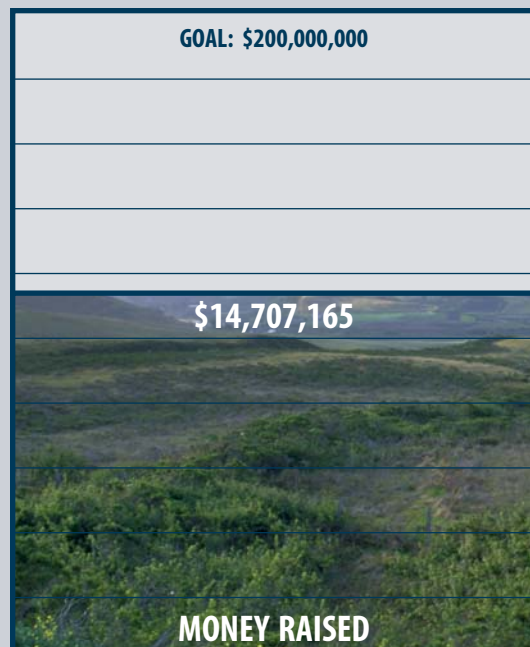


Photo: Robert Buellman

POST'S MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) is to give permanent protection to the beauty, character, and diversity of the San Francisco Peninsula landscape for people here now and for future generations. POST encourages the use of these lands for natural resource protection, wildlife habitat, low intensity public recreation and agriculture.

Please call Kathryn Morelli, Vice President, at (650) 854-7696 if you want to learn how you can participate the this campaign, *Saving the Endangered Coast*. Your questions are welcome. We look forward to talking to you about the campaign and how you can be involved. ■

Ways to Give to POST

There are many ways you can make a lasting contribution toward protecting our Peninsula landscape.

Contributions of cash to POST's operating fund and coastal campaign are fully tax-deductible. A gift of securities is fully tax-deductible at the market value at the time of your contribution. An added benefit is that by contributing your stock directly to POST you avoid the capital gains tax. POST can sell the stock tax-free and use 100% of your gift to save land. Please call Daphne Muehle, Director of Annual Giving, at 650-854-7696 for more information about making a stock gift.

Your contributions are essential to our land conservation work. Thank you for your support!



POST

Landscapes

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*Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength that will endure
as long as life lasts.*

Rachel Carson

Photo: Robert Buelteman

Front cover: Map courtesy of the San Mateo County History Museum



LANDSCAPES
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