

Mr. George Marsh, dealer in Oriental Art
Goods, named the district Richmond, for
his birthplace, Richmond, Australia.

ANZA BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY

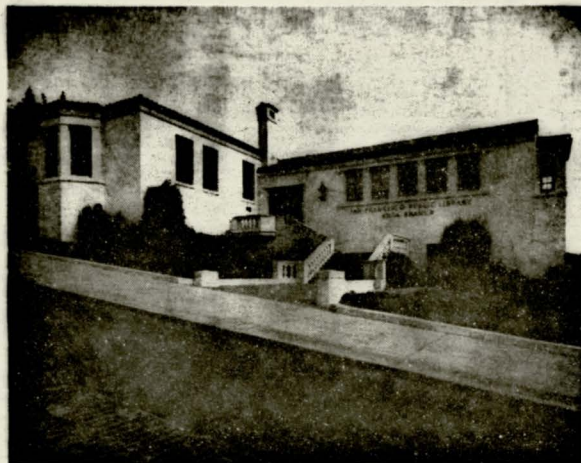
and

PARK-PRESIDIO DISTRICT

Ella C. Paine

Anza Branch Public Library

February 18, 1950



THE ANZA BRANCH OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Anza Branch Public Library is situated on the east side of Thirty-seventh Avenue between Geary Boulevard and Anza Street. It serves a population of about 29,000 (1948) who live in the district bounded by Twenty-third Avenue on the east, Golden Gate Park on the south, the Pacific Ocean on the west and north. This represents the west end of the Park-Presidio district, also familiarly known as the Richmond District.

This district which extends from Arguello Boulevard (formerly called First Avenue) to the Ocean, was first called Richmond in 1890. There are two versions of the origin of the title. One is that at a meeting of civic-minded men of the district, a Mr. Marsh suggested the name after the city of his birthplace. The other is that at such a gathering no name could be agreed upon and the meeting broke up, with the understanding that a definite name would be selected at a later time. One of the men remarked, "Yes, we'll pick a name, just like Grant took Richmond", whereupon another asked, "What's the matter with Richmond?" and immediate agreement followed. However, in later years as the sand dunes gradually gave way to homes, people became confused with the Richmond District and the rapidly growing City of Richmond across the bay, and in 1917 a city ordinance was passed, officially bestowing the name Park-Presidio District.

In the latter half of the 1800's this region was composed of sand dunes, and sparsely settled. There were dairy

ranches owned by Irish and Germans, and Italians and Chinese had vegetable gardens in the district now known as Seacliff. Road-houses were situated on Fulton Street along the side of Golden Gate Park where visitors on their way to the ocean beach stopped for refreshments. Wild goat herds roamed near Lands' End, and the cove known now as China Beach was frequented by Chinese, who fished and raised strawberries there.

The main road to the beach, the old Point Lobos Road, now called Geary Boulevard most of its length, had a toll-gate, and the charge for use of the road was used for its upkeep.

At the time of the San Francisco fire and earthquake of 1906, camps with tents were set up in Golden Gate Park for those who had been burned out. As soon as possible very small cottages, known as "refugee shacks", were erected for those who owned lots, and since land was cheap here then, many were built in the district. A few still remain but have been remodeled and added to so that they now appear as modern cottages. That period began the real development of this territory which continued until now there are very few vacant lots left. Block after block of homes, apartments and bungalows stretch from one end to the ocean.

Overlooking the channel leading into the Golden Gate is the Sea - cliff tract, where many large, beautiful homes are perched on the cliffs and their terraced gardens extend to the water's edge.

The streets, north and south were named Avenues from First to Forty-eighth, and the cross-streets were originally called by the letters of the alphabet; but as the district developed, names of California explorers or pioneers beginning with those letters, have been used, as "A" for Anza, "B" for Balboa, etc.

At present there are several Improvement Clubs in the district, and in naming them it is necessary to include those for the entire district, as there is no dividing line or natural barrier to separate the East end from the West. They include:

Balboa Merchants' Association

Geary Boulevard Merchants' Association

Park Presidio Civic Club

Park Presidio Improvement Association

Point Lobos Improvement Club.

The first Improvement Club was the Park-Presidio Improvement Club, founded by Colonel T. P. Robinson. He was a director on the Board for the Midwinter Fair held in Golden Gate Park in 1894. In 1895 at "The Chutes" on 11th and Fulton he organized the first Improvement Association in the district. In 1913 their own clubhouse at 649 - 8th Avenue was dedicated. The club still holds its meetings there.

An interesting note may be made here of the West End Improvement Association. In 1930(?) an amendment to the charter of San Francisco was proposed to increase the

appropriation of taxes for the Library. For some years the Richmond Branch had proved inadequate for the ever-increasing population and, as a second branch library further west was badly needed, Mr. Gus Pollack, an insurance man, organized the West End Improvement Association, mainly to campaign for the new branch. All associations joined in the campaign and it was the heavy favorable vote from this district that passed the amendment and made the increase possible. Then the West End Improvement Association ceased to exist.

Of the landmarks in the district the Cliff House at Point Lobos Avenue at Great Highway is perhaps the best known. The present Cliff House is the third to occupy the site. The first was built in 1863. Traffic to the cafe was by way of the Point Lobos toll road. On Christmas 1894, the Cliff House burned to the ground. Adolph Sutro erected the second Cliff House two years later and it became a rendezvous for many famous visitors to the city.

In 1907 it was destroyed by fire and immediately rebuilt by Sutro, continuing to be popular until prohibition. After being closed for some time it was bought and reopened by the Whitney Brothers who maintain "Playland at the Beach", an amusement area of rides, games of chance and skill, eating places, etc.

Just above the Cliff House is Sutro Baths and Ice Rink, containing the world's largest indoor swimming pool, built in 1896 by Adolph Sutro.

Just above Sutro Baths was a car-barn, the ocean

terminal of the Market Street Railway Sutter line. Last year this was destroyed by fire.

Also near Sutro Baths, built on a rock overlooking the sea, could formerly be seen a few beams remaining from Pelton's Tide Machine. Here Alexander Pelton planned to harness the tides and develop electric power. An experimental plant costing \$250,000 was three times swept out to sea and he abandoned the project. During the past year the last of this structure has completely disappeared.

Overlooking the Cliff House is Sutro Heights, once the home of Adolph Sutro. The house was surrounded by gardens with trees of many varieties from all parts of the world. Scattered through the ground were many statues, some of which remain. When Sutro's daughter, Dr. Emma Sutro Merritt, died in 1938, she left Sutro Heights to the city to be used as a public park.

Across from Sutro Heights is the end of the Lincoln Highway, which stretches across the continent from the Pacific to the Atlantic. This is at the end of Lincoln Park, 270 green-lawned city-owned acres, which contains a public golf course, Lincoln Park Clubhouse, a children's playground and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. This museum, modeled on that of Paris, was a gift of Adolph B. and Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, as a memorial to California dead in World War I.

Beneath the green lawns of the golf course lie the graves of thousands of San Franciscans who died during the

latter half of the 19th century. Here were located the cemeteries of Chinese, Japanese, Negroes, Jews and Italians. Members of the Redmen and the Grand Army of the Republic were buried here, and here also was the Potter's Field. When the city purchased the land in 1910, it kept its promise not to disturb the graves of the dead.

On the north side of Lincoln Park is Land's End, opposite Mile Rock Lighthouse. Years ago the Sutter street-cars used to run on tracks cut into the cliffs, stopping at Land's End Station, where there was a wooden octagonal structure, used as a waiting station for the streetcars and where one could purchase hot coffee, sandwiches, soft drinks and candy. This has been razed and all signs of the building completely obliterated.

A zig-zag trail down the cliff's side led to a small cove which was a favorite spot for picnickers and waders, as the sea there was not considered safe for swimming. After several landslides across the cartracks, the line was finally rerouted out Geary Boulevard, the tracks removed and the road has since become a favorite place for strollers. During the last war the road was closed to the public, guarded by sentries and an encampment of soldiers quartered on the hillside below.

Nearby on the rocks are the battered remains of the ships Coos Bay and Lyman Stewart, which were wrecked on the rocks there.

Just above Land's end is the Marine Lookout Station of

the Chamber of Commerce.

Next to Lincoln Park are Fort Miley, U. S. Military Reservation, and the United States Veterans' Administration Facility, constructed in 1933, containing an ultra-modern hospital of more than 300 beds, laboratories, clinics, quarters for nurses and physicians, a library, recreation hall and canteen.

The only spot on the city's ocean frontage considered safe for bathing is a short irregular crescent lying just below Seacliff and popularly called China Beach, frequented mostly by highschool boys and girls. Its correct name is James D. Phelan Memorial Beach State Park, named for James D. Phelan, a former mayor and library trustee, who left a bequest of \$50,000 for its purchase. After a long wrangle with the property owners of Sea Cliff, the City and State bought the property in 1933 for \$160,000. The plans for its development as a park have not materialized yet.

Washington High School at Geary and 32nd Avenue has been built on the site of an old quarry, the rock from which was used to build the roads to the ocean in earlier days.

Opposite 37th Avenue, just inside Golden Gate Park, is situated the San Francisco Police Academy. This building was opened originally as a police station about 18 years ago, under the command of Captain Michael Riordan, but when the Police Department was reorganized a few years later, it was changed to a Police Academy where

the new recruits to the force receive their training.

The Bay District Race Track was between Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Avenues, Clement Street and Geary Boulevard. The arch at the entrance remained standing until 1915 when it was removed to make way for a gas station.

The Claremont roadhouse was on Fulton Street at Twelfth Avenue, the Casino near Thirty-sixth Avenue. Another was located at Twenty-fourth Avenue.

A large coal yard owned by a Mr. Welding used to be at Ninth Avenue and Clement Street where the Coliseum Theatre now stands.

Lynch's livery stable where "hacks" and buggies could be hired, was on Geary Street near Eighth Avenue.

Transportation in this district has been varied. In the sixties a horse-drawn omnibus made the trip from Portsmouth Square to the beach. The fare was fifty cents. A tally-ho service from the Palace Hotel brought the guests, who drove through Golden Gate Park to the beach, a change of horses was made, and they returned by a different route. The charge was \$2.00 per person. Many families owned their own horse-drawn buggies and a trip to the beach was a favorite outing.

A steam train ran from Central Avenue, and a horse-drawn car ran from First Avenue to Thirty-fourth Avenue, Adolph Sutro built the first electric railroad which ran from Central Avenue to the beach.

The Market Street Railway had electric streetcars on Fulton Street and also the "1" and "2" lines on Sutter. The "1" line went around by Land's End, while the "2" line went out Geary to the beach.

The Municipal Railway was established in 1912 and soon had the "B" line out Geary to Thirty-second Avenue and, after a few turns, to the beach near the end of Golden Gate Park. The "C" line traveled on Geary Street to Second Avenue to California to Thirty-third Avenue. Later on the Market Street Railway extended the Turk and Eddy line out Balboa to Thirty-first Avenue. All car lines ran east and west, but in 1944 when the Market Street railway was bought by the City and merged with the Municipal Railway, a bus line was instituted on the Twenty-fifth Avenue, crossing Golden Gate Park and connecting with Nineteenth Avenue Boulevard on the Sunset side. There is a definite need of another line between Twenty-fifth and the Ocean, for more rapid transportation between the two districts. Since the latter part of 1948, streetcars have been discarded for busses on all carlines in the district with the exception of the "C" line which terminates at Second Avenue, with a transfer there to a bus out California, and the "B" line, which runs busses on Sundays and in the evenings. Geary Boulevard still remains the main thoroughfare as it was in earlier days as Point Lobos Road.

The first church in the "Richmond" district was St. James Episcopal church on the north side of Clement Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Reverend Lee was the pastor and made many of the interior furnishings himself. When the site became valuable for business property the land was sold, the church torn down and a new one constructed on California Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues.

The first school was the Sutro School at Nineteenth Avenue and Point Lobos Road. The new Sutro School is on Funston Avenue between California and Clement Streets.

The first theatres were the Nickelodeon at Sixth Avenue and Clement, and Fisher's Theatre at Seventh Avenue and Clement Street. La Bonita was on Clement Street near Eighteenth Avenue. The Lincoln Theatre was built in 1913 on Sixth Avenue between Clement and Geary. A few years ago it was razed and the Lincoln Bowl (for bowling) has replaced it. The district now has four moving-picture theatres; the Coliseum, at Ninth Avenue and Clement Street, the Alexandria, at Geary Boulevard and Eighteenth Avenue, the Balboa, on Balboa Street between 37th and 37th Avenues, and the Four Star, a smaller theatre, at Clement Street and 23rd Avenue.

The first public library was the Richmond Branch in a store on the southeast corner of Clement Street and Fourth Avenue. In 1913 the Richmond Branch Building was built on Ninth Avenue.

Anza Branch Public Library is situated on 37th Avenue between Geary Boulevard and Anza Street on the site of the old Lafayette School. Richmond Branch on 9th Avenue had by 1932 then reached a monthly circulation of 40,000 with 13,500 card holders.

For many years there had been a long-felt need for another library in the Park-Presidio district, and in 1931 the requests of the residents between 24th Avenue and the ocean and the district organizations was granted. Money was made available from city funds and on April 10th the Anza Branch was dedicated with formal exercises and was opened for business Monday morning.

A flag was presented, gift of the West End Improvement Association. Two pupils from Lafayette School, Barbara Wilder and Waldo Putzke, dressed as George and Martha Washington in honor of the Washington Bicentennial Year, assisted in the flag-raising ceremony, and Troop No. 9 of the Boy Scouts of America formed the guard of honor.

The branch established a precedent in receiving many beautiful baskets of flowers from the Improvement Associations and the P.T.A. of Lafayette School in honor of the opening. R. Brandlein & Company of San Francisco, who had furnished the tables and chairs, also sent flowers.

On opening day there were 11,823 new books on the shelves. The first day 1811 books were circulated for home use and 438 applications for new cards were filed.

The first book to be circulated was the biography of George Washington, drawn by Mrs. Philip Heatley, an elderly woman who lived directly across the street from the library and who had watched from her window every step in its erection.

The building itself is of California architectural style and made of reinforced concrete, with red brick stairs. The flooring is Tile-Tec, in red and black squares, and the wood finish is stained oak, a departure from the light woods used in the other branches. The book capacity is 16,000 volumes. The estimated cost was \$60,000 but, due to the fact that labor and materials were cheaper due to the depression, the actual cost was \$50,000. The extra money was used to buy books so that Anza Branch started with a finer collection than had any branch heretofore.

The architect was John Reid, Jr. who also selected and planned the shrubs used in the landscaping. He was said to have a special liking for this building although he had designed many larger ones.

Mrs. Ella C. Paine, who had been librarian of the Richmond Branch for twelve years, was transferred to Anza Branch as Librarian, ~~and still holds that position.~~ The first assistants were Miss Vivian Whitney, transferred from Presidio Branch, and Miss Christine Mohr, transferred from Richmond Branch. The page, Jack Hennessy was also transferred from Richmond Branch.
