HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THIS AREA

You are standing on a peninsula. If you were to walk to the lower end, you would see Moraga Creek at your left, San Leandro Creek on your right. Both are now flooded by the waters of San Leandro Reservoir.

Across Moraga Creek is "Island Mountain," so called because a wagon could be driven around it in the old days: along Moraga Creek between the two quarries, then through the small valley at the head of the water at your left, once called "Valle Vista," then across the farm of Antonio Furtado as far as the King Ranch at the lower end of Island Mountain where one met the main road from Moraga to Castro Valley.

On the other side of San Leandro Creek can be seen the tip of the Moraga Redwoods which stretch up to the summit along the southern side of the creek as far as the village of Canyon. One thousand acres of the forest were sold in 1852 to Elam Brown, the founder of Lafayette.

If you are still not far from the site of entry to this park, turn around and look across Canyon Road and the right-of-way of the Sacramento Northern Railroad into Indian Valley. At your left is Pine Ridge, and at your right is Adobe Ridge.

FOOTNOTES

1. Moraga. As applied in this area it commemorates the family name of the owner of the local rancho, granted in 1841 to him and his cousin Juan Bernal. He was Jose Joaquin de la Santissima Trinidad who was rewarded by the grant of three leagues (12,666 acres) for his services to the military under both Spain and Mexico.

   The California branch of the family was founded by Joseph Joachin Moraga, the second in command of Juan Bautista de Anza's Colonizing Expedition of 1775. De Anza left the colonists in Moraga's care at Monterey and returned to Mexico. In June of 1776 the latter led them to the San Francisco peninsula where he founded the Presidio and the Mission. Later he founded the Pueblo of San Jose and nearby Mission Santa Clara. His gravestone is one of three in the church of Mission Dolores. Each year on the birthday of the City of St. Francis the commander of the Presidio places a wreath on Moraga's grave. His son, Gabriel Antonio, was the foremost Spanish explorer of Northern California and named its larger rivers. He was also the commander of the defense of the whole of Alta California during the period of its most troublesome Indian raids. His son, the grantee of Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados, was born in 1793.
2. Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados. "Ranch of the the Lake of the Redwoods" indicates its two principal features: a "permanent lake," or tule pond, once on the site of Campolindo High School; the "reddish trees" of the Moraga Redwoods. The rancho was to be selected as a compact unit anywhere within an area bounded by the Oakland Hills and Las Trampas Ridge (on your eastern skyline), and between San Pablo Creek, (from Caldecott Tunnel and continuing along Highway 24 to Pleasant Hill Rd.) and a line from Picacho de Las Trampas (Peak of the (elk) Traps) to the Moraga Redwoods.

   You are not in the Moraga Rancho, but are standing on land between its tracts One and Two. Only three of eight hundred ranchos were permitted to patent separated pieces.

Joaquin Moraga's son, Jose de Jesus, urged on by Horace Walpole Carpentier, the first mayor of Oakland and the holder of the Juan Bernal half-interest in the Rancho, protested the inclusion of too much unmarketable hill land in the first survey by the U. S. Land Commission. A second map was drawn to eliminate most of the higher hill country; however, since the ridge containing the redwood forest was now despoiled land, Moraga had to accept five hundred acres of it. That became Tract 2; most of it lies between San Leandro Creek and the summit. The Rancho is shaped vaguely like a toy top, the bottom of which lies on the other side of Island Mountain in the vicinity of where the Castro Valley Road (Camino Pablo today) enters the water of the reservoir in King Canyon. The boundary then progresses along the upper eastern slopes of Island Mountain and crosses Moraga Creek where its canyon as seen from Valle Vista begins to narrow; it then courses along the eastern edge of this hill, crosses Canyon Road and proceeds three quarters of the way along Pine Ridge summit and then turns over to Adobe Ridge west of Miramonte High School. This hill was on the ranch of Joseph Smith who came to the U.S. from Portugal in 1853.

3. Valle Vista. This became Subdivision No. 3 of the Moraga Rancho following the purchase of part of it by James Irvine and associates (The Moraga Company) in 1912. Earlier that year all of it, with the exception of six ranches, had been bought by Charles Hooper from Horace W. Carpentier. Between the 1850's and 1885 Carpentier had obtained all but one 160-acre plot (later the Rheem estate) of the rancho of Joaquin Moraga. Valle Vista was developed by one of the Irvine (of Irvine, Calif.) associates, Robert Noble Burgess. It was registered on December 22, 1914. Some of its 98 lots averaging between one and two acres began to be sold the next year and on into the 1920's. Over fifty purchasers, at one time or another, bought fifty-seven lots, or larger acreages at the edges of the valley; some purchased several lots; and sometimes several, just one. There were seven streets, five having access to Canyon Road, three on this side of Moraga Creek, two on the other. Two more crossed the subdivision at the lower end, one of them spanning the creek. A second subdivision, Hillside Vista, was added on the slopes of Island Mountain.

Covenants required by the Moraga Company excluded several races because of color, prohibited the production or sale of alcoholic beverages, required the expenditure of $1500 or more on the homes, and insisted that they be set back twenty feet from the streets. About twenty residences were built.

Beginning in the 1920's the East Bay Water Company and its successor, the East Bay Municipal District, began to purchase property in Valle Vista in order to insure the purity of the water flowing into Moraga Creek, now so close to the termination of its purifying flow. The final two pieces were obtained just this year, 1971. Foundations, garden walls, orchards and landscaping plants mark the sites of homes east of the creek to this day.

4. San Leandro. The creek is mentioned as early as 1828 and gave its name of the rancho of Jose Joaquin Estudillo (1842). It flows through the hills at Chabot Lake and into the Bay.

5. Castro Valley. The road leading there was called in the county records "The Road to William (Guillermo) Castro's." He was the grantee to Rancho San Lorenzo (1841). Between him and Moraga lay lands of "El Establecimiento (Mission) de San Jose " which became public land open to homesteading. The center of the ranches in this area was called "Redwood," but consisted of nothing more than a church and a school; a saloon was some distance away.

6. Canyon. This hamlet and Canyon Road were named for the original "Moraga Canyon," the site of several lumber mills. In 1849 when the constitution for what was hoped to be the State of California was submitted to the electorate, there were three polls in the East Bay. The greatest number of votes cast was that at Moraga Canyon.

7. Sacramento Northern Railroad. Called at first the "Oakland, Antioch, and Eastern" in view of its ambition to connect with an Eastern railroad in Utah, it ran instead to Sacramento and Chico, later across the bridge to San Francisco. It began in 1913, ceased in 1957. Stations in this area included Pinehurst and Valle Vista. A right-of-way for a "San Francisco and Great Salt Lake R. R." was surveyed to the end of Moraga Creek and beyond: in 1892.

8. Pine Ridge. Named for its native knob cone pine (tuberculata) (Mentioned in Jepson) forest. A subdivision, "Pinehurst" laid out at the end of Canyon Road gave its name to the Railway station and to the road from Skyline Blvd. to Redwood Road. It was the site (on the creek side of the road) of an amusement park which drew thousands on Sundays.

9. Indian Valley. Soon to be the site of a subdivision, it was named for a solitary squaw who lived there. A home was built at the entrance in the 1850's, serving as a store in 1854.

10. Adobe Ridge. On its eastern flank, almost at its northern terminus is the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, the oldest edifice in Contra Costa County.