

The Many Aliases in Hunters Point History

By Millie Robbins

HUNTERS POINT, so often in the news these days, was called by at least three other names in its earlier days. (The name has nothing whatever to do with hunting, as we shall see.)

The packet boat San Carlos, the first ship to sail through the Golden Gate, arrived here on Aug. 5, 1775, on an expedition of exploration and anchored off what now is Sausalito.

Captain Juan Manuel de Ayala assigned members of his crew to explore the bay. To his second mate, Juan Bautista Aguirre, fell the job of investigating the Southern arm.

Getting about in a dug-out carved from the trunk of a large redwood tree, Aguirre went into what later was known as Mission Bay and saw on a finger of land there three Indians crying. So he named the point Los Llorones—The Weepers. Later, however, it was referred to as Sea Shell Point.

The following year after the founding of Mission Dolores and the Presidio, Spanish settlers called it La Punta de Avisadera—The Beacon Point.

The mission lands extended from the bay to the ocean and south to Menlo Park, and for many years over this vast area enormous herds of cattle roamed.

Then in 1797 the Buri Buri Ranch, a princely portion of over 15,000 acres of the mission estate ranging from San Bruno to San Mateo, was turned over to the fort, to be used as a supply farm. The Franciscan fathers objected

Millie's Column

strenuously to the authorities in Mexico city, but to no avail.

The mission, though, still retained ownership of six other pieces of property on the San Francisco side of the bay, including the pasturelands of La Visitacion which encompassed Bayview and Hunters Point. These contiguous sections were known together as Potrero Viejo.

Now then, among the grants to the Bernal family after the secularization of the missions in 1834 were 16 square miles extending through the Mission District and Hunters Point and dipping for a short distance into San Mateo county.

The Bernal title to the land later was confirmed by American law after California was admitted to the Union in 1850.

Bernal Heights, incidental-

ly, was part of that property and a Bernal home once stood on the present site of St. Luke's Hospital.

We'll skip now to those hectic, hysterical Gold Rush days when dusty, dirty San Francisco's population zoomed and the cost of land skyrocketed.

Two substantial citizens—Dr. John Townsend and John Cornelius de Boom conceived the idea of developing a nearby community where the weather was good, the air clean and fine fresh water springs were to be had.

They acquired in 1849 the eastern portion of the Bernal Rancho touching the bay, had a surveyor lay out a tract and engaged the youthful, cultured brothers, Robert Eugene and Philip Schuyler Hunter, as their real estate agents.

So here we have it. Those were the Hunters whose name had been attached to the point, the nucleus of this project, ever since.

More about the founders of the abortive town (which was to have been called South San Francisco) on Friday.