

La Selva: A Little Town That's Not So Little

By DON RIGHETTI
Sentinel Staff Writer

In 1925, David Batchelor, realtor and land developer from Petaluma, was driving north along the old San Andreas Road.

He stopped at the virgin land acreage of the current La Selva Beach and liked what he saw: the potential for a pretty beach town.

The land, called Manresa, was part of the old Spanish grant, San Andresa. It was used for a retreat by the Jesuit Fathers.

Batchelor bought it from the fathers for \$50,000 cash. He got 265 acres and 3/4 mile of beach.

Batchelor, a Scotsman, named his new town Rob Roy after the famous highlands chief, Rob Roy MacGregor. Scotch names were given the streets and roads as the tract was laid out.

Utilities were brought in, roads built and lots sold both for summer homes and permanent residences.

A shopping center, consisting of a two-story stucco building, went up on the site of the present La Selva Clubhouse on Estrella.

On the ground floor were a restaurant, grocery store, offices and a garage. The top floor consisted of apartments.

The beach area was equipped with parking facilities, beach store and bathhouses. Four passenger trains a day stopped at the Rob Roy station and the area gained a reputation as a vacation spot.

During the years 1929-1935, the depression slowed things down in Rob Roy, just like it did everywhere else.

In 1935, Batchelor sold what he had left of the 265 acres to Edward Burghart, who started changing names, including that of the town itself, to Spanish. La selva means "the forest."

Burghart gave the streets and roads their current names and demolished the stucco shopping center building, replacing it with the current clubhouse. But Burghart used it as a real estate office and drafting room.

It also had facilities for entertaining prospective purchasers and contained a construction office.

Part of the development scheme consisted of attracting Hollywood people for vacations, and among the frequent guests were Dick Powell and Joan Blondell. But the overall plan failed, and Burghart sold out to Joseph R.H. Jacoby, Inc., a real estate corporation.

After that company sold off the remaining lots of the original acreage, it withdrew from the scene.

Recognizing Batchelor as the founder, the town held a special community party for him on his 85th birthday in 1957.

Closest thing La Selva has to a city council is the La Selva Beach Improvement Association, incorporated as a non-profit organization on Dec. 1, 1947, to take over the direction of the community in the wake of the developers.

In 1949, the association acquired the deed to the private beach and parking lot originally set aside by Batchelor for the exclusive use of La Selvans.

Membership in the association costs \$5 a year, with about two-thirds of the amount used to maintain the beach.

The other third is used to print the Beachcomber newsletter and for other improvement activities.

The association, by vote of its members, has extended beach privileges to all La Selvans, including those in the developments which have succeeded Batchelor's La Selva No. 1.

After fencing in the beach property and providing separate locked gates for pedestrians and automobiles, the association now pays for keys distributed periodically to members, chemical toilets, special emergency telephone, taxes, insurance premiums and trash removal and cleanup.

Annual social events conducted by the association include a cleanup day, scheduled this year for March 20; a Fourth of July barbecue and bonfire, meet-your-neighbor day, featuring refreshments and displays of local talent, and

a children's Christmas party.

Church-goers during the early years of La Selva united to form a non-denominational community church. Services were held in the auditorium of the clubhouse.

A fund-raising drive produced in 1961 the church building and grounds that exist today. A lively Women's Guild promotes a number of community projects.

As a result of efforts of the improvement association, the county in 1948 established the La Selva Beach Fire Protection District. Three commissioners were elected to organize a volunteer department. Firemen were selected from local residents.

The premiere smoke eaters developed through their own effort a building and the first pieces of equipment.

Later, taxation provided money for building improvements and some more modern equipment.

For many years, the firemen have provided the lights and the labor to string them on the big Christmas trees along the center strip of Playa Boulevard. They also sponsor Boy Scout Troop 632, Cub Scout Pack 605, and the La Selva Little League.

To raise funds for their operation, the firemen sponsor two annual social events: a pancake breakfast and a dance. This year's dance was held last night at the clubhouse.

The La Selva Woman's Club sponsors the Girl Scout units: Brownies 1090, Juniors 1002 and the Cadets.

The La Selva Woman's Club was formed in 1948. Its purpose, as described in its constitution is "to engage in charitable work and in community advancement and sociability."

The civic and charitable events cover a wide spectrum. An annual luncheon is conducted to raise money for a scholarship for a recommended Cabrillo College student.

Among the more recent projects were new curtains for the clubhouse, a public address system for community use and the La Selva directional map at the corner of La Playa Boulevard

and San Andreas Road shown on today's picture page.

The city-county library system established a La Selva branch in 1950. It was housed in the rear of the clubhouse until the La Selva Beach Recreation District constructed a nearby building for it.

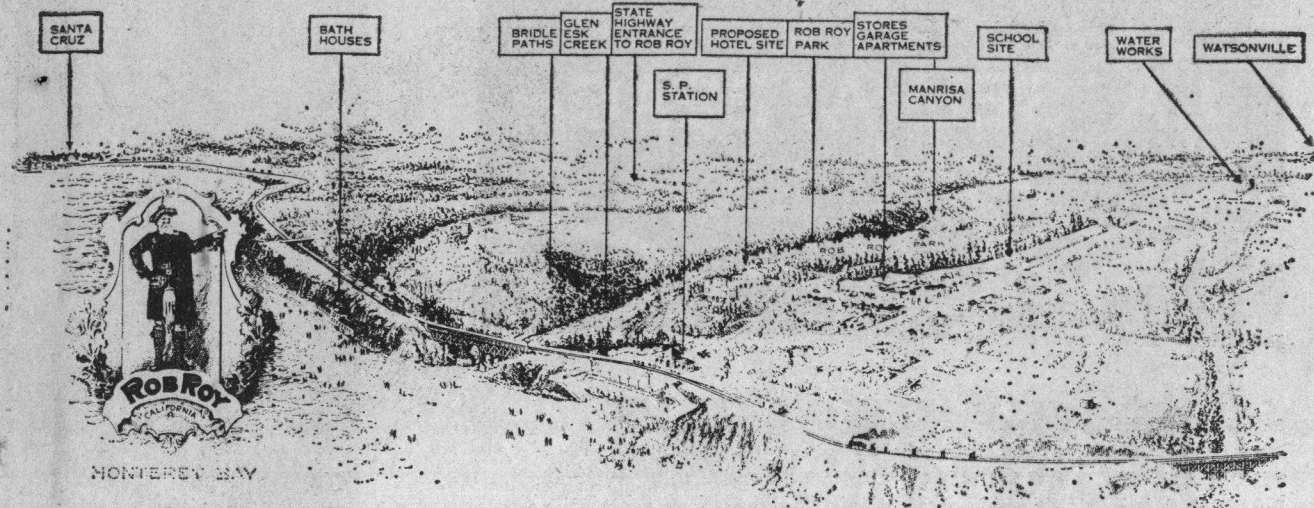
The county guesses the population of La Selva Beach proper — whatever that is — at 525. Overseeing their wishes to have an occasional good time is the La Selva Beach Recreation District, whose predecessor agency was formed by residents in 1953-54 to provide revenue for the purchase of the community clubhouse.

The improvement association had bought the clubhouse in 1949, but association dues and the meager returns from rentals of the building weren't enough. So the recreation district was formed.

Tom Patterson, editor of La Selva's newsletter, Beachcomber, says, "The clubhouse is the center of all community activities. It is vital to all La Selva organizations. The recreation district is responsible for construction of the children's playground and basketball court. The directors maintain close liaison with the many groups which use the clubhouse for business meetings, potluck meals, bridge games, dances, luncheons, art displays, breakfasts, lectures and special activities such as karate classes and adult education classes."

The district has a caretaker who maintains the buildings and grounds. It has paved the clubhouse portion of Florida Boulevard for roller skating, court games and parking and donated park property for the

Rob Roy at the Sea — City of Restful Homes



When David W. Batchelor developed Rob Roy at the Sea, the forerunner of La Selva Beach, he distributed this map along with the following written text: "There is in beautiful Rob Roy an indefinable, wordless charm that grips one as he enters the forest of the park and glen, or stands on the heathery green banks overlooking Monterey Bay with its soft shades of green, the sunsets a brilliant coloring of varied hues. And at times with distant sail and fleecy clouds stirred by gentle breezes drifting listlessly across the horizon, the lapping of gentle waves on the beach, one is soothed into peaceful restfulness as the sun sinks slowly in the West."

realignment of Arbolado Drive to make a safer entrance to La Selva.

District directors have conducted three community surveys to determine voter attitude toward establishing a leash law, incorporation of the town and recreation needs.

Results of the straw votes gave approval to the leash law, turned down incorporation and favored initiation of a night and weekend recreation program.

The La Selva Beach Recreation District, on the face of it, anyway, would appear to be superfluous: most La Selvans have a good time just living there. Their community is what they want it to be: a little town.

But little in size only.

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Auditions For
Cabrillo Production

Auditions for the Cabrillo College drama department's spring production of Euripides' "The Bacchae" will be staged

and tryouts for male roles will be Thursday; all between the hours of 7 and 10 p.m. Persons who are interested in audition-

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