



MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

RANCHO SAN ANTONIO OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

Cultural History

The Ohlone Indians lived in the Rancho San Antonio area for over 3,000 years prior to the arrival of the Europeans. A large village, known as Partacsi, was located in this general area. An expedition led by Colonel Juan Baptista de Anza passed through this area in March of 1776. Mission Santa Clara de Asis was founded in October of the same year, where many of the local Indians were taken. In 1822, Mexico became independent and the Secularization Act stripped the missions of their holdings. After 1833, land grants were mainly given to army veterans and many ranchos were established. The chief commercial products of the ranchos were cattle hides and tallow.

Governor Alvarado granted Rancho San Antonio to Juan Prado Mesa in 1839. This 440-acre rancho was bounded by Adobe Creek to the north and Stevens Creek to the south, and included Permanente Creek. Mesa had been a soldier at the San Francisco Presidio since 1828, served as a corporal in the Santa Clara Guard, and had won fame as a soldier and Indian fighter. Mesa died in 1845. California became part of the United States in 1848 and all land grants issued by the Mexican government became subject to review under U.S. law.

In 1853, William Dana, a former seafarer and merchant, purchased the Rancho. During this time the original Mexican land grants were challenged and six persons laid claim to the Rancho. Two of the claims were patented by the United States in 1857, with Dana retaining 3,542 acres. In 1861, John and Martha Snyder purchased 850 acres of the original Rancho San Antonio lands on Permanente Creek. The Snyder's grain crop of 1862 was the first raised in this area of the County without irrigation and was so successful that it inspired others. The Snyder's had about 500 acres under cultivation, including a 16-acre vineyard with a large winery and 25 acres in orchard. John Snyder, born in 1828 in Indiana, arrived in Santa Clara County in 1850 where he was employed on local farms. In 1855, he married Martha Kifer. John Snyder died in 1901 and his wife continued to live on the ranch until her death in 1919.

In 1923, the Catholic Church purchased the Snyder Ranch and in 1926 constructed Saint Joseph's Seminary and the Maryknoll Seminary. St. Joseph's was badly damaged in the 1989 earthquake and was subsequently demolished. The Maryknoll Seminary, with its oriental motif, stands east of the park across Cristo Rey Drive. The Santa Clara County Parks Department purchased 130 acres in 1977 and another 35 acres in 1981 from St. Joseph's Seminary. The Park's improvements were constructed in the early 1980s with additional improvements completed in 1993.