

CORTE MADERA – published in the *Marin Journal* on March 23, 1911

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IN THE early days, and even before the gold fever started the stampede for California, this locality was known as "Corte Madera del Presidio," meaning "place of wood-cutting for the Presidio," as it was here that wood and lumber used at the Presidio in San Francisco was cut and sawed. Corte Madera then included the entire territory from what is now Chapman Park to Escalle Station.

BALTIMORE COMPANY

In 1847, a company of men brought out from Baltimore, around the Horn a fully equipped saw-mill, which was installed at the mouth of Baltimore Canyon, near the present Gardener home. This was called the Baltimore mill, after which Baltimore Canyon was named: about this time there was also established a second mill, known as the "Government Mill" because it supplied the lumber for the government buildings at the Presidio; this mill was located near the present business portion of Larkspur. (Daniel T. Taylor, now residing in San Rafael was a member of the Baltimore company.)

TRAVEL BY THE CREEK

The only means of transportation to San Francisco was by water through Corte Madera Creek, with a landing running out from the present site of Larkspur Station. During the busy years following the discovery of gold, this was a very busy scene. The two mills employed nearly 400 men; and many vessels and barges plied between here and San Francisco, while Capt. Van Renyegon owned and operated the steamer "Ida" which made three trips a week to the City carrying both passengers and freight.

THE DAIRIES

The mills ran for about 10 years when they had to shut down for lack of timber, and with that the life of the community soon dwindled away, except for a few dairy ranches, and Collet's brickyard at Escalle. Capt. Van Renyegon also owned the place now known as "Owlswood" which he later sold to his son-in-law, Frank M. Pixley, the owner of the Argonaut, who used it as his summer home. Other dairy ranches in the immediate neighborhood at that time were those of "Dr." J. S. McCue, and Mr. Tierney. Samuel R. Brown, later owner of Baltimore Canyon, was

one of the old time settlers. He came around the Horn. arriving in San Francisco in 1850, and for a number of years was engineer at the Baltimore mill.

LATER GROWTH

In the seventies the railroad was built through from San Rafael to the town of Sausalito but for a number of years passengers were carried only by way of San Quentin to Ross via San Rafael, while passengers for Corte Madera had to take their chances on freight trains to Sausalito. Later on the first school house in Corte Madera was built; the building is now the Perry residence in the McCue Tract The development of Larkspur proper under that name was begun twenty years ago, while Corte Madera, as now recognized, followed about five years later upon the distribution and subdivision of the Pixley property.

COMING OF RAILROAD

With the coming of the railroad and the closing of the mills, and also the brick yard about twenty years ago, navigation was neglected. The creek was allowed to fill up with mud and silt, until now even a row boat must wait for high tide. Even after passenger trains came through from Sausalito, there were only a few trains a day and the older residents still delight in telling about the tardy commuter sprinting for the train with his coat and vest under his arm and his collar and tie in his pocket.

ELECTRIC TRAINS

They were good old days—to look back upon, but at last about ten years ago the electric road was built through from San Rafael to Sausalito and with it came a great improvement in our railroad service. Although there is still much room for improvement, we nevertheless have an excellent train service. There is no reason why we should not eventually have a ten cent fare to and from San Francisco as they have to Berkeley and Alameda, which are no nearer to the city: and when that has become an accomplished fact the development of the town will be greatly stimulated.

WILL BE IMPROVED

Corte Madera is putting itself in line for the phenomenal development that is bound to take place in all the suburbs of the metropolis during the next four or five years. We now have an abundant supply of the purest mountain water with an 18-inch main running through the town. We have a splendid local gravity system with its source high enough to give all the necessary pressure for fire protection in any part

of the town. We have organized a lighting district and a fire district, with two fully equipped chemical engines, and the end of the present year will very likely see the installation of fire hydrants and the addition of a hose cart to our department.

LIGHTS, TELEPHONES, SEWERS

Our town is as well, if not, better, lighted than are many incorporated municipalities. We have a modern sewer system costing \$25,000 that already serves practically every portion of the town. The telephone company spent nearly \$15,000 in the installation and extension of an up-to date telephone system, which is the exchange not only for our own town, but for Larkspur as well. In fact, we now have practically all the advantages and conveniences of a modern incorporated town, but with none of the expenses of a municipality and with a total absence of those petty political wangles that so often disturb the peace and progress of an incipient, municipal government.

CLIMATE TEMPERATE AND MILD

Taken year in and year out, the climate is more temperate and mild than in any other part of the County. Situated on a picturesque slope of old Tamalpais only two miles from San Francisco Bay, the climate is tempered in winter by the proximity of a large body of water. In summer the cool southwest winds that come in directly from the ocean neutralize a heat that might otherwise be excessive and uncomfortable. And as though nature were still not satisfied with her many bounties, she lifted a ridge of hills to the southwest of the town just high enough to allow these cooling winds to come over, but yet not too low to keep all the disagreeable summer and autumn fogs on the side.

BRIGHT PROSPECTS

All these things will make the development of Corte Madera in the next few years inevitable. Already several large enterprises are well under way and capital is realizing the wonderful opportunity for large and sure returns. The Doherty Company has recently purchased some 60 acres on the slope of Little Tamalpais and is now subdividing and laying it out for ideal suburban homes.

MARIN CITY

The Marin City Development Company is filling in over 1100 acres of tide land adjoining the east end of the town. A portion of this, with its canals, which only need a little widening and deepening will be turned into a modern Venice,

ideally situated as to location, climate and proximity to San Francisco. About 600 acres will be filled in for factory sites which according to the present plans will have deep water dockage on San Francisco Bay. This will eventually give the community a solid financial and economic foundation, similar to that which has resulted in Richmond's wonderful career as an industrial town.

MAGNIFICENT PANORAMA

From the lowlands, the view of the mountain is superb. From the slopes the magnificent panorama of landscape and marine view stretches away for miles to the east and north, ever changing in color and in beauty. We have a splendid school building in connection with Larkspur that is easily accessible from both towns. It is practically certain that the great system of state highways to be built under the recent bond issue, will pass through Corte Madera, connecting Sausalito and San Rafael.

GREATER SAN RAFAEL

The people of Corte Madera are practically unanimously in favor of the greater San Rafael, and that is one reason why it has thus far refused to incorporate. But unless the greater San Rafael becomes a reality of the near future, we shall be obliged either to incorporate with Marin City or Larkspur or both. It is safe to predict that the next ten years will see a continuous city of suburban homes, reaching from Fairfax and San Rafael on the north to Corte Madera on the south. And as Corte Madera will be the nearest to San Francisco in both time and distance, and second to none in natural beauty and climatic conditions, it bids fair to outstrip all other portions of the valley in rapid development and enhancement of values.