

Our Ocean Backyard — *Santa Cruz Sentinel* columns by Gary Griggs, Director, Institute of Marine Sciences, UC Santa Cruz.

#138 August 10, 2013

Exploring the North Coast

I introduced Donald Clark's wonderful book, *Santa Cruz County Place Names*, in my last column. Mike Clark, Don's son, let me know that the book was revised and reprinted, and is available.

Getting back to the north coast, and heading south, Greyhound Rock appears as large mass of Santa Cruz Mudstone, which is usually connected to the shoreline by a sandspit. A spit connecting a small island to the coast is known as a tombolo. There are many times, however, either at very high tides or during the winter months, when the spit is submerged, stranding unsuspecting adventurers on the rock.

Why Greyhound Rock? Donald Clark's book states that a Santa Cruz pioneer, Thomas Majors, explained how it got its name- because it "looks like a hound, you know". Most people have great difficulty recognizing a hound and simply see a large lump of rock. Some even see a whale.

A mile south of Greyhound Rock is a place with a strange name but which is little known today, China Ladder. A few Chinese fishermen lived in small shacks at the top of the high steep cliffs here in the late 1800s. They used a rope that led to a ladder, which they descended to the shoreline, where they obtained abalone that were then dried and sold to the Chinese market.

Scott or Scotts Creek, depending upon whom you talk to, was named after Hiram Scott, originally from Maine, who arrived in Monterey by ship in 1846. Being from a large family he was forced at an early age to support himself. One of the few opportunities for a young man at the time was that of a sailor, so he went to sea. Through hard work he was successful, and rose to become a 2nd mate, but soon realized this wasn't the life for him.

Jumping ship in Monterey he made his way to Santa Cruz, where, somewhat surprising for a man who disliked life at sea, he began building a boat along what is now Main Beach. The California Gold Rush took him north in 1848, where he

did well in the mines. He ultimately settled in Stockton where he built a grand hotel and also started a ferry service.

Santa Cruz drew Scott back, however. He bought the San Augustin Rancho in the valley that now bears his name for \$25,000, and settled down to raise potatoes, hay and fine horses. His continued financial success led him in 1852 to buy a second ranch up the coast, a portion of Rancho Agua Puerca (dirty or muddy water) y Las Trancas (bar or barrier), near Scott Creek.

The windswept beach at the mouth of Scott Creek is known as Scott Creek Beach. The strong onshore winds from the northwest blow sands into dunes that used to migrate inland across the route of present day Highway 1. The dunes above the beach were formerly the site of a tank farm. In the 1940s and 1950s oil was pumped through a pipeline from offshore into a series of large storage tanks for the cement plant. In later years the dunes were the site of a mushroom farm.

The wide marine terrace between Scott Creek Beach and Davenport Landing is known as El Jarro Point. The name appears to have come from the original 1839 Mexican land grant, Rancho El Jarro. The source of the name, El Jarro, which means jug or jar in Spanish, seems odd, and has to my knowledge, never been understood or explained.

This oceanfront terrace hit the front pages of the Sentinel in 1969 when PG&E announced that they had taken out a lease on 6,800 acres of Coast Dairies and Land property with the intention of building what would have been the world's largest nuclear power plant at El Jarro Point. This proposal, as much as any other single event, ushered in the environmental movement in Santa Cruz.