21. Daly City

THE SUBDIVISIONS THAT dotted the land after the 1906 holocaust bore little relationship to each other. There were no codes to govern the construction of buildings, and little, if any, action was possible to provide drainage, sewage, roads, or even to insure a water supply.[1]

Sensing the problem as early as 1898, community leaders joined in committees to study ways and means of securing self government. Matching their efforts, J.L. Brown, editor of the **Colma Record**, used the power of his press to urge his fellow citizens to take action. Time and time again he wrote, "We need incorporation for self-protection and for the advancement of the Colma District. Will the Colma district people continue to be fall guys for the other fellow? Give us an incorporation. Then we'll be in a position to get our rights . . . Do not aid false gods."[2]

Meanwhile movements in San Francisco to annex all or part of San Mateo County frightened the residents of the Colma area. Neighbors asked each other, "Where in God's name would the Colma District get off at?" The reply was chilling, "We would simply be at the mercy of San Francisco, the same or worse than we are now at the mercy of the southern portion of the county, who regard us as out of the county up there in the north end."[3]

One of the most serious movements toward incorporation developed in the autumn of 1908. On August 22, a petition was published proposing the incorporation of the City of Vista Grande. The proposed east-west boundaries stretched across the peninsula from the bay to the ocean, while the proposed northern boundary was the San Francisco city-county line, and the southern was the northern limits of South San Francisco and the old Buri Buri Rancho. Thus included were the present day cities and towns of Daly City, Colma, and Brisbane, and all the surrounding unincorporated area including the San Bruno Mountain.

The vision of a city covering so much territory was beyond the imagination of many residents and did not reckon with the deep seated differences that were developing in the area. Therefore, while the proposal was being discussed powerful opposition arose to insure its defeat. Among the opponents were such pioneers as Robert S. Thornton and G. Lagomarsino. Also opposed were the owners of the Crocker Tract and those of the Spring Valley Water Company and the proprietors of most of the cemeteries.

Not only did Vista Grande's failure shatter the dream of a single city for northern San Mateo County, but it demonstrated to observers that three rather

distinct districts had developed. In the southern part the residents were gardeners and ranchers seeking to perpetuate a rural environment.

In the eastern portion of the region on the foothills of the San Bruno Mountain and along the bay shore, a district was developing quite independently of the communities on the western side of the mountain.

In the north near the San Francisco line and southward along Mission Road, the people lived on small lots and were interested in urban developments. For these "city folk" incorporation was necessary. "We must be in a position to demand our rights," read an editorial in the **Colma Record**, "and we can only do that successfully with the independence of a city charter to back us."[4]

A group agreeing with the editor called a mass meeting to study incorporation and to select a committee to study the schemes that were proposed. The committee that was appointed chose to contact the people through other mass meetings. Each meeting that was held was filled with arguments of the pros and cons of incorporation. The opponents held that a land covered with ranches and gardens is more adequately governed by a village or township organization than by a city council. They predicted that a city government would drive out the ranchers and gardeners with regulations imposing sidewalks and sewers upon areas that did not need them. Other opponents argued that the residents of the area were too young or too laden with debts to devote their time to the activities of a city government.[5]

As the fight over incorporation grew, the opposition seemed to settle in the south in the old Colma Hills area and near the cemeteries. Finally the committee suggested that this area be eliminated from future incorporation schemes. Writing of this action the **Colma Record** reported, "The committee was of the opinion that Colma would antagonize the movement and that it would therefore be wise to exclude all the territory south of School Street. The committee disclaimed any ill feeling in the matter and said it would gladly welcome Colma either before or after the new city government is formed, provided the people there wish it."[6]

Even as the committee made its recommendations, it earned the emnity of people who fell into three groups: The residents of the excluded area who favored incorporation; those in the same area who fought the incorporation of any part of the area lest a new city engulf them; and those residents of the included area who feared that not enough people had been included to insure the city's success.

During the heat of the debate the editor of the **Record** expressed the views of many:

> **The Record** is glad of this spirit of fairness, and that there is no desire to force Colma in the matter; that could undoubtedly be done with the large vote up here . . . The time is ripe and incorporation is a sure thing, and it is hoped our people will join the harmony wave to better our

DALY CITY'S TOP OF THE HILL
—ROCK QUARRY IN BACKGROUND

below
"LOTS FOR SALE"
—MISSION STREET TRACT

Mission Street Tract

5 CENT CAR FARE

In the Fastest Growing District of the City

Ocean View Car Starting for the City

ALL Streets will be graded, macadamized or oiled and curbed. Cement or asphaltum sidewalks will be layed, complete water service and sewers will be installed, all will be staked and boundary lines established without cost to purchaser.

Our office on the Tract will be open daily, Sunday included, from 12 A.M. to 5 P.M.

'T PAY

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LOTS $300 AND UPWARDS

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SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA

CHAS. F. O'BRIEN & CO., Agents

No Interest No Taxes

LOTS in Mission Street Tract will range from $300 upwards, which is 30% less in price than ten miles further down the Peninsula, and a saving of 60% in car fare.

Our terms are $50 cash, balance in small monthly payments, or you can pay all cash and take advantage of 6% discount. Title is perfect.

View Looking Southwest

Take Ocean View Cars, or any Mission Street cars and transfer to Ocean View cars, get off at Daly's Hill, just below City limits; our salesmen will meet you there.

SANTA BARBARA AND VISTA GRANDE STREETS A FEW YEARS AFTER INCORPORATION.

conditions all along the line.[7]

But harmony did not prevail. As the debate raged some influential people who favored the incorporation of the whole area joined the forces opposing incorporation. Among them were both state and county officials.

Meanwhile, the committee called a mass meeting to decide the exact boundaries of the proposed city and to choose its name. On January 16, 1911, they filed a petition with the San Mateo County supervisors to incorporate the City of Daly City. The boundaries proposed were determined by the ends of building tracts that ran south from San Francisco along the San Bruno Hills to Price and School Streets and west to the summit of the hills. The population of the proposed city was estimated at 2,900 people.

Accordingly, the Board of Supervisors set the 18th day of March, 1911 for a special election to determine whether Daly City should become incorporated, and also to elect municipal officers prescribed by law.[8]

During the time that lapsed between the notice and the voting, the residents continued to debate and to hold mass meetings, wherein many facets of incorporation were discussed. On the eve of the election, the **Colma Record** summed up the feelings of many voters as follows: "Tomorrow, Saturday, March 18, 1911, is the most important day in the history of Vista Grande, Mission, Hillcrest, Crocker Tract, and West End Homestead, for it denotes a Spirit of Progress. Good citizenship will assert itself."[9]

The events of the day when the vote was taken were filled with drama that was described by George Kirchhubel, Daly City businessman, as follows:

> The polling place was the upstairs backroom of John Letlos's Restaurant on Mission Road. For the voting day the supervisors had ordered the room sealed off from the restaurant.
>
> To many people today it may seem strange that an area as large as Vista Grande should have only one voting precinct, but in those days the men were the only voters, and their work was in San Francisco. The mode of transportation was the streetcar, and the people of the Vista Grande, Knowles, Mission and Hillcrest tracts boarded the car either at the Knowles Avenue switchback on Mission Street or at the waiting station at the top of the hill, opposite Hillcrest Drive. The people from the Crocker Tract with the exception of a very few living in the far west end got the streetcar at either Templeton, Evergreen or Crocker Avenue, so the farthest they had to walk to the precinct was three blocks, which in those days was hardly anything, even to a woman carrying two babies.
>
> There is little doubt that a more vigorous, thorough campaign was ever conducted in this area. Opposition to the incorporation had sprung up and there were just as many reasons against the incorpora-

tion as there were for. No one would make any predictions as to the outcome, and when the election day finally came both sides were ready to get their vote.

And so on this day of March 18th they started voting early, and it continued through the day, with the voting very heavy after working hours. When finally the polls were closed nearly every registered voter had voted. Whatever the outcome of the election, the result would be a true expression by the people.

Then began the canvass of the ballots. The inspector took out the key from his pocket and opened the ballot box. He turned the can upside down, then emptied the ballots on the table. As he counted #1 he placed the ballot inside the can again. This followed on until the last ballot in the can counted was 262. This checking with the roster of citizens voted, the tallying was now ready to take place.

As the inspector watched, the judge reached into the can and opened the first ballot for recording. Then followed one of the most seesaw battles ever seen in this neck of the woods. First the incorporation was ahead, then the incorporation was behind. This continued with absolute silence prevailing throughout the room from the onlookers. As the count was nearing the very end the judge read one of the last ballots, "against the incorporation. "Tally, said the clerks, meaning the diagonal crossing of four straight lines, that meant five. Everyone in the room knew that the count was 130 votes for. He then opened the next ballot, against. "Tally," said the clerks. Now the vote was 130 for and 130 against.

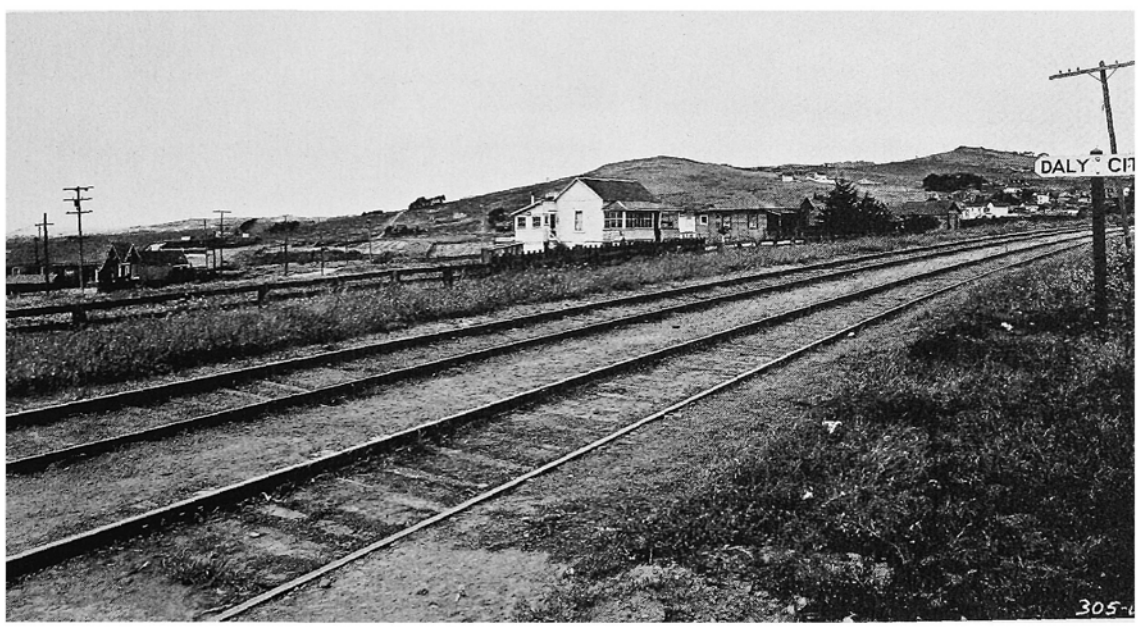
There were only two ballots left. One vote against, and the incorporation would be beaten. Again the judge reached far down into the can. Slowly his hands came up with the ballot. They were not as steady as they had been at the start of the count. No one was blaming him. He took a deep breath as he opened the ballot, and recorded it in a firm voice, "For the incorporation." A big sigh was heard in the place, whether it was relief or frustration depended on the viewpoint of the individual. And now here was the teller. In a flash the judge had the ballot in his hands, and he was unfolding it. The inspector was looking over his shoulder and everyone was straining to see which way it was cast. His mouth was opened and "For" was all that could be heard, for immediately the room was full of shouting, hand shaking and jumping with joy. As though there were instant television, the bartender across the street in Knowles Saloon ran out with his shotgun and fired two shots. He shouted, "Drinks on the house, the incorporation wins.' There followed up and down the street two shots from every saloon, the signal that the incorporation had been successful.

JIM CASEY'S MEAT MARKET AND SELMI'S FRUIT STORE

H.H.SMITH LUMBER COMPANY—DALY CITY

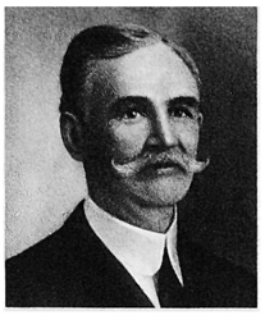
RED CROSS WORKERS—1918

ABOVE: AFTER A LONG MEETING LEFT TO RIGHT: TIM O'ROURK, HENRY SUNDERMANN, A.J. BODIEN, T.P. MORAN AND H.H. SMITH



WHEN THE RAILROAD RAN THROUGH DALY CITY

Daly City's Former Mayors

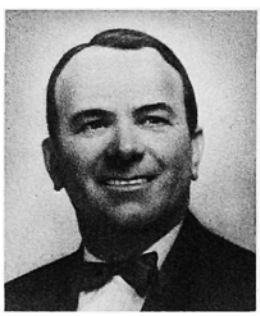


EDWARD FREYER
1911-1912

B. C. ROSS
1912-1916

FRANK B. WOODHOUSE
1916-1918

H. H. SMITH
1918-1936



PAUL G. SELMI
1936-1940

JOHN J. FAHEY
1940-1942

ANTHONY J. GAGGERO
1942-1946, 1948-1949
1952-1954

JAMES P. GREEN
Apr-Dec.-1946, 1949-1952

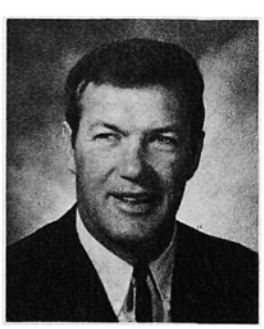
MELFORD D. BATTYE
1946-1948

JOSEPH J. VERDUCCI
1954-1958
1962-Nov. 1963

MICHEAL R. DeBERNARDI
1958-1959, 1963-1965

EDWARD J. DENNIS
1959-1960

FRANCIS P. PACELLI
1960-1961, 1965-1966



ROBERT B. ST. CLAIR
1961-1962

ALBERT E. POLONSKY
Apr.-Dec. 1966

BERNARD J. LYCETT
Dec. 1966-1973

For this occasion the drinks were on the house, someone picked up the tab, and nobody cared who. There followed a night of celebration perhaps never equalled in the city. I can still remember that night. All night and early morning shots were being fired, people celebrated in the streets. It was like Chinese New Year in Chinatown. When at last the town seemed to have settled, some drunk would come home, go into the house and get his gun and fire two shots and holler at the top of his lungs, "Hooray for the Annexation." The whole procedure then started up again. When at long last came the dawn all was quiet and it was back again to work.[10]

The City was now on its way.

On the same ballot that created the City of Daly City, Edward Freyer was named mayor with Martin Oberhaus, Al J. Green, Thomas J. Mullins, and Dennis Quillinan as councilmen (trustees). Also chosen were Walter J. White to be city clerk and T. Sheehan as treasurer. Ed Knight became city attorney and Ellis C. Johnson recorder. Mrs. Clara Chess became Daly City's first justice of the peace and one of the first women in California to hold that position.

Four days later these officers met in a converted tool shed to be sworn into office. The **Record** reported that "each gentleman seemed to drop into the spirit of his position with ease, acting like real old timers."[11]

From the first ballot to the present time spirited campaigns have been a Daly City tradition. Such issues as the annexation of this or that suburban development, the creation of city facilities and departments, and the adoption of the Manager-Council form of government have been placed on the ballot for the decision of the electorate.

In the selection of city officials the people of Daly City have seen the names of men and women from nearly every walk of life appear on the ballot. It is interesting to note a few who have been leaders. Mayor Robert B. St. Clair guided city affairs while he was captain of the San Francisco 49ers football team. Mayor Edward Dennis was a noted labor leader. Mayor Hugh Smith was born in poor circumstances in Canada and rose to become a bank director. Councilman Henry Sundermann was born in Germany and came to America as a runaway boy. Many of the leaders were members of the first families to settle in the area—Mayors Green, Selmi, Gaggero, Verducci, Dennis and Lycett to mention a few. Others were men who chose to live in Daly City after having resided in other parts of the Bay Area.

As an example of the devotion of Daly City leaders we refer to Burton C. Ross. Although a former councilman and mayor, he accepted an appointment as city clerk, saying, "I am only interested in the development of the city." Following his example other men have served the city in several ways—as councilmen, commissioners, city attorneys, judges, and so forth.

From 1911 to 1972 forty-eight men served as members of the city council

with sixteen having served as mayor. In the words of a long-time resident of Daly City, "They were honest to goodness down to earth men."[12]

Daly City adopted the Council-Manager form of city government in 1955 while Dan E. Anderson was serving as city administrator. City managers to date have been Howard Stites, 1955-1958; George W. Watts, 1958-1959; Edward Frank, 1960-1969; and David R. Rowe 1969 and still serving.

To advise the City Council and the department heads, Daly City relies on commissions and boards. Six of these were operating in 1973 as follows: the Personnel Board, the Planning Commission, the Recreation Commission, the Library Board of Trustees, the Civic Center Corporation and the Redevelopment Agency. Records show that throughout its history Daly City has benefited greatly because of the long service rendered by many board and commission members.

The resolution of the people who have served Daly City, either as employees or as members of councils and boards, has been a great factor in the growth of each department of the city. This is exemplified in the records of the three oldest departments: fire, police and public library. All three relied on volunteers until the growth of the city made it necessary to staff them with full-time personnel. Today the stories of the heroism and loyalty of these volunteers are favorites among the people of the area.

Among the activities that have received wide notice is the creation and maintenance of the Daly City Water Department which in 1973 remains one of the few municipal systems in California.

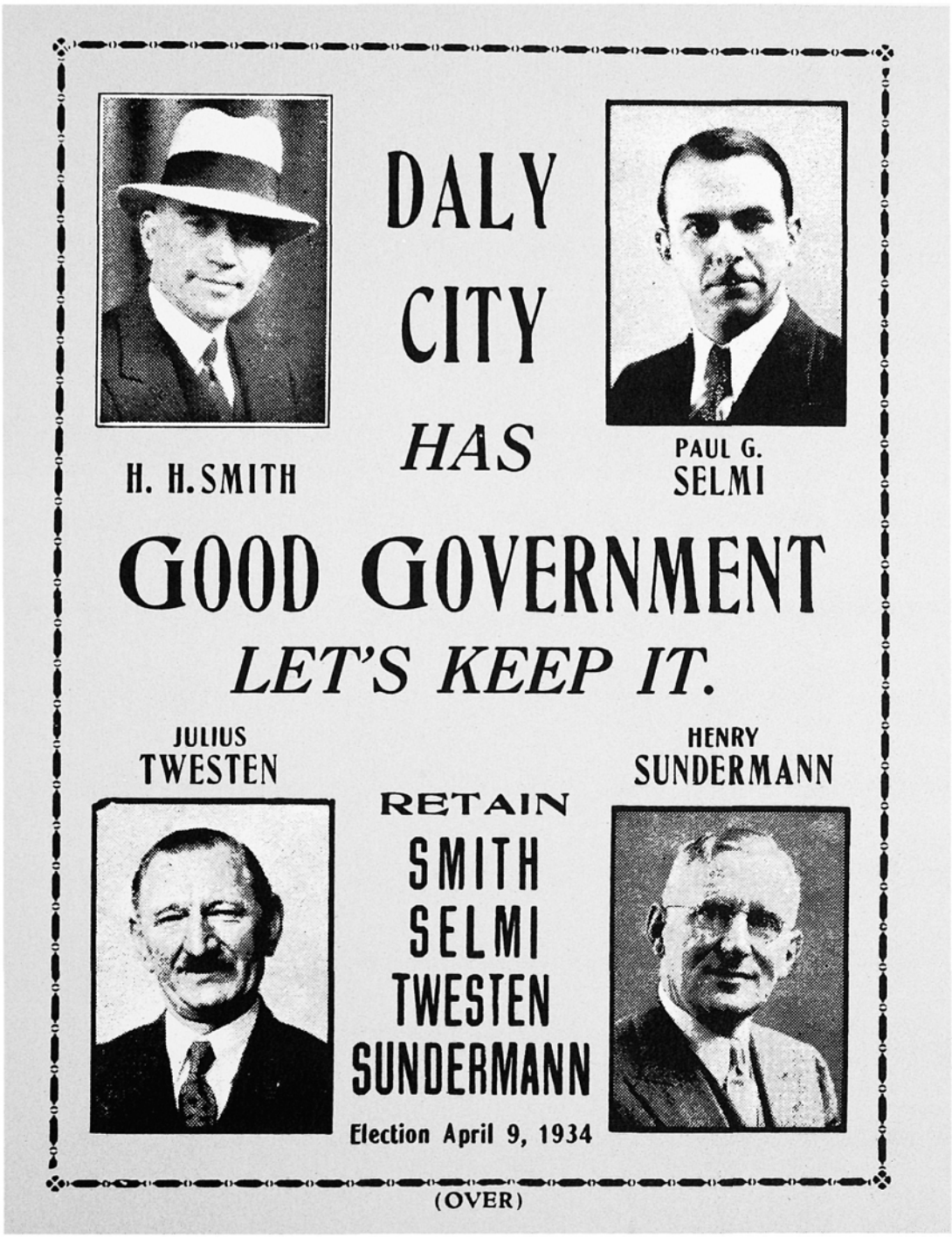
In 1913 the voters of Daly City approved a bond issue of $100,000 to do three things: install a water system in the sections of the city where it was most urgently needed; to purchase the existing Crocker system and wells; and to build a pump house and a reservoir of a million gallon capacity. In truth the system was very small, serving a section of Daly City bound by Citrus Avenue on the south, the Southern Pacific Railroad on the west, Hillside Boulevard on the east and the city limits on the north.

To increase the coverage, the voters approved a bond issue in 1924 that was used to replace the old Crocker system. Within a few years a city councilman noted that both bond issues were retired with the profits gained by the system.

From these beginnings, Daly City's "water works" has grown until in 1973 it served all of Daly City except the Bayshore District. "It now has 165 miles of pipe," writes Engineer Herbert McDonald, "serving all of the city except the Bayshore District."[13]

The present water system maintains a State approved water laboratory which is operated by certified personnel, and it is one of the few operated by water systems in the county.

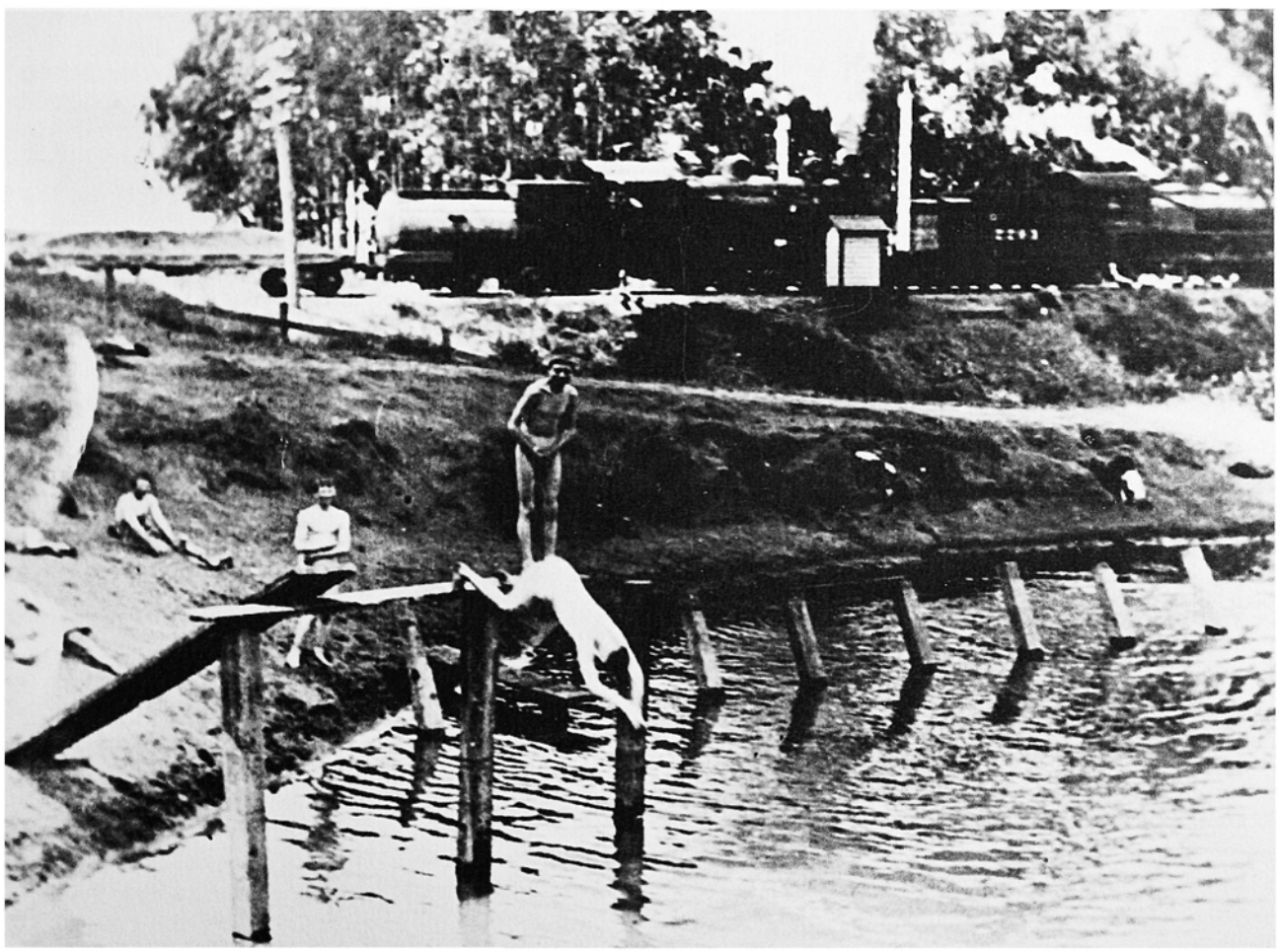
POLITICAL POSTER OF THE 1934 ELECTION ERA



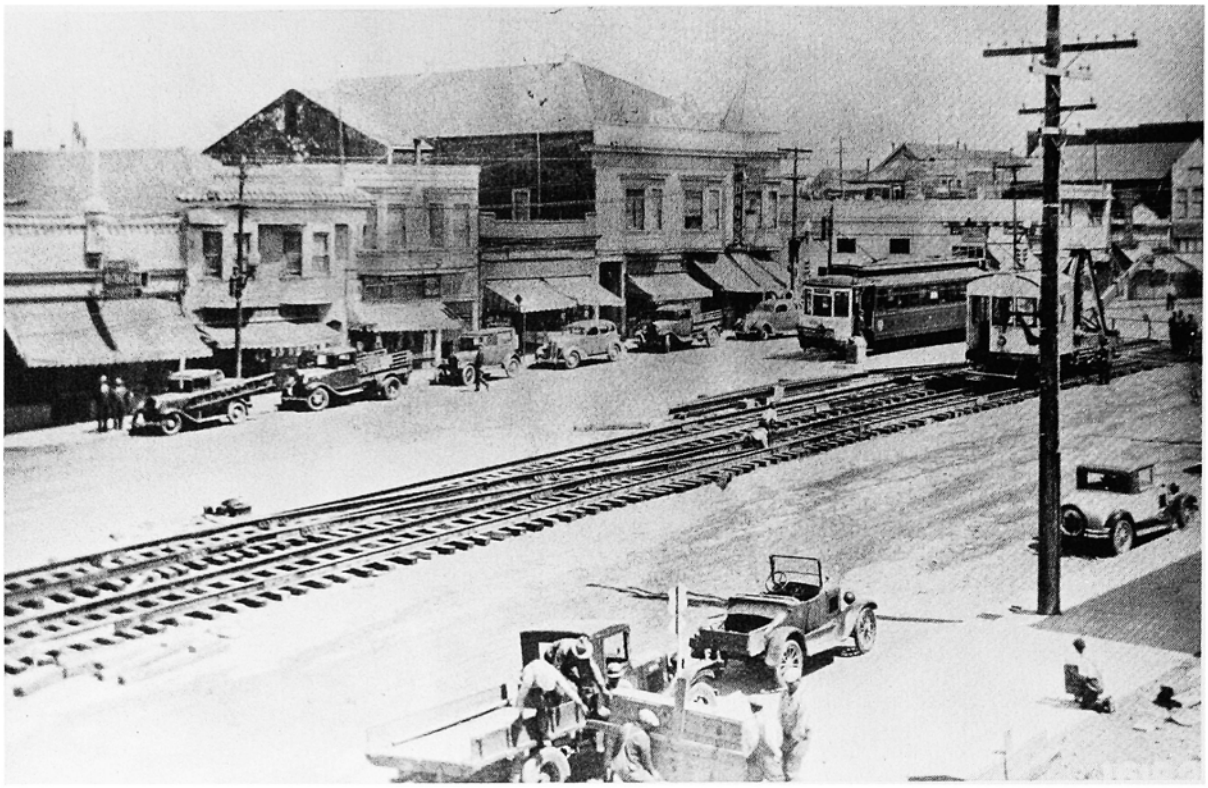
DALY CITY FIRE WAGON IN 1909 PARADE

ROCK QUARRY
MISSION & HILLSIDE,
DALY CITY

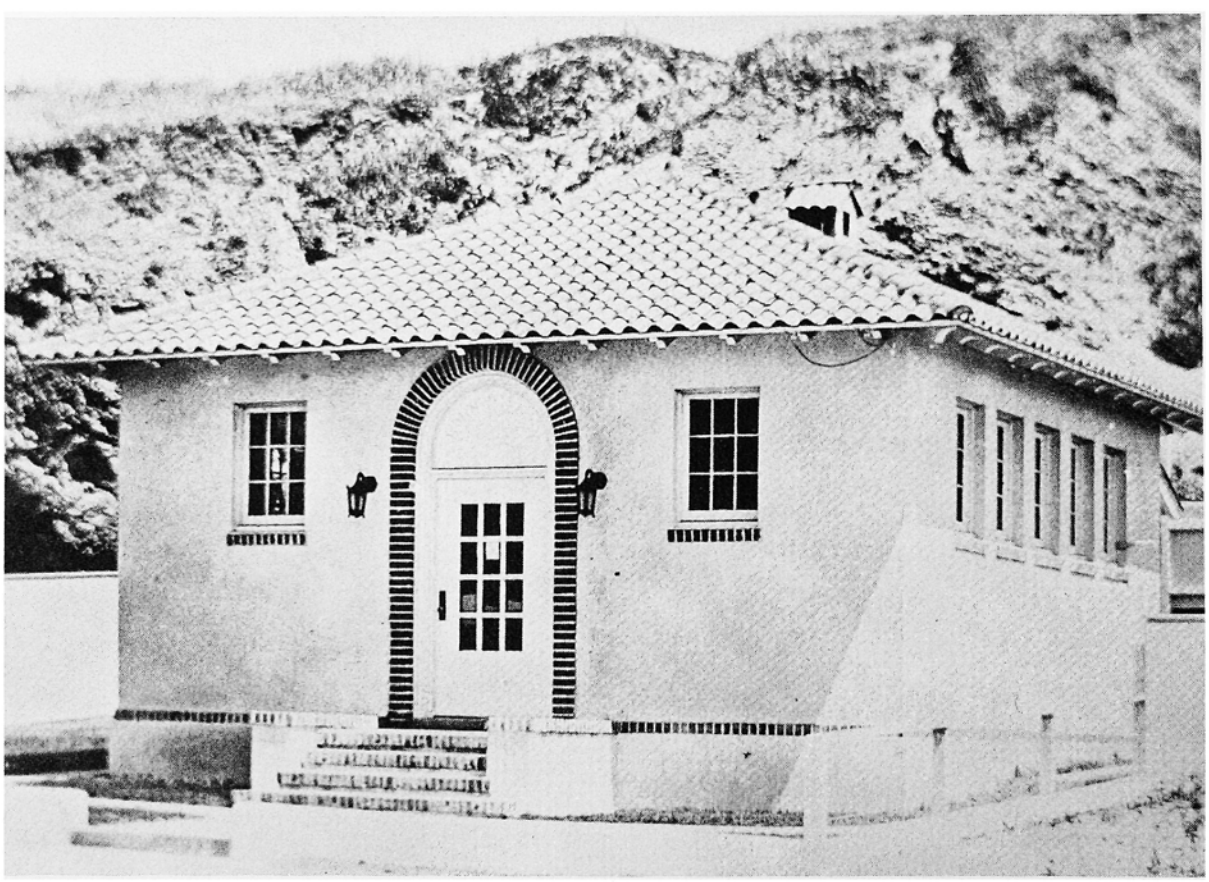
DALY CITY CITIZENS EXAMINING THE FIRST WATER PIPES



KNOWLES POND—NOW MARCHBANK PARK

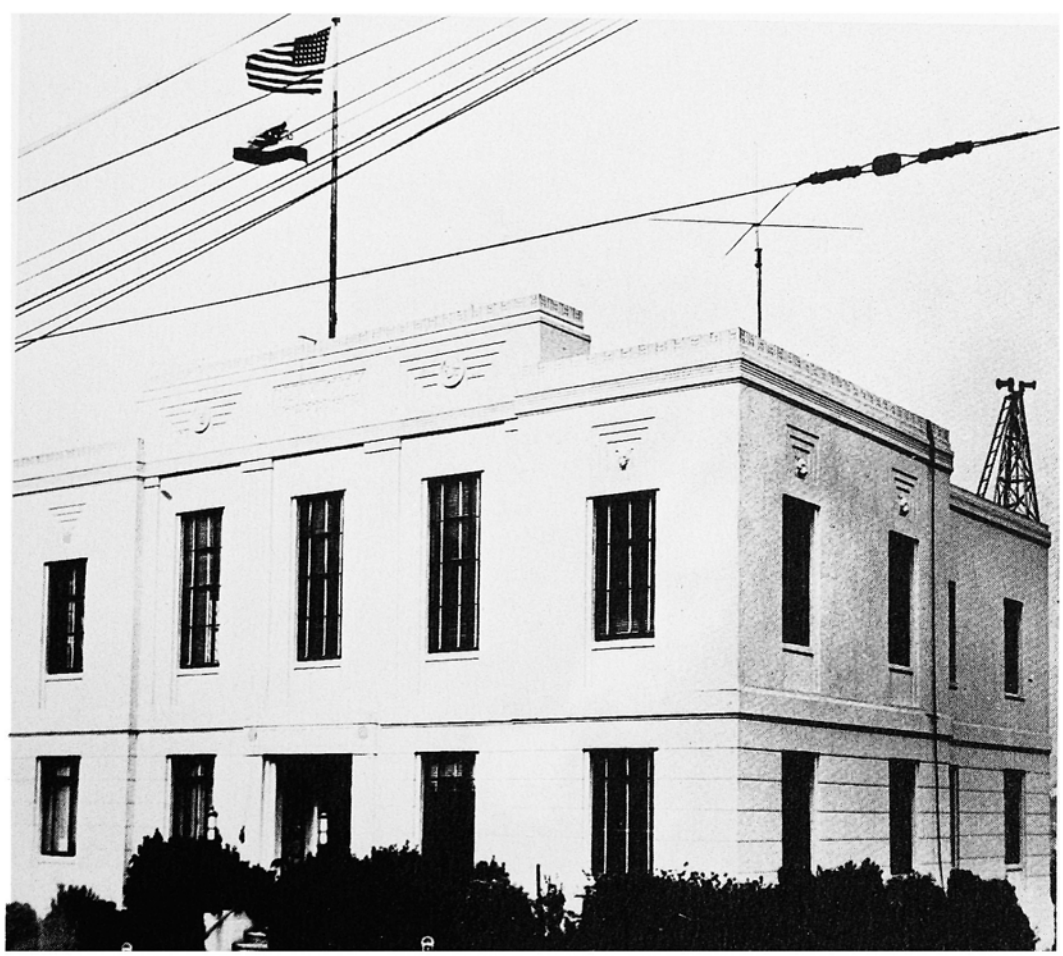


WIDENING MISSION STREET IN 1936



DALY CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY—1920

above
GRANDVIEW
NICKELODEUN
TOP OF THE HILL
ON MISSION
STREET



DALY CITY'S 2nd
CITY HALL
1939-1967

View of the western front portion of Daly City's Civic Center, with lush shrubbery in stark contrast to the exposed aggregate construction which is highlighted with panels of marble and black metal sash works.

DALY CITY'S CIVIC CENTER—DEDICATED MAY 20, 1967

The interior decor of the building utilizes aggregate, marble, and dark oak trim with black metal accessories. Large areas in the lobby are devoted to plants and flowers.

GRAND STAIRCASE AND LOBBY OF DALY CITY'S CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX ON 90th STREET.

O'ROURK HOME ON EVERGREEN AVENUE BUILT SHORTLY AFTER THE 1906 QUAKE

HOUSE AT 1687 SULLIVAN AVENUE NOTED AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE AREA'S POST 'QUAKE HOMES.

1st POLICE AND FIRE BASEBALL GAME IN 1957, WON BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT
LEFT TO RIGHT: CHARLES MASCHINOT, JOHN RADHUBER, SANFORD VICKERS,
ELMER KENNEDY AND ROLAND PETROCCHI.

The annual Fire and Police Baseball Games are now things of the past. The Police have been deeply involved in Police Athletic League activities since 1957 and the Fire Department has been very active in Operation Santa Claus for over 20 years.

Dedicated in December 1965, this 270 bed General Hospital is the largest medical facility in the city. Its prominent location makes it a landmark from the surrounding areas. Private medical office buildings and convalescent homes have been constructed nearby.

MARY'S HELP HOSPITAL—DALY CITY

From 1911 to 1914 the Daly City City Council met in various places. Among them were buildings on Mission Street. One of them has been converted into a laundry; others have become stores while some have been torn down.

In 1914 the first City Hall was built at 75 Wellington Avenue. It was a tall two-story wood frame building with a dance hall on the top story. The cost of construction was $6,000.

Twenty-four years later, the people passed a bond issue to replace the 1914 City Hall with a new building. It was finished in 1939 and dedicated with ceremonies featuring a parade and speeches from local, county and state officials. The sponsors of the day, the Native Sons of the Golden West and the Daughters of the Golden West, hailed the City Hall as a handsome structure of cast concrete and steel.

Speaking for the citizenry, Mayor Paul Selmi noted that the completion of this building marked the climax of a long struggle to provide adequate facilities. Said he, "It is undoubted that the better equipped to serve we are, the better job we can do of making Daly City an A-1 community in which to live."[14]

The rapid growth of Daly City in the period after World War II expanded Daly City's municipal government so much, it outgrew the Wellington Avenue building. A serious study of the present and future needs resulted in the erection of a Civic Center costing three and a half million dollars that was raised by a group known as the Civic Center Corporation.

The design of the Civic Center thus built consists of the intersection of three square buildings resting on an existing mound in a way that allows for a maximum number of first floor entrances. The neo-classic design of the building was chosen by the architects, Donald F. Haines, Zaven Tatarian and Associates, to include concrete columns and fins, glare-reducing glass, and marble spandrels. The internal arrangement includes a general reception area in the center of a central mall that acts as the nucleus for traffic circulation to the various departments.

In the center of the mall, a stairway rises to the second floor with the whole area crowned by a plexiglass dome to admit natural light and ventilation. Thus the whole building is constructed to serve an aesthetic as well as a functional purpose.

Writing for the dedication of the Civic Center, Mayor Bernard Lycett wrote, "City government is not a fixed or stationary business. It is constantly changing, and therefore, requires a progressive and dynamic attitude toward the fulfillment of its responsibilities, which the new City Hall symbolizes both in appearance and in potential service."[15]

Daly City's Elected Officials ...1973...

ANTHONY A. GIAMMONA
MAYOR

VICTOR G. KYRIAKIS
MAYOR PRO TEM

PAUL M. HUPF
COUNCILMAN

BERNARD J. LYCETT
COUNCILMAN

McROBERT L. STEWART
COUNCILMAN

ANNA OHLENDORF
CITY CLERK

ANTHONY J. ZIDICH
CITY TREASURER