

The largest farm in the Potrero district was the Russell ranch now the Barrett ranch.

The writer well remembers the two unmarried boys, Alex and Robert, and their sister, Maggie, all were tall, around six foot, of a North of Ireland family. The men had their regular places about the city where they called; Alex interested in the City bank; Maggie every Sunday in the Church of Ireland (Episcopal) although the population here was predominantly Roman Catholic. They inherited the extreme low church practice of the Church of Ireland and when the cross was placed on the altar, in Calvary church, they stopped going, but if Maggie, who for years attended the Congregational, was alive she would find today on the communion table in the Congregational church a brass cross.

## RANCH COVERED LARGE AREA

The Russell ranch was a large one and to pay both city and county taxes on such large holdings meant something.

The ranch included a section of the Mission Hill plateau; the end of Spring street was the dividing line. That section, with its sloping hillside, gave a wonderful vista of the bay, ocean, mountains and city. In the spring it was a mass of blue and gold from the California poppies and lupines.

The greater part of the ranch went from this section, reached over to the Pogonip property and that meant almost from Spring street for a couple of miles. It was bounded by the Henry Cowell Lime and Cement company holdings and by the John Wagner, the Runge, Heller properties and a stretch of what was known as the Imus ranch later held by John Towne.

Potrero, a name given by the Mission fathers, where likely roamed the cattle, horses and sheep of the mission.

The Russells had this large section on the upper hill planted to grain. They had their own grist mill at their Evergreen street main entrance. This road was a beautiful one. It went along the edge of the ranch, skirted on one side here and there by the large live oaks. The oaks on the other side ranched to the forested hillside. For a short distance it passed through a grove of the largest and finest bay also known as laurel or pepperwood and in Oregon as myrtle. The road crossed over a little bridge of planks which spanned what was a part of the year a stream flowing from the gulch.

## STATE MILITIA CAMPED THERE

To the north of the home was and is a beautifully shaped hill. This was given the name of Tripe hill and a sham battle there by the state militia was called the battle of Tripe hill. It was during the encampment when militia from the entire state was encamped at this lovely spot. The chief of one regiment started to serve tripe and after several servings came a strike. The tents started back of the Hunter place at the corner of Potrero and Evergreen streets and from there swept in a graceful curve almost a mile, to the base of Tripe hill. Each regiment, infantry and artillery had its quarters. They followed military discipline, except streets were allowed to be decorated. Each regiment tried to outdo the other and each company the others.

## REGIMENTAL STREETS WERE ILLUMINATED

The illuminations then were mainly from colorful Chinese lanterns; there were redwood festoons, flags and bunting along the street. In front of the regimental headquarters, were outdoor dance platforms with music by the regimental bands. Crowds, especially summer visitors, drove to the grounds for dress parades. They had dress parades with an elaborate uniform only worn at that time as at other times were worn the fatigue uniform of tight plain dark navy blue coats and cadet blue trousers.

The dress suits were long coats and a helmet. The officers wore large round spanlets and much gold cord and braid. Their helmets were surmounted by tall plumes. Several thousand daily would watch the dress parades.

The whole country around turned out for the sham battle, like a real battle only it was a blank cartridge affair.

The forested hills and the Russell gulch were unusually beautiful, especially the gulch, which separated toward the end and formed a Y. Much of the redwood had been taken out but a second growth had started and even some of these have been cut down. Firewood was then gathered from the ranch in the seventies.

## TREES COVERED SURROUNDING HILLS

On the hills above and bordering the Potrero were more trees than now, some of the very largest being spreading live oak. Other varieties of oak, madrone, the bay or laurel and buckeye were everywhere. There were thickets of hazel nut bushes. It was close to town and the hazel nuts were gathered by the small boys, as also were blackberries. There were also the thimble berry, elder berry and strawberries. Along the creek were the alder and willows. Bushes of the yerba santi and chapparel and creeping over the ground were medicinal herbs gathered then by the Spanish residents.

In those days about the Russell ranch boys and girls came for wild flowers. At no spot were so many varieties as on this ranch. In early spring the large fields were a mass of gold from the buttercups and the California poppies, with here and there masses of blue lupines and blue eye grass. There were spots where cream cups grew in profusion amid white and light yellow clover. Sun cups were also there, a low growing golden flower which only grows between San Francisco and Monterey counties.

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Except for one other place on the back Moore ranch bordering the Wilder gulch the favorite wild flower of those days, the hare bell, was found in greatest quantities on the Russel ranch.