

ARCHEOLOGY/HISTORY

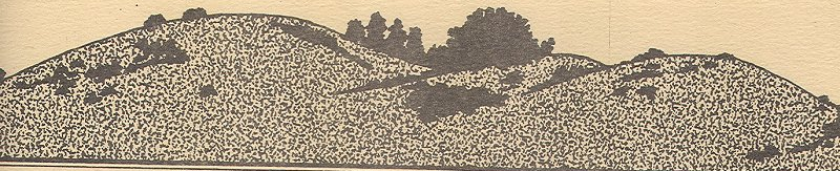
SETTING

Peacock Gap, located on Point San Pedro in Marin County, is an area rich in archaeological and historical significance. It has evolved through four major eras of influence: the Native American period, the Mission period, the Chinese period and the McNear family period. Each era has directly or indirectly played an important role in the formation of the area as it exists today.

The Native American Period. The aboriginal inhabitants of Point San Pedro were a hunting and gathering people known as the Coast Miwok. It is estimated that at one time as many as 1,500 lived within this region. These people had no overall tribal organization but rather traveled in small bands throughout Marin and southern Sonoma County. Excavations in the Peacock Gap area have revealed significant Native American artifacts, thus establishing the region as being of high archaeological sensitivity.

The Mission Period. California's Mission period resulted in the decimation of most coastal Indian tribes. Founded ostensibly for the purpose of converting Native Americans to Christianity, the Missionaries introduced not only European religion, customs, language, and dress, but also European diseases, from which the Indians had no natural immunities. The Mission San Rafael Archangel was founded in 1817 as a sanitarium for sick Indians from the Mission San Francisco de Asis across the bay. Once established, the Missionaries sought to indoctrinate the natives from the surrounding region. By 1828, the San Rafael Mission claimed 1,140 converts, a large part of whom were Coast Miwok. Those Indians that resisted conversion were none the less exposed to the European diseases and thus fared no better than those who willingly joined the Mission. By 1842, when the Mexican government promulgated the abandonment of the Mission system, there were approximately 20 known Coast Miwok left in existence. Most of the Mission property passed into the hands of ranchers, thus Point San Pedro was deeded to Timoteo Murphy as the Rancho San Pedro Santa Margarita y las Gallinas Land Grant.

The Chinese Period. In the mid 1800s four Chinese settlements were established on Point San Pedro. These communities began as relay points for Chinese laborers smuggled into the country to work on the construction of the transcontinental railroad. When the railroad was completed, many Chinese returned to San Francisco to find jobs; however, this was a period of intense anti-Chinese sentiment in the Bay Area, culminating with the passing of the Exclusion Act in 1892 which restricted the employment opportunities open to Chinese. Because of this, some 2,000 to 5,000 displaced Chinese located on Point San Pedro developed their own community. During this time the Chinese leased most of the land in this area, establishing trading companies as well as shrimp and fishing businesses which flourished along the bay. The Chinese also discovered that the clay soils in the region were ideal for brick making, beginning what would one day become the



area's most prominent industry. The community prospered until 1910 when the state planted bass, which eat shrimp, into the bay and put restrictions on the use of net-fishing. This, aggravated by increasing water pollution, resulted in a steady exodus of Chinese from the region. Today, a few of the descendants from the original Chinese still live in the area, and the remains of one of the fishing villages exists. It is located north of the study area in China Camp State Park.

The McNear Family Period. In 1859 a young immigrant to California from the east named John Augustus McNear and his brother George W. McNear purchased 700 acres of land comprising part of the Rancho San Pedro Santa Margarita y las Gallinas Land Grant, thus establishing what was to become one of Marin County's wealthiest and most influential families. It was John A. McNear's dream to see Point San Pedro become the major industrial center for the San Rafael area which he promptly set out to accomplish.

Within a few years time the brothers dissolved their partnerships; with John keeping the Marin County property and George concentrating his efforts in Petaluma. In 1864, John became the first manufacturer of concrete, for which he has been credited the inventor. Six years later he was the first to use reinforced concrete in building a reservoir on his Point San Pedro land. Over time John McNear increased his Point San Pedro land holdings to 2,500 acres, most of which was used as dairy pasture or leased to Chinese trading companies and fishermen.

In the 1880's John McNear and his eldest son George P. McNear built summer homes on what is now known as McNear's Beach. This area developed into a fashionable resort community known as the Glen. About this same time John McNear's other son, Erskine B. McNear joined his father in business. Together they bought the land used by the Chinese to get clay for making bricks, and thus began a brick company of their own. By the turn of the century, McNear and son had constructed the necessary sheds and houses, installed a kiln of their own design, and were selling bricks throughout the bay area. This was the start of the McNear Brick Company which is still in operation today. The brickyard area rapidly grew into a small company town, complete with a post office and the region's first school.

The San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 put an end to John A. McNear's dreams of developing Point San Pedro into an industrial center. His vision of connecting his land with San Rafael by railroad was destroyed when the financial backers who had promised to support him withdrew their funds to help rebuild San Francisco. John A. McNear died in 1918 whereupon his son Erskine took control of the family fortune. At its zenith, the McNear family owned 3,000 acres of land on Point San Pedro, including the brickyard and a substantial dairy operation.

The family held on to their ranch until 1955 when 2,500 acres were sold to be subdivided. Glenwood and Peacock Gap are the two housing developments that resulted from this sale. McNear's Beach was sold in 1959 and was subsequently bought by the county in 1970 to be used as a




regional park. In 1971 the family sold its last piece of property. This was the existing quarry and brickyard land. The McNear family now operates their Brick Company on land that is owned by the Dillingham Corporation, from which they hold a long term lease.

Archaeological Resources. The base maps of the Peacock Gap neighborhood, compiled from archaeological information gathered by the Cultural Resource Facility of Sonoma State University reveals an area of high archaeological sensitivity. Within one mile of the region's boundaries, 25 classic San Francisco Bay shellmounds have been identified. Of these sites, two have been found to contain petroglyphs and six contain evidence of human bone. Within the Peacock Gap planning area, there are nine recorded shellmounds. The soils of these sites are characterized by heavy shell content, some mammal bone, and grey-brown friable ashy soils containing charcoal. There have been reports of obsidian, chert flake tools, and mortars and pestles being found within the region.

Historical Resources. What is now known as McNear's Beach began in the 1880s as the summer homes of the McNear family. Because of its relatively warm waters and sheltered beach, it became a favorite spot for swimmers and boaters from around the San Rafael area. This popularity resulted in the development of a fashionable resort community, referred to as the Glen, complete with hotel, tennis courts, dance hall and rose garden. It also served as a stop over-point for the steamer "Gold" enroute between Petaluma and San Francisco. By the 1930s the Glen's popularity began to fade. Most of the older structures were abandoned and have been subsequently destroyed. The McNear family held on to the beach front property until 1959 when they sold to an organization that revitalized the area by putting in a swimming pool and coffee shop, as well as dredging a new yacht harbor. In 1964 the property sold again. At this time a tennis court was installed, and the area became known as Peacock Gap Tennis and Swim Club. In 1970, twenty-four acres of McNear's Beach was bought by the Marin County Parks and Recreational Department, which maintains the site today as a county park. Most of the historically significant structures have been destroyed, including the original John A. McNear family summer home. The two remaining historical structures are a wood barn, which is currently utilized for storage of park equipment, and the simple wood frame two story George P. McNear home. This structure, located in the palm grove on the southern border of the property, is currently in extremely rundown condition and is of no present use; however, it constitutes the only remaining example of the period of Point San Pedro history and is thus worth considering for preservation.

The Brick Barn complex, located at the base of the hills northwest of the Peacock Gap golf course, is a rare example of an agricultural structure that is rich in both architectural and historical significance. Built in the 1880s, the structure encompasses approximately 16,700 square feet, consisting of three attached buildings: a large, clear spanning gable roofed main barn; a lower monitor roofed livestock barn; and a smaller auxiliary barn. Each of these sections is constructed with unreinforced 13 to 17 inch thick brick walls supporting a wood frame, corrugated sheet metal roof. The architectural importance of this building is not just in its unique design, which



includes arched windows and doors and louvered ventilators in the clearstory, but also in the material of which it is constructed. It is uncommon to find an agricultural structure on the west coast that is made out of anything but wood, thus it is the masonry that makes the barn architecturally significant and could potentially qualify it for the National Register of Historic Places.

The historical importance of this structure is in its association with the McNear family, one of the major contributors to the early economic development of Marin County. Abundant pasture land and a mild climate made the Peacock Gap area ideal for dairying; the McNear dairy was one of many to develop in the region. Although the exact date is uncertain, it is believed that the McNear Brick Barn was built in the late 1880s. It is also speculated that the masonry construction results from the availability of bricks from the nearby brick company. The structure was designed as three interconnecting barns, each with its own separate function. The main barn was used to store hay, which was fed to the animals in the winter months when pasture land was limited. The expansive monitor roofed structure served as both a livestock barn and milking barn, while the auxiliary barn was used to handle the milk which was put into large cans and sold to the Marin Dell Dairy Company. Most of the workers at the McNear's dairy were Portuguese emigrants who lived in small houses that once surrounded the barn. These families and their descendants comprise an ethnic group that is still dominant in Marin County today.

The McNear dairy went out of business in the mid 1940s, and the structure has since been used for a variety of activities. Through its many uses, the structure has been maintained with little or no change to the original design. Today the brick barn is used as a storage facility for the Peacock Gap Golf Course. The Historical/Architectural report, filed in 1977 by the San Rafael Cultural Affairs Commission's Technical Advisory Subcommittee, classified the barn as being of excellent architectural significance and of major historical and cultural importance, and was thus given an overall Historical/Architectural rating of exceptional.

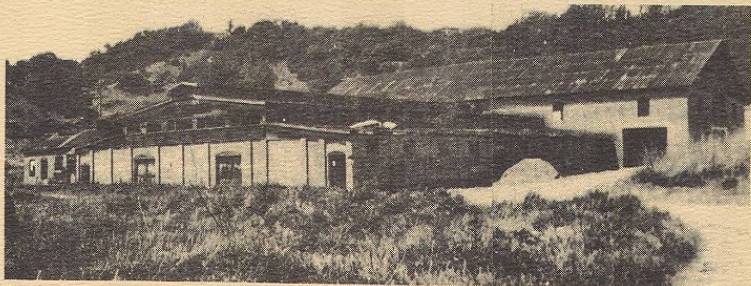


FIGURE 12: The McNear Brick Barn Complex



Around the turn of the century, John A. McNear and his son, Erskine B. McNear took over the old Chinese brickyard on Point San Pedro. The quality of clay and the easy accessibility of water transportation to San Francisco, the East Bay and the Sacramento river markets made the location ideal for brick manufacturing. The necessary equipment, sheds and houses were built and the site rapidly developed into a small company town, complete with post office and school. As soon as the brickyard was established, Erskine B. McNear moved his family to the house he had made ready on the property.

As time went by, fewer employees lived on the brickyard site resulting in the abandonment and eventual destruction of all but a handful of the many company homes. Many of the original brickyard structures are still a functioning part of the operation. The old Erskine B. McNear family home is still standing, as is the original Point San Pedro school, which has been renovated as part of the Saint Sylvester's church facility, located adjacent to the brickyard site.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Peacock Gap is recognized as a region of high archaeological sensitivity and, therefore, will require special land use constraints. All efforts should be made to prevent the disruption of any known archaeological sites and provisions should be included to prevent the degradation of possible unknown resources. Any land that is to be developed in this area should first be investigated by a qualified archaeologist. Tests should be done by both auguring and hand excavations if necessary. If any additional archaeological remains are encountered during development, the contractor should be bound by his contract to halt work immediately within a 30 meter radius of the find. Work should not be resumed until a professional archaeologist has determined the significance of the discovery and has designed and executed a mitigation program which minimizes any impact.

All efforts should be made to preserve and restore the McNear summer home, brick barn and brick yard structures. A total understanding of these buildings should be established, and a design philosophy of reconstruction and reuse should be considered with respect to historic qualities and functioning of the facility in relation to its surroundings.

LAND USE

SETTING - PRESENT USES

Residential. At present, residential development in the Peacock Gap planning area consists of approximately 600 units of single family housing and 110 condominium units. The single family homes were built between 1956 and 1963 and currently range in value from \$150,000 to \$300,000 (Century 21, 1979). The condominium complex was built between 1965 and 1974 and the units currently range in value from \$150,000 to \$160,000 (Century 21, 1979). The total population is about 2100, and the average family size is 2.9 to 3.4 people/housing unit (City of San Rafael, 1977).



Density of the single family houses is about 2.0 units/acre, while the density of the condominium development is about 10 units/acre.

There is no low-cost housing in the planning area. The nearest low-cost housing is in the central business district of San Rafael and the unincorporated Santa Venetia area, five and eight miles distant from the planning area, respectively.

A portion of the land that has been zoned for residential development is still undeveloped (Figure 13). A proposal was submitted in 1977 for developing the land that is owned by New York-California Industrial Corporation (an affiliate of Latipac, Incorporated). That proposal was not approved by the City. The remaining undeveloped land which is zoned for residential development is owned by the American Savings and Loan Association. They have contracted a local developer, Ivan Grover, to begin the process of developing the land (Howard Lawson, 1979). A 27+ acre parcel of land located between Point San Pedro Road and McNear's Beach has been zoned by the county for residential development. The parcel has an estimated development potential of 40 units (Larry Seeman Associates, 1978).

Commercial. There are no commercial establishments within the planning area. The major center for commercial interactions for the residents of the planning area is the Central Business District (CBD) of San Rafael, approximately five miles from Peacock Gap. The only other commercial center serving the community is the Loch Lomond Shopping Center at Point San Pedro Road and Loch Lomond Road, about two miles from the planning area. The Loch Lomond Shopping Center has the following stores: a medium size food store, a drug store, a liquor store, a cleaners, and a beauty parlor. For all other services, the residents must drive to San Rafael. Further development of the Peacock Gap area may generate a need for some type of convenience store or other commercial facilities in or near the planning area.

Industrial. There are three industrial operations in the planning area. One is a crushed rock quarry operated by the Basalt Rock Company (a division of the Dillingham Corporation). The second is an exposed aggregate products plant operated by Marin Exposed Aggregate Company. The third is a brick factory operated by the McNear Brick Company. All operations are in an area zoned M-2 (Manufacturing) by Marin County. The land is owned by the Dillingham Corporation which has leased the exposed aggregate facility and the brick factory to the respective companies mentioned previously.

The brick factory has been in operation since the 1880s. Figure 14 shows the location of the factory and the area where raw materials are obtained. Although future plans for the brick factory are uncertain at present, it is implied by the quarry reclamation plan that the factory will operate for approximately 15 more years. The quarry has been in operation since before the second world war and remains well hidden from developed portions of the planning area. The life of the quarry is estimated at 13 to 18 years (Gilroy, 1977). The quarry operation plans to excavate below the elevation of the Bay and then flood part of the area when the quarry



operations end. The existing hills, which act as a buffer between the residential sector and excavation activities, will be preserved.

The brick factory area has been considered for either residential or commercial uses (Gilroy, 1977).

Recreational. There are three established large open spaces in the planning area: McNear's Beach, Peacock Gap Golf and Country Club, and a 12-acre parcel at the corner of Riviera Drive and Biscayne Drive. These undeveloped, privately owned parcels also function as visual open spaces at the present time.

McNear's Beach is a County facility that provides a number of recreational opportunities. Facilities include two tennis courts, public pool, beach, open play areas, and picnic areas. The park presently charges an entrance fee that is much higher than most other County parks in an effort to control the large demand for use of the park relative to its capacity. The park is used by many people who live outside of the Peacock Gap area.

The privately-owned golf course is an 18-hole course that is open to the public and experiences a moderate amount of use.

At the corner of Riviera Drive and Biscayne Drive there is a 12-acre parcel owned by the San Rafael School District. A portion of the site is presently leased and maintained by the City as a neighborhood park. The site has been moderately developed with one baseball field and a small play area. The City has no long-term plans or policies for this parcel of land, other than the year-to-year lease agreement with the School District. Currently, the School District is reviewing the possibility of selling the property.

Adjacent Recreational Land. Bordering the planning area to the north is China Camp State Park. Existing and planned facilities include picnic areas, hiking trails, and bike trails. Other recreational facilities are available in the adjacent neighborhood: Victor Jones Park is a 29-acre community park within the Glenwood development approximately one mile west of the planning area. At this park, five to eight acres are developed with a softball field and designated picnic and passive areas. The remaining land is open space.