

HISTORIC CONTEXT

This section summarizes the cultural landscape of the Driscoll Ranch area in San Mateo County, California, discussed in detail by L. Furnis in the companion report entitled *Architectural Survey and Evaluation Report for Driscoll Ranch near La Honda, San Mateo County, California* (Furnis 2016).

The earliest European ownership of the land which comprises Driscoll Ranch was by Don Antonio Buelna, who during the Mexican period owned two ranchos. The one within the Project Area totaled four square leagues in size; it was the Rancho San Gregorio. A quarter of Buelna's Rancho San Gregorio was sold to Salvador Castro in 1849. After U.S. takeover of California, Castro was confirmed as the owner in 1852. The Driscoll Ranch lies within the original boundaries of the Rancho San Gregorio. Salvador Castro sold off portions of his land to a variety of people looking for business and living opportunities in the area. These people were loggers, mill owners, ranchers and farmers and included both Americans and immigrants.

The name of La Honda that is connected to the area originates with John L. Sears, when he started to develop that area as a town in 1861. Sears, family members and associates including the Younger family of outlaws from Missouri built at least one store there, with John and William Sears operating the store. The community of La Honda developed during the 1870s, and attracted a population sufficient to host a post office, a hotel run by Sears, as well as other businesses. The La Honda store was a focal point for area loggers, ranchers and dairymen. Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, the La Honda store was owned and run by Charles and Frank Cavalli, and by then included the general store, a saloon, and a post office.

The La Honda area's timber led to the establishment by the mid-nineteenth century of a new and prominent local industry. The area's lumbering history has been divided into five periods. These span Native American use prior to 1842, and another period marking the establishment of water-powered mills until 1875. The latter period encompasses the Gold Rush era, during which many loggers left for the gold fields. They were eventually replaced by other loggers when timber demands grew. New, steam-powered, mills were established at that time and milling camps were established where those supporting or working in the mills lived. Period III, after 1875, saw further expansion of the industry as well as the introduction of new technology such as steam tractors for hauling logs. The industry also witnessed consolidation when large companies purchased multiple small mills. Period IV, from the first years of the twentieth century until the end of WWII, was a period of ups and downs for the local industry, with a boom after the San Francisco 1906 earthquake and a bust during the Depression, causing the shutting of many mills. It was during this period that the steam tractors were replaced by diesel-powered ones. The last period, Period V, going through the present, has been marked by both technological innovation such as gasoline powered saws and large trucks. These efficiencies allowed large corporations to

take control of the local lumbering business. However, beginning in 1945, laws were passed to regulate the ways in which forests were cut and access roads cleared.

During the same time period that the area's timber industry was developing, the oil industry was also starting, made possible by large oil fields underlying San Mateo County. The oil industry began in the 1860s and until the late 1930s was mainly extracted by small, local companies. At first, the main use of the oil was for fishing boats. The local ownership and small scale oil production changed, however, when the area's oil fields attracted the attention of larger oil companies based in Los Angeles. In 1940 the first of several Los Angeles-based oil companies leased numerous wells in the area. Aerial photographs from the 1950s show the locations of many active oil wells on and near the Folger Ranch properties, on the west side of the Project Area.

The Driscoll Ranch Project Area is composed of four ranches. These comprise the Ray Ranch, the Guerra-Zanoni Ranch, the Wool Ranch, and the Folger Ranch. The Folger Ranch is divided into Upper and Lower ranches. The Driscoll Ranch name derives from the family by that name who, between the 1970s and 1990s, acquired all four ranches and combined them into one. The Driscoll Ranch has since become a part of the La Honda Open Space Preserve.

The Ray Ranch was first associated with Salvador Castro in the 1850s as part of the Rancho San Gregorio (Revolvy 2016). The property as shown on the 1868 and 1877 Official Maps of San Mateo County belonged to the "Estate of Burns John" (Easton 1868; Cloud 1877). Richard T. Ray, whose name also appears on the 1877 Official Map of San Mateo County on the parcel where the ranch stands, was also mentioned in the 1878 publication *The Illustrated History of San Mateo County* as being the owner of the illustrated ranch in the book (Moore & DePue 1878). John was one of the early pioneering families at La Honda (a + h llc 2015:4). He purchased property with Michael Dubbs in 1856 (Foss 1941:6). Dubbs retained the north half of the 1412.54 acres and Burns John took the south half. John became County Treasurer of San Mateo County, which had just been formed, but died later the same year (1859), leaving his wife and four children. Mrs. John then married their ranch hand – Richard T. Ray – and the family remained at the ranch until 1880 (Foss 1941:6). This couple produced six more children.

During the 1860s and 1870s, this ranch was associated with the Younger family, who added to a pre-existing ranch house on the property. In 1892, Richard Ray sold his property to William Hughes, of Hanson, Ackerson & Co., a large lumber company in the area (Foss 1941:6). Later, it was sold to Henry Hilderbrandt, who then sold it to the Italian-Swiss brothers Julio and Felix Guerra sometime between 1909 and 1927 (Kneese 1927; Neuman 1909). On both the 1902 and 1940 USGS topographic quadrangles, standing buildings are shown at the Ray Ranch site. The Guerras rented the property to others by the 1940s. These tenants had dairy and beef cattle. One of the families who rented the ranch was the Cunha family, who also rented other ranches in the area from the 1950s to the 1980s.

The Guerra-Zanoni Ranch property first belonged to Salvador Castro, as part of the Rancho San Gregorio in the 1850s. The property as shown on the 1868 and 1877 Official Maps of San Mateo County belonged to Michael Dubbs. Dubbs was one of the early pioneers at La Honda and the partner of Burns John (Foss 1941:7-8). In March of 1880, William Hughes purchased the Dubbs' property and in 1886 rented it to Charles Dearborn. This is the parcel that includes the present-day Guerra-Zanoni Ranch. Hughes owned the property until at least 1909 as shown on the 1909 Official Map of San Mateo County. By 1927, the Italian-Swiss brothers Julio and Felix Guerra possessed both halves (Neuman 1909; Kneese 1927). The Zanoni name derives from the ranch's renter, Joe Zanoni, who rented from the Guerra brothers in the 1940s. Zanoni ran a small dairy operation on the property and also grew his own cattle feed. Beginning in the 1950s the ranch was, like the Ray Ranch, leased to the Cunha family. At some point between the 1970s and 1990s this property was purchased by the Driscoll family, who eventually sold it to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

The Wool Ranch property was first owned by Francisco and Encarnacion Rodrigues, who granted it to Salvador Castro in 1855 (Abstract of Title 1909:50, 51). On March 3, 1858, Franklin Todd deeded to Henry W. Seale a tract Rancho San Gregorio property 95 acres in extent (Abstract of Title 1909:104). In 1863, Henry W. Seale was granted the deed to 1114.30 acres of land by Lloyd Tevis (Abstract of Title 1909:82, 83, 93). Lloyd Tevis acquired the acreage from James Bell prior to 1863. Henry W. Seale deeded to Joseph Buchannan Seale (relationship unknown) this same 1114.30 acres on August 31, 1866 (Abstract of Title 1909:93).

A parcel consisting of 120 acres was patented to Helen Schultz who assigned 110.47 acres of the original 120 to William Wilson in 1867 (Abstract of Title 1909:103, 104). The parcel given to Wilson eventually became part of the Seale Ranch. Joseph Buchannan Seale deeded back to Henry W. Seale the same 1114.30 acres in 1870 that Henry Seale had sold to him in 1866 (Abstract of Title 1909:94). The 1868 Official Map of San Mateo County shows property belonging to Henry Seale that is 1114 acres in extent (Easton 1868). Henry Seale continued to expand his holdings for the next 20 years (Abstract of Title 1909:110; Cloud 1877).

On May 23, 1890, the Seale property, now in the estate of the deceased Henry W. Seale, was distributed to Thomas Seale. The Seale Ranch amounted to 1314.30 acres at this time and it is depicted on the 1894 Official Map of San Mateo County (Bromfield 1894). During that same year, Thomas Seale entered into a lease agreement with Natale Fry, for 1500 acres, to be leased for a period of five years (Abstract of Title 1909:95). The lease was in effect from late 1891 through 1896.

In 1897, Thomas Seale began leasing 1500 acres, possibly the same 1500 acres, to James and Barnado Zanoni for the purposes of farming and dairying (Abstract of Title 1909:96). Fry's

lease would have been up by this time, so the Zanoni Brothers likely took over working the same land. According to George Bordi, Joe Zanoni was raised on the Wool Ranch, probably in the 1920s and 1930s. Joe leased adjacent property from the Guerras in the 1940s (G. Bordi 2006).

Thomas Seale was deceased by July of 1908 and his holdings were distributed to his grown children – Alfred and Mabel Seale (Abstract of Title 1909:118). A few days later, in July, 1909, the Albert and his wife Grace Seale and Albert’s sister Mabel (now Mabel S. Laumeister) deeded 1293.52 acres of land to Emilia D. Silva (Abstract of Title 1909:121). This transaction ended the Seale Ranch era and began a new one at what is now known as Wool Ranch

By 1927, Peter Faber owned the ranch and was a dairyman who used it for haying and pasturage for dry stock (Kneese 1927). The 1927 Official Map of San Mateo County and the Half Moon Bay 1940 USGS topographic map show no buildings or structures at the current location of the Wool Ranch in those years (Furnis 2016: Figure 1; Kneese 1927; USGS 1940). However, the 1953 aerial photograph does show the house, barns and other buildings at the current location, along what was known as “Seale Road” on some maps (Furnis 2016: Figure 15; Bromfield 1894). It is possible the buildings were in existence prior to 1940, as the USGS topographic maps were sometimes years behind in reflecting built resources on the ground. George Bordi’s account of Joe Zanoni being raised on the Wool Ranch property certainly suggests that a ranch house existed somewhere on the Wool Ranch property (G. Bordi 2006). Since the Zanoni Brothers leased the Seale Ranch from Henry Seale in the late 1890s to early 1900s, this makes sense.

Following the Faber occupancy, A. J. and D. E. Wool owned the ranch, as well as other properties to the north. Their names are shown on the 1960 county map (San Mateo County 1960). In the 1960s, A. J. Wool was a member of the San Mateo County Cattlemen’s Association and sponsored an article on the history of San Mateo County (California Cattleman 1966:16). In the article, A. J. Wool was listed as a resident of La Honda. The Henry Cunha family leased the Wool Ranch for 30 years, from the 1950s to the 1980s (Judy Wilson, personal communication, April 29, 2016). The ranch buildings are shown in aerial photographs from 1953, 1956, and 1960 (Furnis 2016: Figures 15-17). They used the property for dairying and growing hay and oats, and may have seasonally occupied the house. Sometime during the 1970s to 1990s, the property was acquired by Rudy Driscoll Jr.

Owners of the Folger Ranch, as with the others, purchased the land from Salvador Castro. The Upper Folger Ranch land was first purchased from Castro by Alfred R. Woodhams sometime after 1868. He sold it to James W. Bell sometime between 1877 and 1894, based on ownership parcels shown on the San Mateo County maps for those years. The James W. Bell family included a mother, father and six children. The Bell family owned various properties in and near to La Honda, establishing a school on their property, leasing land for oil production, but also dairying. The Bells, or at least the parents, continued to reside at this ranch until their old age, at

or just after the start of the twentieth century. Most of the property was sold off by 1909 to another family, Robert A. and Manuel F. Silva. Silva family members continued to live and farm the ranch until 1959. In 1960, Carter Lane was shown as the property owner, when it was leased to Charlie Bettencourt for the next ten years (Charlie Bettencourt, personal communication, May 2, 2016; San Mateo County 1960). Then, Peter Folger, grandson of J. A. Folger, of coffee fame and fortune, purchased the 1000+ acre ranch. Bettencourt continued on, working for Folger raising beef cattle, barley, oats, and hay for another 10 years. It is Peter Folger's name that is currently attached to the ranch.

The Lower Folger Ranch shares the Upper Folger Ranch's history until 1902. No structures appear on the property until 1953, when a large barn is apparent along with smaller buildings south of the present-day ranch house and small barn. These may have belonged to S. J. Tichnor (or Tichenor). Other than the fact that buildings on this ranch appeared later in time than on the Upper Folger Ranch, the Lower Folger Ranch's property history is the same as that of the Upper, with the same series of owners. Peter Folger was the last to own it prior to the Driscolls.