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Serramonte and Southern Hills

THE COLMA HILLS are gently sloping mountains, tertiary in age and made of sandstone, shale, and a conglomerate of marine and continental origin.¹ During the entire year they are green with flora; so green they gladdened the heart of Patrick Brooks when he came in 1852 to find a homestead. Selecting 400 acres in the center of the hills he made his house by carting the building materials from San Francisco.

Within a decade others joined him in the center of Colma Hills to build ranches that remained family farms for as long as fifty years. Ultimately J.A. and Harry Christen acquired a large portion of the Colma hills and started a dairy which they named for themselves. For some fifty years thereafter the Christen Ranch was a fixture in the Bay Area with "city people" traveling its narrow lanes to see a dairy in operation. Changing hands in 1963, the center of Colma Hills was renamed Serramonte and slated to become the home of thousands of suburbanites.

It is strange that the center of the Colma Hills should have been one of the first parts of San Mateo County to attract settlers, yet one of the last to yield to urban development. Serramonte, covering 950 acres of land formerly owned by Patrick Brooks, the Christen Brothers, and other pioneers, is a planned community of homes and apartment houses. Politically it is part of Daly City.

To create Serramonte, the Suburban Realty Company found it necessary to lay plans for one of northern California's largest construction jobs. In 1963 plans were formalized for moving thirty million yards of earth and for laying as many as 17.7 miles of utilities in just one of the various units. In 1964 some eighty acres of recently graded slopes were planted to beautify the \$200,000,000 development.³

The realization of these plans is found in the 1970 census. There were 1,126 occupied housing units. While most of them were single family units, there were areas covered with medium rise apartment houses. An eighty acre shopping center was serving the public and a satellite shopping center was being developed. In 1970 Serramonte High School was rapidly growing into one of the largest in the Jefferson Union High School District; several grade schools were under the direction of the South San Francisco School District. A twenty-five acre city park with a public library and a fire house near by was being developed. Meanwhile, plans



SERRAMONTE HOMES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

were being formulated for building more homes and more apartments. In 1970 the builders' estimate of the ultimate population of Serramonte was 21,000. This did not include nearby areas of Colma where both commercial and residential units were being constructed.⁴

Southern Hills, on the opposite side of Daly City, is another development of the builders of Serramonte. Here on the hills that have stood as a barrier between Daly City and Bayshore and where San Francisco meets Daly City, Suburban Realty constructed their Sunstream Homes as another section of the gateway cities.

The men behind Suburban Realty and Sunstream Homes are Carl and Fred Gellert, brothers who have built so many homes they can stand on any hill in San Francisco and look down on some house or apartment building produced by their companies. After fifty years of building they had constructed 20,000 houses and were planning to build more. "We have always been proud of our homes and the fine reputation they enjoy," said Fred Gellert, "so we feel an obligation to continue to give people the kind of homes they want for the amount of money they can afford."⁵

FRED GELLERT



BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS OF THE SERRAMONTE
AND SOUTHERN HILLS SECTIONS OF DALY CITY

CARL GELLERT





JETS OF WATER STREAMING FROM THE CEILING TO FLOOR TO ENLIVEN THE CENTRAL MALL OF THE SERRAMONTE SHOPPING CENTER—DALY CITY

This fountain area, which is one of many relaxation areas throughout the mall, draws many people. It is used for displays and entertainment for young and old.

Sparkling jewel-like, this large indoor shopping complex, adjacent to Highway 280, is one of several shopping centers in Daly City that provide the residents with a world wide selection of merchandise.

SERRAMONTE SHOPPING CENTER AT NIGHT LOOKING TOWARDS MARY'S HELP HOSPITAL AND SAN FRANCISCO.

