

1956: A factual look back at the birth of the county

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Sentinel is celebrating its 150th year in 2006 by reaching into our archives to republish some of the noteworthy stories out of the past. The following story, titled "County Was Incorporated Feb. 18, 1850," was printed in the Santa Cruz Sentinel on June 17, 1956.

Santa Cruz county was incor-

porated February 18, 1850, as one of the original 27 counties in the state of California.

The state was actually admitted to the Union September 9, 1850.

By the act of the first legislature in 1851, which set the boundary lines of the counties throughout the state, Santa Cruz was then the county south of San Francisco.

The San Francisco boundary

was set as "Commencing at a point in the bay of San Francisco, three miles from and opposite the mouth of Alameda creek; thence in a direct line to the mouth of San Francisquito creek, thence up the middle of said creek, to its source in the Santa Cruz mountains, thence due west to the ocean and three miles there."

In 1855, the surveyor general

was called upon to survey the boundaries of Santa Cruz county. In examining San Francisquito creek, after ascending the foothills of the mountains, it was found to be divided into three branches, neither of which had been distinguished as the San Francisquito.

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"One of them came from the northwest, one from the southwest and the third, or middle fork, pursued nearly the main course of the creek below to its source in the mountains. This was settled upon as the boundary between the counties of San Francisco and Santa Cruz."

When San Mateo was established as a county in April of 1856, its south boundaries were identical with those of the San Francisco county as they existed March 18, 1856. But in 1857, an act to reorganize the county was approved providing that the county as formed the year previous would remain, but under section two of the southern boundary was made to follow the middle of the south branch.

At the time the Sentinel commented: "Both our senator and member of the assembly are men domiciled far from the mountainous region of the headwaters of the San Francisquito, and had no knowledge of the geographical position of its three branches, or of the branch selected as the boundary by the surveyor general — the county of Santa Cruz thus being despoiled of, in proportion to its extent, the largest tax-paying part of her territory."

An act "reorganizing" San Mateo County, which would have restored the Pescadero area to Santa Cruz County, was passed by the lower

house of the legislature in 1858 but was defeated in the senate.

A proposal to form a new county out of the Pajaro Valley and territory contiguous to the south and east got short shrift from the Sentinel which had moved only months before to Santa Cruz when the project was presented to the legislature in 1856.

The Sentinel said:

"The scheme of establishing a new county out of portions of Santa Clara and Monterey having been revived, and a notice given to the legislature of a bill for that purpose, coupled with the fact that a petition has been in circulation for signature in the lower part of this county asking to be included within the limits of the proposed new county — has had the effect of drawing the attention of the citizens to the question.

"If we are correctly informed the Santa Cruz petitioners are desirous of making Aptos creek the western boundary line, thus taking the whole of the Pajaro valley into the new county. Santa Cruz now is one of the smallest counties in the state and with San Mateo annexing on the west and another new county to the east, there will soon be scarcely enough territory to form a township much less a county.

"We cannot believe the scheme will receive the endorsement of any considerable portion of the people of the Pajaro valley unless it be through a misapprehension of facts, advanced doubtless by some disappointed office seeker."