



## the reactor

by Paul Azevedo

In Redwood City the county tax records go back more than 100 years. The county collected taxes then as it does now, though some of the amounts collected appear ludicrously small today.

They were not computerized then. The records were meticulously, if tediously, entered in handwritten form, line by line, in huge permanent bound volumes.

A man's home was typically valued at about \$50. About the same value would be placed on his horses and the tack that went with the animals. If he was a rancher he would be taxed for his "spanish" cows, and his "american" cows, the latter worth a good deal more than what must have been the scrawny, self-sufficient creatures that the Californios turned out in the hills.

**THE MAN WHO** in the late 1850s owned most of what is now Pacifica was Francisco Sanchez.

He was no friend of the American invaders. Unlike Mariano Vallejo in the north bay, Sanchez saw trouble. He was a good judge.

He was worth about \$30,000 before he died, enough to make him one of the five wealthiest men in the county. It was mostly in land. And it took only a few years after his death for this heirs to lose most of their inheritance.

**THE TOBIN** family, which still runs the Hibernia Bank, ended up with a lot of what is now Pacifica by 1879.

They owned parts of Linda Mar, parts of Pedro Point, parts of Rockaway, parts of Pacific Manor and Edgemar.

As far as I can determine, the land known as Tobin Park, a brush-covered vertical landscape on the side of Montara Mountain sold by mail as flat, fertile coastal plain was never owned by the Tobins. The people who sold lots on those paper streets were I presume, abusing the good name of the Tobin family.

Whether the sale of subdivision lots in Salada Beach and Brighton Beach was a true swindle or just over-enthusiastic salesmanship, I'm not sure.

**WHAT IS** indisputable is that it took many, many years before those lots could again be sold at the prices paid in the early Ocean Shore era.

The maps were splendid. Curving avenues, great splashing fountains, magnificent landscaping wound up in reality as crooked, narrow, potholed streets with ragged, weedy edges.

The homes sometimes needed paint and propping up, and often became a bit ramshackle.

**VALLEMAR'S TREES** saved that little valley from repeating the disillusioning scruffiness of other subdivisions. The tree planting was one of the great successes this area has seen, one of the few real contributions from early developers to our present-day enjoyment.

I wish I could see signs in Park Pacifica or even Fairway Park that they are on the way to becoming Vallemar-style arboretums, but I don't. There are some nice individual trees, but tract homes don't lend themselves to the unregimented lushness and beauty that is the secret of Vallemar.

Tract homes are more likely to get an obligatory palm-tree-in-the-front-yard style of landscaping, a la Fairmont.

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