

Literary greats — past and present — are all around us

SOME of the best known authors who have lived here — or live here now — and set their characters among the valleys and along the sea of the Central California Coast:

Frank Norris: Author of "The Octopus," "McTeague" and other major classics; he bought land up the road from Redwood Retreat in the hills above Watsonville in an area called Murphy Canyon. The year was 1900. Wilbur Sanders built the Norris cabin, still standing and now a national historic landmark, but the author died in 1902 before he could move in.

Wallace Stegner: Pulitzer Prize winner who lives in Los Altos Hills, has well-known Peninsula figures in two of his recent novels: "All the Little Live Things" and "Spectator Bird." His prize-winning novel, "Angle of Repose," has New Almaden, San Jose and Santa Cruz settings, among others.

Jonathan Hirsch: One of the editors of New West magazine, he has a novel out right now called "Bad Moon Rising," which is clearly based upon the Ohta murders in Santa Cruz.

Robinson Jeffers: One of the great poets of the 20th

Century who authored "Roam Stallion and Other Poems"; lived in Monterey County and wrote about it for most of his life. The unique granite stone tower he built and lived in on Carmel Point is a Monterey Peninsula landmark.

Henry Miller: Spent years on Parkington Ridge above Big Sur and wrote several books about his experiences there.

Joe Gores: A mystery writer who used to be a private eye like his hero Dashiell Hammett; wrote the book "Hammett," which features Hammett as a private detective before he came to national fame as the creator of Sam Spade. Gores lives in Marin.

James Houston: Lives in Santa Cruz; wrote a novel called "Gig," the story of a piano bar musician, which seems to be based on a Santa Cruz or Capitola setting, and is reportedly writing another with a local setting. He co-authored "Return to Manzanar" with his Japanese-American wife Jeanne.

Al Coppel: Lives in Menlo Park; has written several major best sellers, usually international spy thrillers.

Al Young: His "Sitting Pretty" has a Palo Alto setting; he went to Stanford University, knows both Stegner and

Houston, and now lives in San Francisco.

Edwin Markham: Was an educated but unheralded poet living in San Jose until he composed "The Man With The Hoe" in 1899; then, suddenly, he became something of a cause celebre; considered one of San Jose State's most distinguished graduates; his home at 432 S. Eighth St. has been preserved as an historical landmark. It is open to visitors by appointment only.

James P. Hall: On the UC-Santa Cruz faculty, he's been publishing short stories, novels and poems since 1948; his best known works are "Racers To the Sun," a motorcycle story, and "Mayo Sergeant."

George Hitchcock: Poet and publisher of "Kayak Review," he lives in a old house in Bonny Doon. He wrote "Another Shore," a surrealist espionage novel and five books of poetry.

Peter Beagle: Lives in Watsonville where he supports his family and 75 animals through freelance writing; his fantasy books, "The Last Unicorn" and "A Fine & Private Place," have sold millions of copies. One of his few non-fiction books, "That California Feeling," sings lyrically of his enchantment with the area.

Robert Heinlein: Dean of American science fiction who

lives in Bonny Doon and author of award-winning books for two decades, he wrote the scenario for space travel, "Destination Moon," and got into a new wave of consciousness with his best-selling novel, "Stranger In A Strange Land." He's written two books while living in Bonny Doon including the latest which recently came out in paperback, "Time Enough for Love," a continuation of "Methuselah's Children."

Robert Louis Stevenson: His books are classics; in 1879, when he was 29, Stevenson lived at 530 Houston St., Monterey, and wrote in two rooms of this adobe house. He had come to California to court an Oakland artist, Fanny Osbourne. Today the adobe is Stevenson House, a shrine for Stevensoniana: furniture, keepsakes, manuscripts and other personal possessions of the Scottish writer are on display. It is open to public tours daily and owned by California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Rosemary Rogers: Secretary-turned-author she wrote "Sweet Savage Love," "The Wildest Heart," "Dark Fires" and other romantic genre best-sellers; she lives by the ocean in Carmel where a portrait of Clint Eastwood hangs in her bedroom.