29. San Bruno Mountain

THE SAN BRUNO Mountain with its narrow valleys and rounded peaks is the dominant physical feature of northern San Mateo County. Rising near the northern line of San Mateo County, it extends in a direction diagonal to the peninsula to Sierra Point near South San Francisco. From east to west it reaches a width of three miles between Sierra Point and the cemetery land of Colma. It reaches its greatest height at Radio Peak, 1,314 feet above sea level.

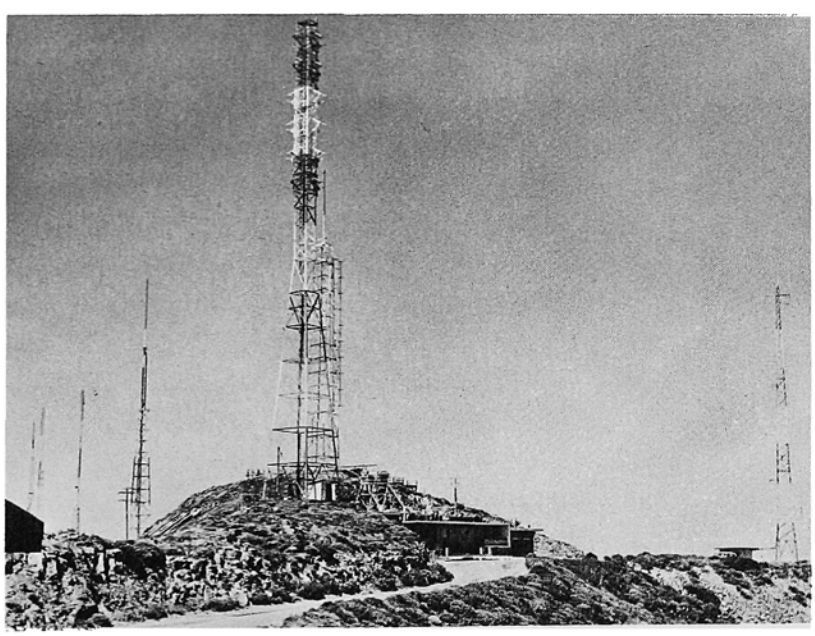
San Bruno Mountain is part of the California Coastal Range being separated on the north from the Contra Costa Hills and on the south and east from the Colma Hills. "The great bulk of the mountain," writes Neil Fahy, "is composed of late Cretaceous (100 million years old) dark greenish gray graywacke of the Franciscan Formation."[1] Outcrops of dark shale chert of many colors are among the rocks found on the mountain.

San Bruno Mountain is drained by two main streams and several smaller ones. One of these, Colma Creek, runs from the top of the mountain to the valley eastward where it joins a fork of the stream coming from the Colma Hills then flows at the foot of the mountain until it reaches the Pacific Ocean. The other main stream is Guadalupe Creek, which flows through Guadalupe Valley. The smaller streams are mainly in ravines on the southwest portion of the mountain. Houses and road construction have altered the course of most of the streams on San Bruno Mountain.

Studies by Elizabeth McClintock and Walter Knight show that some 542 plants grow in the soil of San Bruno Mountain. Of these, 384 are classified as natives and 158 as introduced. Although a shortage of water has limited the wildlife population of the mountain, numerous species of birds and a smaller number of species of other animals have been found dwelling on Mount San Bruno.

While leading his men through the peninsula, Fernando Rivera and four soldiers climbed the mountain and from its crest watched the sun rise over the bay. The mountain was named a year later by Bruno Heceta for his patron saint. From that day to the present, the mountain has played a part in the lives of the people who have come to live at its feet. Men and women, even children, hiked through its glens and climbed to the top of its peaks. Mrs. Altieri, who grew up in "Old Colma," recalls hiking to its top. "When we arrived at the top, she said, "we waved a red shawl so Father, who was watching, would know that we arrived safely."[2]

SAN BRUNO MOUNTAIN VIEWED FROM THE WESTLAKE SHOPPING AREA



RADIO AND TELEVISION TOWERS ATOP SAN BRUNO MOUNTAIN

Most of the San Bruno Mountain was included in the gigantic rancho known as Canada de Guadalupe la Visitacion y Rodeo Viejo, although some of its foothills were in Rancho Buri Buri. In 1841 it became the property of Robert Ridley who built a house with a shingled roof that set it apart from the thatched roof houses on the rancho. Mr. Ridley was forced to sell his holdings with 700 acres going to Robert Eaton and the rest to Alfred Wheeler who picked up his share for $875.00.[3] In 1865 Henry R. Payson acquired 5,473 acres which was soon subdivided with the Visitacion Land Company acquiring the largest portion.

Charles Crocker acquired 3,814 acres of the Visitacion Rancho in 1884 and 183 acres the following year. In 1891 this land, San Bruno Mountain included, passed to the Crocker Land Company, and thence to the Foremost McKesson Company, who remain its present owners.

In 1972, referring to the San Bruno Mountain area, an employee of the Foremost McKesson Company wrote:

> A number of plans have been made for use of the land; some have been realized. There are 290 acres occupied by the award-winning Crocker Industrial Park. The area, Antenna Hill, has a scattering of broadcasting transmitters. A quarry is operated on a 107 acre site next to the industrial park, though it is slated to phase out for a long-term program of landscaping. Guadalupe Canyon Parkway, a major county highway, traverses the property, connecting Bayshore Highway with Daly City. Otherwise, the land is virtually undeveloped.[4]

As 1972 drew to a close the Crocker Land Company presented plans for developing the San Bruno Mountain with commercial, industrial and residential communities on the northern and eastern slopes. It further announced that it has plans calling for at least 1,140 acres to remain a regional park, forever dedicated to open space.