24. Bayshore (Daly City)

BAYSHORE CITY, NOW a division of Daly City, was part of the Visitacion Rancho that was conferred upon Jacob Leese in 1841. In 1859 Henry Schwerin, a German baker, bought several hundred acres south of the present day street known as Geneva Avenue. It is reported that he had a "herd of dairy cows on the side hills and—in the area that is now the parking lot of the Cow Palace—he started a horticulture nursery and sold cut flowers and shrubs to the San Francisco Flower Market."[1]

The same writer reports that by 1860 the ancestor of the present Bayshore Boulevard came into existence as the San Bruno Toll Road; it connected with El Camino Real at San Bruno. At that time the toll gate was at the Seven-Mile-House, which continues to be a landmark, just south of Geneva Avenue.

Industry came to the Bayshore area in 1876 when W.C. Ralston organized the Union Pacific Silk Manufacturing Company. A few years later, however, the company was moved to South San Francisco.

By 1890 other companies were establishing themselves up and down Bayshore Boulevard in areas that became parts of San Francisco, the Bayshore district of Daly City, and Brisbane.

Attempts to subdivide the area began in 1868 and continued on a piecemeal basis until December 28, 1932 when an irregular portion of the populated area was incorporated as Bayshore City with Robert J. Hatch as mayor, and J.P Lawson, J. Franzer, Herbert A. Ford, and Ernest Durbin as councilmen.

Truly it was a unique place with a race course as its chief attraction and dog racing as its chief industry. Besides providing the largest payroll, the race track paid most of the taxes and became the chief booster of the miniature city. Indeed, it is said that during the days of their greatest prosperity the owners of the race track presented Christmas presents and Easter baskets to the people of Bayshore.

But there came a day in 1939 when the attorney general of California ruled that dog racing was illegal. The track shut down, the dogs left, and the residents found themselves with a city government to support from a small tax base. Under the leadership of Mayor John Lawson and Councilmen Herman, Malone, Parker and Smith, Bayshore disincorporated and disappeared from the roll of California cities.

Even as the dog track was closing down, a new industry came to Bayshore, marking the area as the home of the Cow Palace.

This huge, state-owned convention hall and sports arena was built astride the boundary line between San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. In 1973 it contained more than 17,770 seats and provided parking for 6,500 automobiles. It was the home of two nationally famous shows, "The Grand National Livestock Exposition, Horse Show and Rodeo" and "The Junior Grand National. Since its construction it has been the site of national political conventions, trade shows, circuses, games, religious rallies, and other major activities.

Writing of the Cow Palace, the **Westlake Times** reported:

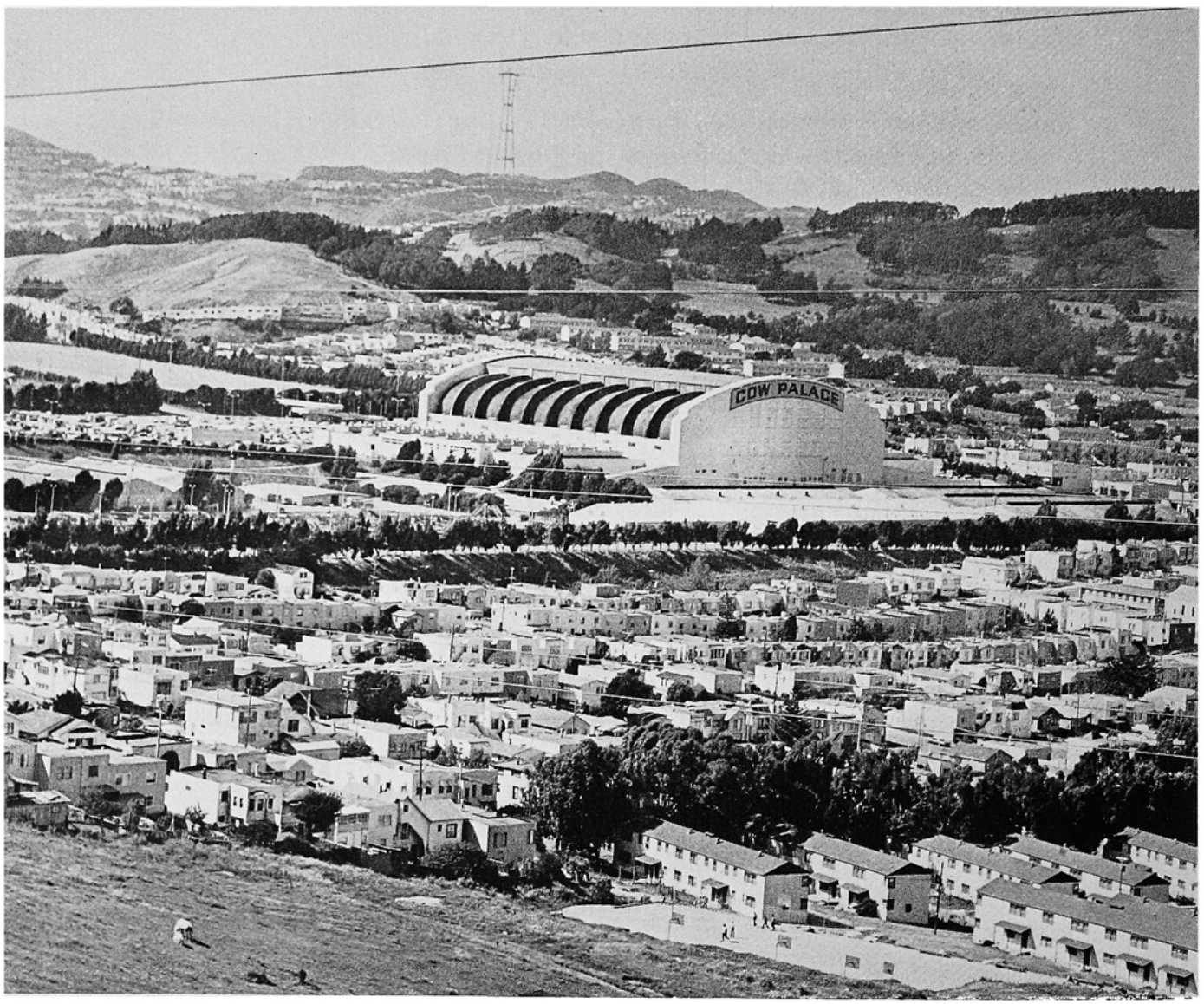
> Impetus for the Cow Palace had its start with the successful staging of a livestock exposition at the 1915 San Francisco World's Fair.
>
> The Exposition Company acquired a site in the Marina District of San Francisco, where the 1915 exposition had been staged. By 1931 support for the livestock exposition program had generated sufficient public acceptance to warrant sale of the Marina property.
>
> The $25,000 left over was used to purchase 25 acres of land in Visitacion Valley—the site of the present Cow Palace today.
>
> Original founders of the Cow Palace were C.H. "Bert" Sooy, a San Francisco lawyer; George J. Giannini, wholesale fruit and produce merchant; R.B. Henderson, San Francisco city official; Thomas L. Hickey, San Mateo County Supervisor; Robert P Holliday, newspaper publisher; Charles S. Howard, automobile dealer and sportsman; R.B. Krobitsch and Ernest Drury, hotel men.
>
> Sooy was credited with raising more than $1,900,000 from federal, state, local and private interests. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in November of 1935 in the height of the depression. One local newspaper complained, 'while people are being evicted from their homes, a palace is being built for cows.' The headline writer made it "Cow Palace' and the name stuck. Born in derision the name now stands out boldly in letters 16 feet high and 170 feet long.
>
> The work, begun in 1935, was completed five years later with labor largely supplied by the WPA.[2]

The dedication of the Cow Palace came in the fall of 1941 and featured the first Grand National.[3]

In 1963 the newly formed City of Brisbane announced its desire to annex the San Mateo County lands between its borders and the San Francisco line. Not desiring to become part of Brisbane, a citizens' association from Bayshore proposed that the residential area of Bayshore and the Cow Palace be annexed to Daly City.

A fight resulted with some officials of the Cow Palace and those of several large business houses trying to block annexation by the introduction of a bill in the legislature that would make it illegal for Daly City to annex the Cow Palace lands without the consent of the directors.

When the bill failed to pass the legislature, the matter was placed before the residents of Bayshore, who soon approved the annexation to Daly City.



BAYSHORE AREA WITH THE COW PALACE IN THE BACKGROUND