

If Trees Could Talk

Old Trees Mark Early-Day Dairy Ranch

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Sometimes a stand of lonely old trees is all that's left of a home place . . . all that remains of something that was quite large and elaborate in its day.

That is the case with the Pio Scaroni home, "up the coast."

The trees are there.

A weeping willow spreads its drooping lace; the ever-popular cypress loom dark and forbidding near the front gate. And off to one side in the rear, eucalyptus provide the remnants of a protective planting to break the force of winds from the Pacific.

The old home stood until very recently, about 4½ miles beyond the Santa Cruz City limits. It dated from the days when big dairy ranches were operated up and down the coastal stretch, some by Swiss and Portuguese settlers, others by Yankees like the Steele and Major families.

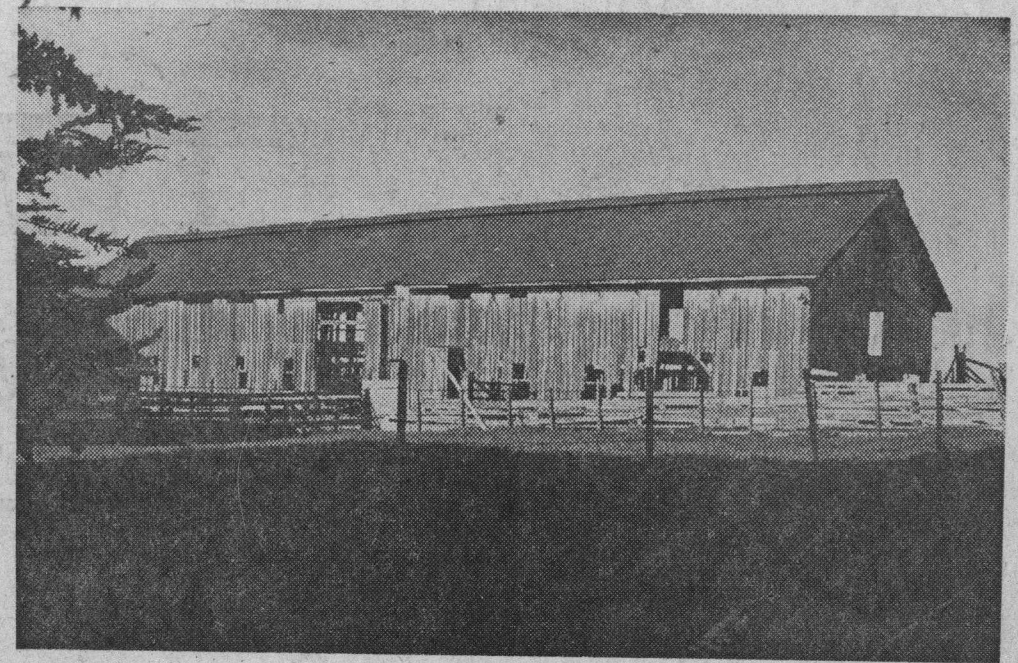
A big ranch employed 40 or 50 workers, some up to 100 steady employees. In addition to dairying, beef cattle

and crop farming operations were carried on. Artichokes and Brussels sprouts became big business, and were shipped East. Cheese was always one of the dairy business' profitable products and cheese was shipped all over the State of California from this reach of green coast, from the earliest dairy days in the 1860's.

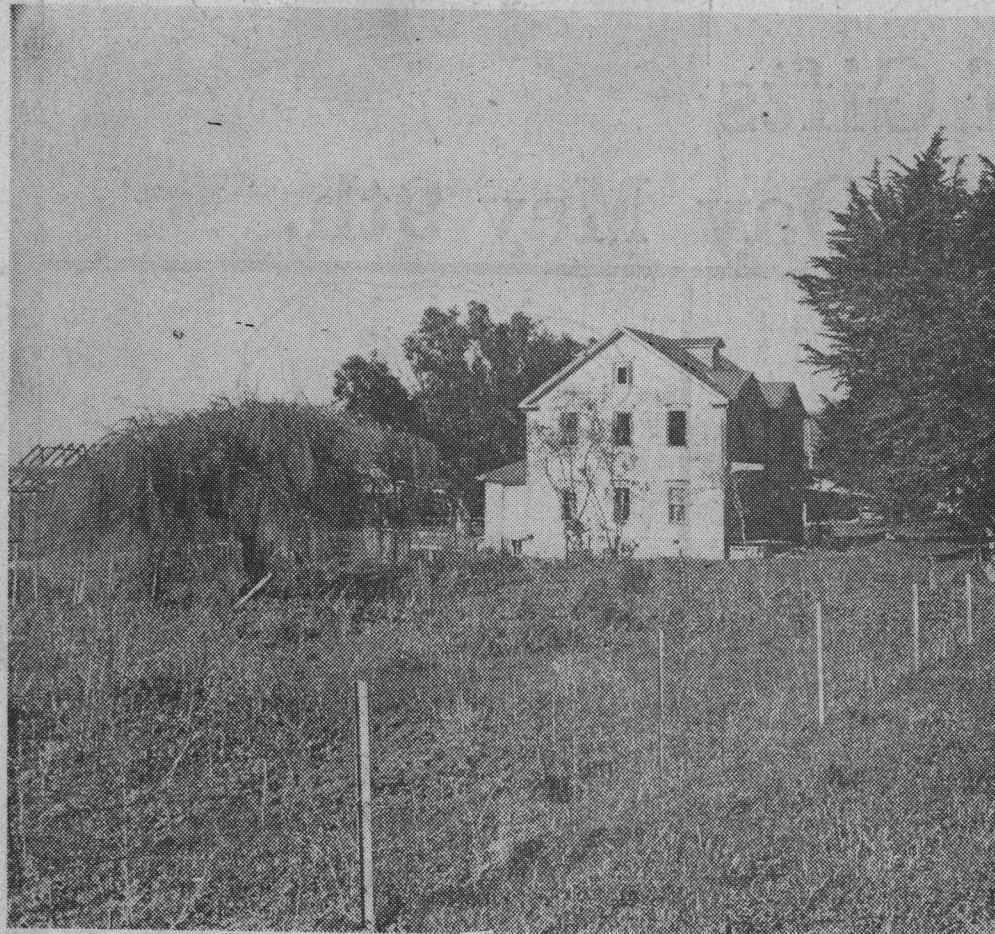
For years the Scaroni family operated the ranch. Then an era developed when part of the land holdings were leased out to crop growers . . . the dairy business waned and the big barn stood empty. Then finally, the day came when the old family home, which had served as a tenant house for years, was torn down.

Things change. Up the coast the changes are perhaps more noticeable . . . at least for a time, before building scars heal themselves with fresh growths of grasses and wild flowers.

When that happens, only the old trees remain to mark the places where farm houses and barns and cheese houses once flourished.



Above, the big dairy barn, with a corner of the cheese house showing through the Cypress tree branch. Pete Arvella was the last person to lease and operate the dairy. Below, equipment barn and farm workers' houses on a section of the ranch leased out for sprouts and artichokes.



Pio Scaroni house as it looked until February of this year when it was torn down.