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A SHORT HISTORY OF
THE RURAL BONNY DOON ASSOCIATION

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by

Genevieve H. Beck

Revised and Updated

by

Burt Kessenick

Bonny Doon is a community of independent people. We have come here for various reasons, but two or three reasons seem common to all. Bonny Doon's relatively untouched natural beauty makes it an obvious choice for those of us who love the land as God made it. It offers unmatched privacy and a respite from one's neighbor's picture window or kitchen sink. It gives true rural living, not the pseudo-country style of the suburban tract.

We are, likewise, a community of forward-looking people. We were the first community in Santa Cruz to have any kind of zoning. Our percentage attendance at the polls is far and away the highest in the county. All progressive measures on the ballot are passed in Bonny Doon. School bonds pass, and a large percentage of our residents do not have school age children. When the boom in school attendance began some years ago, Bonny Doon was ready with the money for a new schoolroom. The room was built by the time the pupils arrived. We want the best for our people, our children, and our community. We believe our present way of life is without peer and we want to preserve it for ourselves and those who come after us. We believe progress is the result of building for the future on the foundation of a good present.

It was Easter Week, 1955, that the residents here first became aware of a plan which would eventually change Bonny Doon irrevocably. One of the essential prerequisites for country-living is an adequate sized parcel of land. It is a physical impossibility to retain privacy, natural surroundings, and rural living on urban sized lots. Therefore, when the first sign went up advertising a subdivision of small lots with city restrictions, those property owners affected banded together under the banner of the Rural Bonny Doon Association. At this time Santa Cruz County was without a zoning ordinance, either permanent or temporary.

The period that immediately followed the formation of the Rural Bonny Doon Association was dominated by the struggle to achieve proper zoning and planning for our area. The story of how our present A-2 zone, with a 2-1/2 acre minimum, was formulated and adopted, together with a plan for the Bonny Doon area, is a long one, and can only be summarized here. Initially we sought and achieved an interim (temporary) zone of 2-1/2 acre minimum to protect Bonny Doon while a plan for the area was drawn up. The RBDA hired not only its own attorney, but its own planner as well, taking the initiative in an area that the county itself had sadly neglected. Countless meetings were held, hours were spent studying and marking maps, contacting property owners, meeting with planning commissioners, consultants, and supervisors. All parties concerned learned a great deal about zoning, about planning, about legislation, and about each other. In time, certain crucial areas of Bonny Doon School District were zoned according to our wishes, but other areas remained in an "Unclassified" zone, and therefore were vulnerable to the kind of small-lot development we were opposed to. While a certain calm settled over the community after our initial success, late in

1957 an application to have an area in the unclassified zone changed to a city-type R-1 zone with lot sizes of 10,000 square feet, shattered some of the sense of security we had begun to feel. Again property owners banded together, and within ten days 200 people had signed a petition protesting any such zone in our area. The application for the subdivision was denied.

Following this second attempt to "citify" Bonny Doon, a permanent association was formed in January, 1958. As stated in its by-laws, it was formed:

To keep Bonny Doon rural.

To aid and cooperate with all state and county agencies whose functions in any way involve activities that could affect the welfare of the community.

To protect the Bonny Doon area and adjoining areas from the encroachment of things not in the best interest of the property owners as a whole.

It was not until 1960 that five years of hard work were rewarded with the establishment of the zoning we have today and the acceptance of our plan, twin achievements that remain, perhaps, the most noteworthy in the fifteen-year history of the Rural Bonny Doon Association.

The decade since 1960 has seen periods of inactivity in the Association alternating with periods of great agitation and interest. The RBDA, after all, is not a country club, and indeed has no set schedule of meetings. It is only natural that it becomes most active when matters arise in or around the area that vitally concern its members. And, sad to say, not all of its efforts are crowned with the kind of success that met our struggle for zoning. In 1964, for example, RBDA locked horns with the powerful PCA operation in Davenport. PCA applied to the county for a permit to open a new quarry on a 67 acre parcel within the Bonny Doon School District. The Association vigorously opposed this extension of mining into the Bonny Doon area as a tragic mis-use of superb land, and a possible threat to important water sources. We obtained signatures of 660 property owners representing more than 380 parcels of real estate and hired a capable attorney to represent us before the Board. All to no avail, for the supervisors chose to ignore our stand and granted the permit requested by the New York-based firm. In fact, the grotesque conveyor tube that now irrevocably scars the once-beautiful hills seaward of Bonny Doon was made inevitable by that decision.

Early in 1966 the matter of zoning again commanded the attention of most of us in Bonny Doon. Considerable acreage had been sold in the Martin Road area of Bonny Doon, and the new out-of-town owners had plans to subdivide around a proposed golf course. Lots for 314 homesites were to be made available around the course, some of them as small as one-half acre, and a shopping center was also envisioned. While the plan as proposed by the developers represented a significant break in the General Plan for Bonny Doon, not all of Bonny Doon's residents saw it as a threat, and some in fact favored it. A majority of the Rural Bonny Doon Association members, however, voted to oppose the golf course development, seeing it as an untimely and serious breach of the zoning and planning that had been so arduously worked for and achieved only a few years before. While the Board of Supervisors ignored the majority of Bonny Doon property owners and allowed the variance requested by the developers, ultimately nothing came of the grandiose plans for a golf course. If a new development is proposed for this land in the future, a new permit will be required, and the Association can once more examine its merits and take a stand.

The vitality of the Rural Bonny Doon Association lies in the conviction that, despite occasional set-backs and disappointments, a united community organization can effect profoundly those governmental decisions which impinge on our environment and our way of life. Sometimes our achievements have been far-reaching, as our efforts in zoning and planning. Occasionally those effects are minor, albeit significant. Last year, for example, members of RBDA were directly responsible for getting county road engineers to spare at least a few of the superb redwoods scheduled for removal along the newly-widened stretch of Bonny Doon Road. Recently we have begun to involve ourselves with Santa Cruz County conservation efforts, realizing that the special quality of Bonny Doon can best be preserved by intelligent and far-sighted planning throughout the general area surrounding us. One can only guess the issues of the future, but with a strong Association we can meet those issues with vigor and intelligence, and a determination to make our voice heard.