

was the twilight . . . the very late twilight . . . of a czar. Fran-

6-2-57

History
**Century-
Old Echoes**
from The Sentinel
files, 1857

Edited by Preston Sawyer

THE "BIG STEAL"

The editorial column of the Sentinel of Saturday morning May 30, 1857, was devoted to what was generally considered a "big steal".

As time passed and personal temperatures continued to rise with indignation, the Sentinel writer unburdened himself on how this county was "clandestinely robbed of about thirty square miles of her richest domain."

"So completely was the plan laid and executed", he wrote, "no one, except the originators of the scheme, discovered the trick until long after it had become a law, fixed upon the statute book."

The true situation did not come clearly to the fore until in the current period, when the state legislature passed an act "to re-organize and establish the county of San Mateo". The first notice of the action the local public had was via an official communication, from the supervisors of the new county to those of our county, asking the appointment of a joint commissioner to survey and settle the boundary.

"By the act of 1851, dividing the state into counties, the following was declared to be the southern boundary of the county of San Francisco: 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 therein.'

Our County Met S. F.

"The northern boundary of Santa Cruz county was on the same line, and was described in the act as follows: Commencing "in the ocean three miles from land, at a point due west of the head of San Francisquito creek, and running due east, to the summit of the Santa Cruz mountains.

"In 1855 the Surveyor General was called upon to survey the boundaries of Santa Cruz county. In examining San Francisquito creek he found, after ascending the mountain foothills, that the stream was divided into three branches, neither of which had been distinguished as the San Francisquito—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 mountain.

"This was settled upon as the boundary between the counties of San Francisco and San Mateo, and a west course, from its source to the ocean, as the boundary between San Francisco and Santa Cruz counties.

"On the 19th of April, 1856, an act was passed forming officially the county of San Mateo. The act provided the boundaries on all sides except the north, "shall be identical with those of the county of San Francisco."

"Thieving Bill"

In the following year came what was called the "thieving bill of 1857". It was entitled "An act to re-organize and establish the county of San Mateo," stated to be "formed out of the southern portion of the County of San Francisco".

The second section of the act provided that the southern boundary of the new county commenced "in the middle of the bay of San Francisco, opposite the mouth of San Francisquito creek—thence to and up the middle of said creek, following the middle of the south branch thereof, to its source in the Santa Cruz mountains—thence due west to the Pacific ocean."

"Thus the plan is laid," says the story—"both our Senator and assemblyman were 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 inference was that the inclusion of the phrase concerning southern boundary of the new county following the "middle of the south branch of the San Francisquito" was injected as "a direct steal" which was placed with fraudulent intent.