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# The Reactor

Paul Azevedo



## We've Come a Long Way

Your county government is a pretty clean operation today. Like anything run by human beings, it's probably not perfect, but nobody today goes into a San Mateo County polling place scared that those toughs running the place will overwhelm his vote with fakery.

Only 130 years ago the county was born in such corruption that the crooks "elected" the sheriff, county clerk, assessor, county attorney, and treasurer, and one of the three supervisors.

According to the late historian Alan Hynding, the Mulligan brothers, Bernard and William, joined by a former governor, John McDougal, set up three precincts that used lists of names from ship arrivals and claimed hundreds of votes where only a few score lived. Their precincts included what is now Pacifica. With fewer than 2,500 people in the county, there were 1,800 votes recorded. What's more, women could not vote.

The man who would become the father of San Mateo County and the leading citizen of Redwood City was Horace Hawes. He was a young state assemblyman in 1856. He was not part of the crooked clique, and happily, the crooks were overcome and the county got off to a better start than anyone might have expected. In fact, San Mateo County, born as an after-thought in the effort to get the crooks out of San Francisco, has turned out to have a better brand of politics than the mother city. Not only that, San Francisco has had to come to San Mateo for the one thing it did not have after the big division: space.

San Francisco's airport, jail, cemeteries and water storage are all in this county. We are interdependent with the city that shares our peninsula. Pacifica shares a state Assembly member and a state senator with San Francisco. Thousands of Pacificans depend on salaries earned in San Francisco to support their way of life, and the fact that we are so close to San Francisco keeps the price of Pacifica housing up. No one would pay so much if your Linda Mar rancher were located outside of Philadelphia.

Hynding calls the beginnings of this county "farcical" and I think he was right; but all's well that ends well.

Actually, Pacifica's connection with San Francisco goes back to the days before there was either a Pacifica or a San Francisco. Francisco Sanchez received the grant of almost 9,000 acres, including most of what is now Pacifica, and built the oldest building in the county, his adobe; but he was Alcalde of San Francisco and lived most of his life near Mission Dolores even before the little village of Yerba Buena was renamed San Francisco by the Americans. The bay was San Francisco before the city was San Francisco.

Even before that, San Mateo County's first settlement was the Asistencia de San Pedro y San Pablo, on the site of the Sanchez adobe. This, the farm of Mission Dolores, makes San Pedro valley (Linda Mar) the linchpin of county history.