

The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park



2009 marks the 30th anniversary of *The Ponderosa*. The following article appeared in the first issue in March 1979.



FROM UNDER MY BRIM

Late Spring 2009

This is the start of a formal news letter for the PINE RIDGE ASSOCIATION. It will come out at least four times a year, giving information on what the ASSOCIATION has done, and will be doing; and will include, among other things, articles by, and of interest to the members. For the name of the newsletter, I propose "THE PONDEROSA". The word PONDEROSA means "BIG", and many things are big at Henry W. Coe State Park, but what I'm really referring to here are those large trees called PONDEROSA Pines. Their uses are many, and valued. This paper, or the house in which you live may have come from this pine, but their value as living members of the natural environment should not be underrated. They are a part of the unique place that Sada Coe Robinson gave to the people of California because she knew "From these quiet hills comes the peace of one's soul and the food for the power of thought." Send me other ideas for the name of the newsletter— Barry

Special points of interest:

- 30 years of Ponderosas
- Robison Mountain hike
- Mining in Coe
- ADA trail update
- Gilroy Hot Springs

The Ponderosa, 30 Years On

The Ponderosa was first published thirty years ago, in March 1979, and was a mere two and a quarter pages long. The first issue introduced Barry Breckling's regular column, "From under My Brim," that ran until Barry retired in June of 2007. After ten years publishing *The Ponderosa*, I passed the editor baton to Kevin Gilmartin and Barbara Bessey who produced it for the next nineteen years. Quality of the newsletter has improved steadily over the years as publishing techniques and editors have gotten more sophisticated.

With the advent of the first online issue coming soon, we'll see another level of improvement. I wish the editing staff, and contributors all the best and look forward to enjoying many more issues.

Dave Hildebrand

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Attention all PRA members! Please see insert for an important announcement regarding the online edition of *The Ponderosa*.

Coe's Charms

By Ron Erskine, President, PRA

Special Places Like Robison Mountain

One of the great benefits of being a PRA member and volunteer at Coe Park is the occasional opportunity to visit remote areas of the park. I have always felt that, while the park has plenty to boast about, it shines brightest east of County Line Road. We all know that as soon as you drop off of Pine Ridge and head...anywhere, there's work ahead: steep down, steep up, then do it again.

On the east side of the park the succession of deep corrugations relaxes into gentler terrain. Orestimba Creek and Red Creek meander through Mustang Flat and Paradise Flat ("flat" in Coe Park?), which are long stretches of rolling meadows dotted with blue oaks and gray pines. There is probably no place in the park more like Eden than the San Antonio Valley, and no place that can muster floral displays like the Thomas Addition. Some volunteers visit these areas regularly, but many volunteers rarely, or never, get to see them.

I had been a volunteer for about ten years when I first saw the San Antonio Valley. It was an unforgettable, nearly mystical moment. A group of us had driven out County Line Road to find and clear portions of the Mt. Stakes and Pinto Creek Trails. On the return ride, someone mentioned that we would pass close by the San Antonio Valley, so I asked if we could take a quick look. No problem.

Circumstances conspired to create magic. Suddenly a road that, to that point, had been etched into a hillside emptied lazily into some broad open Serengeti Plain. The warm light and long dramatic shadows of impending sunset sweetened the scene. After a day of walking directly up and down a steep trail choked with flesh-eating chaparral, the contrast could not have been more striking. Then, showing a total disregard for tasteful restraint, the fates added a small herd of tule elk racing across the valley away from our intrusive entrance.

I didn't know whether to scream, cry, or look around for Allan Funt. It was way too much. At such over-the-top scenes, Dave Sellers (a former Coe Park volunteer) and I used to say, "Must be Disney. God

wouldn't go that far." But there it was. Fortunately, I have had other chances to return to the San Antonio Valley. But how many volunteers and PRA members never get the chance?

So, I applaud the efforts Ranger John Verhoeven has made to put together special trips to these places that allow us a chance to see them. On the March trip to the Orestimba/Robison Mountain, the park put on an impressive show. We met at Bell's Station in dreary wet fog, later we parked by Orestimba Creek under warm clear skies, and later still, from our perch atop one of Robison Mountain's spur ridges, we watched black clouds approach, then leaned into the wind and slanting rain when the blustery weather arrived.

And flowers, lots of flowers. I have never seen such a display of shooting stars and gilia. Hillsides were color-washed, even from a distance. I offer the following photo as evidence.



Shooting Star in abundance along Paradise Flat, photo by Ron Erskine

On the drive out, we stopped to view a patch of several hundred purple mouse ears. I passed by there a week later and they were gone.

I lingered here and there on the hike and was one of the last people back. Tailgates were down, coolers open. Laughter and chatter passed between smiling faces and rosy cheeks. I grabbed a cool one and tried to keep up with the tale-telling and teasing. The afternoon sun streaked across the Rooster Comb, then approaching rain clouds shut the lights and a few rain drops began to fall. We scrambled to pack up and go.

You don't see this stuff at the mall. Thanks, John. Let's do more.

Reading the Landscape

By Teddy Goodrich

The Blue Ridge Copper Mining District and the Burra Burra Mine

April is absolutely the best month to make the challenging hike from Hunting Hollow up to Steer Ridge to admire the fabulous wildflower display. While you are there, take a few moments to check out the odd excavations in the serpentine outcrop near Willson Peak; they are all that remain of the Blue Ridge Copper Mining District.

After the Civil War began in 1861, copper was in great demand for the manufacture of cannons, bullets, and shell casings. Problem was, one of the largest copper mines in North America, the Burra Burra Mine in Tennessee, was controlled by the Confederacy and suddenly there was an urgent need to find more sources of this precious mineral in the Union.

Early in 1863, two prospectors found malachite, a copper ore, in the blue schist rocks that are abundant on the southern slopes of Burra Burra Peak. They named their claim the Burra Burra Mine, after the Confederate-controlled mine in Tennessee. The claim was incorporated in April 1863, and the list of trustees bore some impressive names: Josiah Belden, first mayor of San Jose, P.K. Dow and David Huber, Gilroy physicians, and other prominent members of the Gilroy community. With profit in mind, and to fund their enterprise, they proposed the sale of \$990,000 in stock to be sold at \$100 a share.

Meanwhile, another claim was made along the ridgeline that is known today as Steer Ridge. Named for the Blue Ridge Mountains in Tennessee where the original Burra Burra mine was located, the Blue Ridge Copper Mining District was incorporated in August 1863 and the trustees, once again prominent men primarily from Gilroy, proposed to sell \$510,000 of stock at \$100 a share. Apparently, neither venture proved successful as any mention of these mining operations disappears from local history within a year of their discovery. There were several possible reasons for the failure; one reason may have been the expense of shipping ore to the smelter. Ore was freighted by wagon to Stockton, transferred onto riverboats and shipped to San Francisco. Once there, it was loaded onto

sailing ships and taken to smelters in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The war ended in 1865, and the price of copper fell from a war-time high of 55 cents per pound to 19 cents per pound. The combination of the cost of shipping and the declining price per pound most likely made these mining ventures unprofitable.

Over time, the name of the Blue Ridge Copper Mining District migrated north to a ridgeline northeast of Pine Ridge, which became simply Blue Ridge. The Burra Burra Mine loaned its name to the peak on whose slopes it was located. The Burra Burra mine shafts, there were two, were covered over by landslides years ago, but tailings of excavated material can still be seen on the peak's southwestern slopes.

Teddy Goodrich
Historian, Pine Ridge Association



May 16, 2009
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Interpretive History Day at Gilroy Hot Springs..

What: Displays, docent lead tours,
live Jug Band music
period costume welcomed

Where: Gilroy Hot Springs,
A part of Henry Coe State Park,
at the end of Gilroy Hot Springs Road

Bring a picnic lunch, friends, & chairs!
Adults \$5 / teens \$2 / under 12 free with adult
Parking free but limited - please carpool

Reservations: (408) 314-7185 or (925) 837-1024
email: info@FriendsOfGilroyHotSprings.org

hiking tour optional; ask about accessibility
Proceeds benefit Friends Of Gilroy Hot Springs efforts
to preserve, protect, and restore public access
to this historical resort

Ask about volunteering with Friends Of Gilroy Hot Springs!
Friends of Gilroy Hot Springs is a subgroup of
the Pine Ridge Association

Update on the Park's First Major ADA- Accessible Trail

By Libby Vincent

In the June 2008 issue of *The Ponderosa*, I wrote about plans for developing and building Coe Park's first major ADA-accessible trail in Hunting Hollow. The plan is to have the trail begin at the Hunting Hollow parking lot, traverse the lower slopes of Osos Ridge, include some accessible backpacking sites in the windmill area, and eventually reach the Kickham Ranch.

Plans are well underway to start work on the first stage of the trail, from the Hunting Hollow parking lot to around Fish Pond. Although the distance is 1.5 miles if you walk straight along Hunting Hollow, that section of the accessible trail will be around 3.2 miles long. The trail will follow the contours of the hillside and wind into Woodcutter's Canyon and a couple of other places to follow the most level route, thus adding to the mileage. There are some construction challenges with bridging structures needed in several places to deal with slope stability issues, but there are no insurmountable problems with the route. The trail will be hardscape all the way so it's accessible year round. Lots of other details are still in the planning stages.

The project evaluation form (PEF) is complete, and an application was submitted in late March to the California River Parkways grant program. However, per the California Natural Resources Agency web site:

"Due to the State's fiscal crisis and the current freeze on bond funds, the application cycle for the California River Parkways ... Grant Program has been delayed. However, the Natural Resources Agency and the Department of Water Resources are moving ahead with the initial review process and anticipate conducting site visits to projects under consideration during Summer/Fall 2009, contingent on the availability of grant funds."

We currently estimate the cost of this first stage of the accessible trail to be around \$900,000. We've already received some astonishingly generous commitments of private funds and also other donations from PRA members, and we're very hopeful that the River Parkways grant application will be successful. If by any chance it's not, we'll apply for federal funds to build the trail via the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration Recreational

Trails Program. Any way you look at it, the funding for the construction of this first section of the trail is almost in place and we hope construction will start some time in 2010.

In the future, we're planning to continue to develop the accessible trail in stages along the length of Hunting Hollow, over the rise at the southeastern end, and down to the Kickham Ranch area. Completing the trail will open up the Kickham Ranch where the Coe Sector Office is located to much more public access so everyone can enjoy this beautiful valley as a trailhead and staging area. Completing the trail from Hunting Hollow to the Kickham Ranch will also provide the most comprehensive accessible trail in any California State Park. Now that will be another huge achievement for Coe Park!

Volunteer Drive

We're Asking for Your Help

We're always searching for enthusiastic new volunteers for Coe Park's uniformed volunteer program. It makes sense that a great source of new volunteer candidates must surely be you, the people who love the park. Stop and think of your like-minded friends and acquaintances who share your passion for open spaces. You may hike, bike, or ride with them, or you just share a love for the outdoors.

Who among your friends would love to volunteer at Coe Park if only they knew there was such a program, or knew more about it? If you have a name and contact information of someone you think might be interested, contact Ron Erskine at (408) 779 5335 or ronfoxtail@msn.com. As an incentive, we'll give any PRA member a \$20 credit in the visitor center bookstore when your new recruit finishes the volunteer training.

Uniformed volunteer training starts in September, so now is a good time to start thinking about possible candidates. Many thanks for your help.

Park News

By John Verhoeven
Headquarters Ranger



Hello to all PRA members from Henry W. Coe State Park. Thank you as always for your continued membership and support. I hope many of you were able to enjoy the recent Backcountry Weekend event sponsored by the PRA. The event brought a park experience to many visitors who would not be able to access the remote and beautiful east side of the park any other way, so thank you! The weather was cooler this year, which allowed visitors to hike, bike, and ride comfortably on their excursions.

Overall, the Backcountry Weekend was a great success this year. A recent improvement that was directly supported by PRA membership monies was the purchase of ten radios for use by PRA volunteers working at the park. All the PRA radios, new and old, were utilized at the event, which enabled rangers and volunteers at the park to respond quickly to medical incidents and overdue hikers returning from hikes.

The PRA is continuing the redesign of its website, and of www.coepark.org. Sometime this year the new website should be unveiled and will connect PRA members with the park. The already impressive web presence will be enhanced with a better interface and even more information. We will let you know when the new site is available.

I hope you have been able to come out to the park and enjoy the wildflowers and cool spring weather. Mother's Day breakfast is around the corner, as well as the Gilroy Hot Springs interpretive event on May 16th and the Lakeview PRA outing on May 23rd. I hope to see you at the park soon and thank you again for your support.

John Verhoeven
Ranger, Henry W. Coe State Park

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the new members listed below. Thank you for your support

Bill Barnhart, Morgan Hill
George Borst, Morgan Hill
Ronald Capener, San Jose
Jeanne & Joseph Filice, Gilroy
Vivian Jung, San Jose
Anna Le, San Jose
Robert Nichols, San Jose
Emily Strauss, Sunnyvale
T.Seikichi & Miriam Taba, Cupertino
Michael Toney, San Jose
Van Whitis, Palo Alto
Mary Williams, Morgan Hill

We need your help to keep our membership list current and accurate. If you are a paid annual member, your *Ponderosa* mailing label includes an expiration date. (No expiration date for life members and organizations.) If you have any question regarding your membership or to let us know of any change of address, please contact us. Email: membership@coepark.org

Snail mail: 9100 East Dunne Avenue, Morgan Hill, CA 95037
Phone: (408) 779 2728

News from Friends of Gilroy Hot Springs

By Laura Dominguez-Yon

“Welcome to Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs, my first home. Please wipe your feet!”

My name is Laura Dominguez-Yon, I am spokesperson for Friends of Gilroy Hot Springs (FOGHS), and that is how I begin the guided tour of the Hot Springs, standing on the dirt where the old hotel once commanded attention. Let me tell you why I am passionate about this place.



Gilroy Hot Springs Hotel,
photo courtesy of the Gilroy Historic Museum

Imagine: you are an immigrant from Japan, you have arrived in America alone, with minimal education, very little money, and your only assets are youth, determination, hope, and the name of a friend or relative from the same village. It is a time of social turmoil, economic hardship, and racism, and you feel intensely the frustration of it all. Now imagine the integrity, endurance, flexibility, intelligence, and hard work that can turn opportunities into success, the success necessary to build a home, a family, and a business in the face of the social injustice of racism that strips pride, demands humility, and threatens dignity. How do you find solace? Where do you go to relax, to re-energize, to remember purpose, and to reconnect with the heritage suppressed in efforts to adapt to this new culture?

There was such a place. Purchased and owned from 1938 to 1964 by H. K. Sakata, a successful Japanese grower/shipper in Watsonville, California, the historic Gilroy Hot Springs resort reminded him of the mineral springs and hillsides of his country of origin, Japan.¹ *Onsen*, bath houses or hot springs, have been used in Japan for centuries as a place to wash off one's weariness and to re-energize body and spirit. Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs provided such a respite for the Japanese

before and after their World War II internment experience. An excellent businessman, Mr. Sakata's astuteness enabled him to keep his property through his internment, and provided a way for him to help the many evacuees who were not able to find homes after the war.

In partnership with the Japanese Presbyterian Church, Mr. Sakata opened the resort as a hostel for 60 such families, allowing them more time to find a permanent place to resettle. My parents were among those 60 families. My passion is to hear the stories about the Hot Springs. I first contacted the Sakata grandchildren, then found descendants of the 1860s builder George Roop who, in turn, found a descendant of another owner, William Tennent. Together we are developing relationships with the local and neighboring historical societies and cultural organizations, working with Eagle Scout candidates and Boy Scout troops, and looking toward the future.

We have the support of the Pine Ridge Association, and we value the strong support from California State Parks Sector Superintendent, Eddie Guarcha. I invite everyone to join us, and learn more about our history and our plans.

¹Henry Kato, interview, April 13, 2008, California.

Yamato (大和) is an ancient name of Japan. The term was semantically extended to mean “Japan” or “Japanese” in general. The Ryukyans sometimes use this name in contrasting mainland Japan with Okinawa Prefecture, and in the Okinawan language. Yamato is called “Yamatu.” The term is thus a name for many things, and is occasionally a point of contention.

By Laura Dominguez-Yon



Mineral well



Cabin



Auto stage



Hotel dining room

All photos courtesy of the Gilroy Historic Museum

The PRA Calendar

Saturday, May 16, FOGHS, *Gilroy Hot Springs Walk Into the Past.* For more information contact:

info@FriendsOfGilroyHotSprings.org (408) 314 7185

Saturday May 23, PRA *Lakeview Meadows outing.*

Join Ranger John Verhoeven for a day hike. Meeting at the Dunne Avenue visitor center. Please RSVP to John at jverhoeven@parks.ca.gov.

Saturday June 13, *Hunting Hollow 5K/10K walk and fun run.* You can register for this fun event and download an entry form at www.coepark.org or call the visitor center: (408) 779 2728.

Saturday, October 3, The annual *Tarantula Fest.* Mark your calendars for the fun-filled day. More information is available at www.coepark.org.

Upcoming horse-related events

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| May 16 | Poker in the park ride |
| May 30 | Alternate Poker in the park ride if May 16 th is rained out |
| May 30 | Trail work day on horseback, if rain day is not needed for the poker-in-the-park ride |
| September 19 | Moonlight ride and potluck at Hunting Hollow |

For more information, please email
Bonnie Stromberg at
bonniestromberg@yahoo.com



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Henry W. Coe State Park
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The Ponderosa is a publication of the Pine Ridge Association with approximately five issues per year. The PRA's mission is to enhance and enrich the public's experience at Henry W. Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the natural history, history, and management of the park are welcome. Also, interested in volunteering? Please send submissions and ideas to the editor at: PRAnewsletter@wildblue.net.

Deadline for next issue: July 30, 2009



Printed on recycled paper