

# 4. The Top of the Hill

**S**OMEONE BUILT A TAVERN near the hill that the Spanish called La Portezuela and named it the Abbey House. For over fifty years it served as a landmark to travelers on both the Old Mission Road and the slightly newer San Jose Avenue.

In 1871, during a homestead craze that struck the San Francisco area, it gave its name to a subdivision that did not develop. The plans for this development were most ambitious, stretching from Vista Grande Avenue in present day Daly City to a point well past Holy Cross Cemetery.

Dr. Frank M. Stanger's research indicates that the lots in the Abbey Homestead subdivision were to be 100 by 120 feet in size, and "designed for homes with extensive gardens. Most of the streets were to bear the names of contemporary European statesman and generals. To this day the names of Gambetta, Moltke, Bismark and Thiers remain on streets projected by the planners of the Abbey Homestead.<sup>1</sup>

Another group of subdividers, calling themselves the School House Homestead Association, laid out a tract west of the Colma business district. Their plans called for thirteen streets running north and south from the juncture of San Pedro Avenue and Mission Street into modern day Broadmoor. The north-south streets were called Reiner, Allemany, Hill, Railroad, Dunks, Briggs, Clara, Bryant, Augusta, Annie, Frank, Yates and Brady. These streets were divided by an east-west boulevard that was named Washington Street by the developers. At its head was the property that Peter Dunks had presented to the Catholic Church; at its feet was a fifty acre plot for future development. Like the Abbey Homestead, the School House Tract failed to develop. Many of the plots were unsold while some of those that had been purchased were subsequently sold for taxes.

Meanwhile, the business community along Mission Road continued to grow. In 1888 the Great Register of San Mateo County listed a realtor, liquor dealer, and boiler-maker among the tanners, blacksmiths, painters, carpenters, dairymen, and farmers who were doing business in the area.<sup>2</sup>

While the settlers were tilling their land and the businessmen were starting their enterprises, the Colma and La Portezuela areas were always subject to the influence of a growing, bustling San Francisco. This angered some residents and frightened others into joining groups that called for a separate county government.

But even the creation of San Mateo County did not stop San Franciscans from crossing the county line to gamble and to fight. This led to what has become

one of the most noted duels in California history. The immediate cause of the quarrel between United States Senator David C. Broderick and David S. Terry, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, was a speech in which Judge Terry called Senator Broderick an arch traitor; but the underlying reason for it was the political conflict between Terry, who advocated the extension of slavery, and Broderick, who was opposed to slavery in any form.<sup>3</sup>

Quoting a local correspondent, Robert Baldick describes a scene that has inscribed forever the names of Terry and Broderick in the lore of Daly City:

All things being in readiness, the pistols were cocked and the hair-triggers set by the seconds. They were then delivered to the combatants. It was observed at this time that Mr. Broderick appeared nervous and ill at ease. He repeatedly twitched the skirts of his surtout, as though they were in his way. He was also somewhat out of position, and Mr. McKibben corrected him. Broderick closely measured with his eye the ground between himself and Terry. Mr. Benham read the conditions of the meeting, and Mr. Colton followed with instructions as to the firing. Broderick was still nervous, but Terry stood firm and erect, a silhouette against the early morning light. The men held their weapons muzzle downward. A moment of painful silence ensued.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Colton, in a clear voice, "Are you ready?" Both replied, but Broderick delayed a few seconds. He then said, "I am ready."

"Fire! One—" There was a report from the Senator's pistol. It was answered in a second by Terry's weapon. Broderick's pistol was discharged before he brought it to a level. This was probably caused by the fineness of the hair-trigger and his want of familiarity with that particular weapon. The bullet buried itself in the ground, two-thirds of the distance between himself and his antagonist. It was a splendid lineshot, fallen short of its mark. Broderick had the reputation of being an expert with the pistol, and this result surprised those who knew his skill. With the crack of Terry's weapon, Broderick winced, turned half round, and then made an effort to recover himself. "Hard hit," his friends murmured. These words were proved by his unavailing efforts to maintain an upright position. He drooped until finally he fell prone on the ground, with his pale face toward the sky. He was hard hit.

Mr. Broderick was removed from the ground three-quarters of an hour after he was shot, placed on a mattress in a spring wagon, and taken to the residence of his friend, Leonidas Haskell, at Black Point. He lingered in great pain until Friday, September 16, and expired at 9:20 in the morning. He did not speak much during his suffering. From his rent and torn breast no breath came without exertion. Words were

agony. He felt, to use his own expression, as though a thousand pound weight was pressing on his chest. But he did utter a sentiment which had great significance a few years after his death. "They have killed me," he said, "because I was opposed to slavery and a corrupt administration."<sup>4</sup>



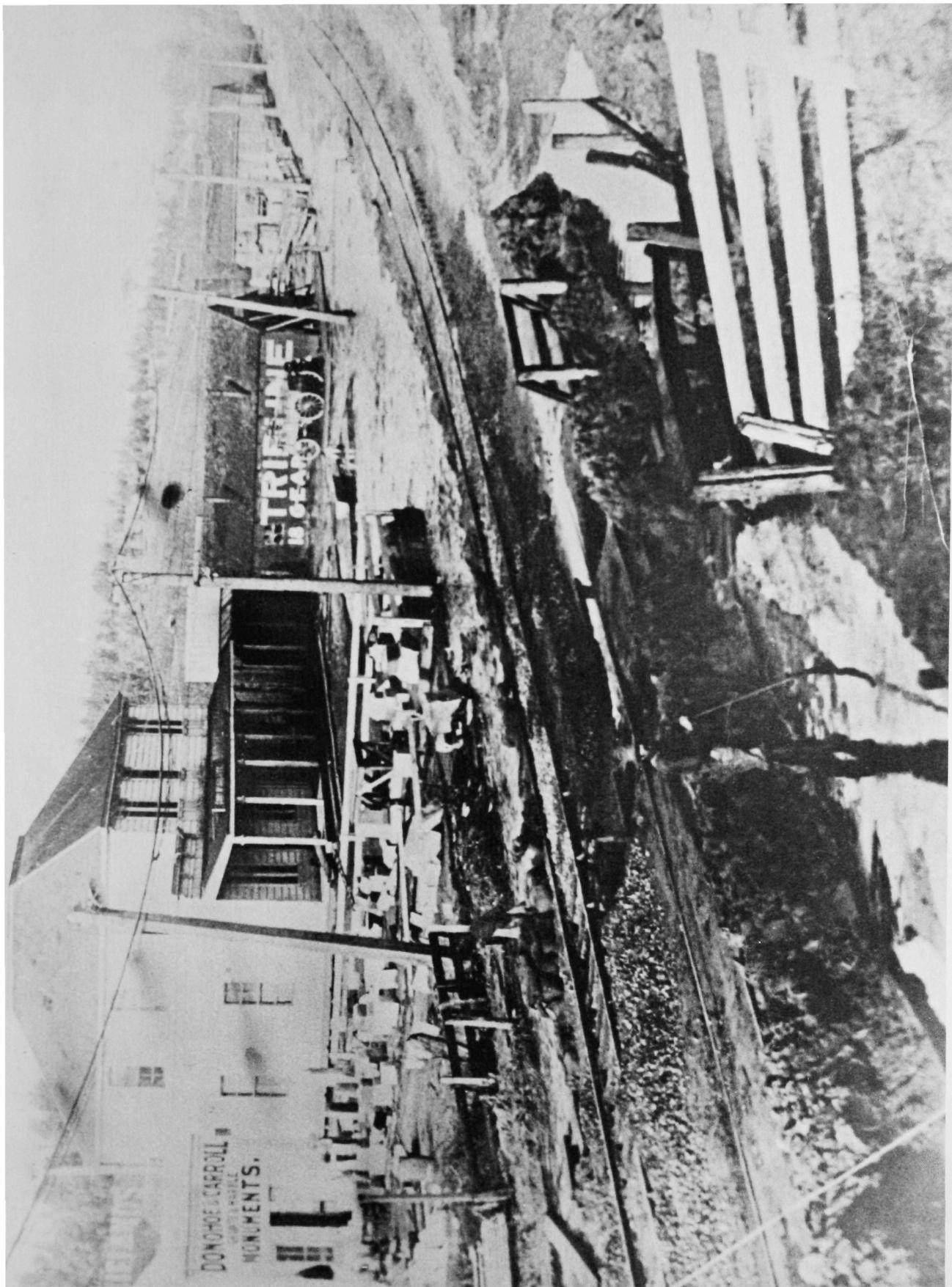
TERRY-BRODERICK DUEL SITE



SITE OF COLMA'S FIRST BUSINESS VENTURE



MISSION & MARKET STREETS, COLMA 1910



BROOKSVILLE, COLMA 1895



THE PIONEER PROTESTANT CHURCH