

Should Santa Cruz place names reflect city history?

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✓ **T**HE CITY PRESERVATION COMMISSION is seeking input on the following list of proposed place names. The commission meets at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the council chamber at City Hall.

Aulinta Park: The Beach-Area Master Plan proposed a park near the mouth of the San Lorenzo River. It could be named for the Ohlone Indian village at this site called Aulinta, meaning "the place of red abalone."

Sulanta Creek: An archaeological site borders the creek running through Lighthouse Field, believed to be an Ohlone seal-hunting camp where the catch was processed. The brook is Laguna Creek, one of several in the area. In 1982 the Lighthouse Field Committee was asked to give the creek the Ohlone name Sulan, meaning seal camp, or Sulanta, place of the seal.

Runsian Lane: Runsian is an Ohlone village that, early accounts suggest, stood between Laurel and Walnut creeks along the bluff that includes the high school site. The path from the school to the lower field could be named Runsian Lane in honor of the tribe.

Spud Rush Lane: Commercial Lane was part of a site known as the Potato Patch stretching from Mission and Pacific to below Church Street. It was once part of the Mission Hortaliza vegetable gardens and included potatoes from Chile. After Mexico closed the mission in 1834, the gardens were divided and tended by mission Indians and Branciforte settlers. The Potato Patch was tended by an 1812 settler who



California Indians harpooned seals and otters, as shown in a 1915 illustration by F.N. Wilson.

had helped the mission plant the patch in the 1820s. He sold potatoes in the Sierras to gold miners for \$1 each, as did other Santa Cruzans. This culminated in the 1852 Spud Rush of potato farmers into Santa Cruz County.

A tent city sprang up along Pacific Avenue as farmers rented downtown land for \$100 an acre. The Spud Rush brought a number of Irish, who helped transform the

Pajaro Valley into "Spud Valley" for a time; and also brought the county's first blacks to Santa Cruz and Watsonville, planting potatoes for their Southern masters, or themselves.

In 1853, the boom brought the county's first Chinese settler, Ah Moon, who rented land from Elihu Anthony to plant potatoes. When the boom went bust that fall, shingled-over tent frames establish-ed a perma-

nent downtown.

La Barranca Park: The newly landscaped terrace park above Neary Lagoon on Bay Street could be named La Barranca Park in honor of the Italian colony that once dominated this neighborhood. The site sits between the original La Barranca neighborhood of lower Bay Street and the Trescony Italian neighborhood between California and Mission streets. The park should include a plaque commemorating the founding families, and *la male notte*, the bad night during World War II when Italian resident aliens were forced to relocate north of Mission.

Midford Island Way: River Street forks south of Water with the west branch connecting to Front Street and the east branch following the levee to Soquel Avenue. Since visitors may need to find their way to River from Front, the east branch could be re-named for what used to be called Midford Island. It sat between the Water Street ford and the Soquel Avenue ford. An inlet outlined the island, following today's west fork of River, paralleling Front, then cutting diagonally from the end of Cooper Street to the Soquel Avenue bridge.

This island was the home of the Italian Garibaldi Hotel and vegetable gardens; the adobe homes of Mexicans Carlos Alarcon and Lino Ortiz, who held Spanish bulls'-head barbecues at Island Grove park; and Berkenseer's Chinatown, whose street was called China Lane.

China Lane: The lane still exists as a pedestrian pass-through beside the Galeria

and River Twin cinema. Reviving this name through lane signs may further focus attention on its history. And the more prominent Front Street Chinatown between the VFW Hall and Cooper could be lined with Chinese-style lampposts.

Hecox Cove: An early newspaper article once referred to the cove east of the lighthouse as Hecox' cove, whose beach was the "front yard" of the light station run by Laura Hecox and her father Adna.

Laura was a well-known naturalist, who started the Natural History Museum's collection in her lighthouse home. The crag in the middle of this cove is the remains of Lighthouse Natural Bridge.

54th Coast Artillery Monument: The all-black 54th Coast Artillery unit was stationed in the old cottages at Phelan Park, today's Lighthouse Field, and used the lighthouse cupola to identify aircraft. There is no veterans memorial to the chief military base within city limits. There was an attempt during the closing of Fort Ord to get an old cannon for the 54th's monument, but the cannon went to another city.

A current suggestion is for a monument surmounted by a coin operated telescope, to emphasize the unit's coastal surveillance, as an aid for viewing seals, surfers, and bay activities.

■ Ross Eric Gibson is an author and historian, historic architectural consultant and chairman of the Santa Cruz Historic Preservation Commission.