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CALIFORNIA ROOM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS
Bibliography of George S. Erskine.

Mr. Erskine was born on October 24, 1905, in Transvaal, South Africa, a fourth-generation white African. His grandfather was an explorer in the 1870's, and his father was a big-game hunter and gold miner in South Africa. At the age of two (1907) his parents took him to pioneer in Rhodesia, where he attended St. George's school in what is now Harare. He lived there for eleven years until his father, Charles Howard Erskine, died in 1918. In 1919 he returned to South Africa where he attended St. Andrews College in Grahamstown, Cape Province. In 1921 he and his mother immigrated to California, where Mr. Erskine studied electrical engineering. He is the Author of a variety of publications including "Selecting, Specifying and Installing Cables", published by Electrical Systems Design, 9/89; "Small Hydroelectric Generation" published by Electrical Consultant; "Tidal Power" - Self Published 1983; "Legislation for California Society of Professional Engineers"; and Assembly Bills AB431 and AB433, passed by the Assembly in 1947 and 1948. Mr. Erskine currently lives in San Jose with *HUE THI, his Vietnamese wife and family.*

TREASURE AT SILVER DOLLAR BEACH

INTRODUCTION:

A true story about the adventures of three of us on vacation from high school, on three bicycle trips, and our return.

We rode bicycles from Redwood City through San Juan Bautista to Jolon, and horses from there across the Coast Range to Gorda, and reversed the procedure on return in 1922, 1923 and 1924.

TREASURE AT SILVER DOLLAR BEACH. Pages 16 through 32.
Map 1, Page 33-Map 2, Page 34-Map 3, Page 35.

People or agencies who were consulted:

Assessors Office of Santa Clara.

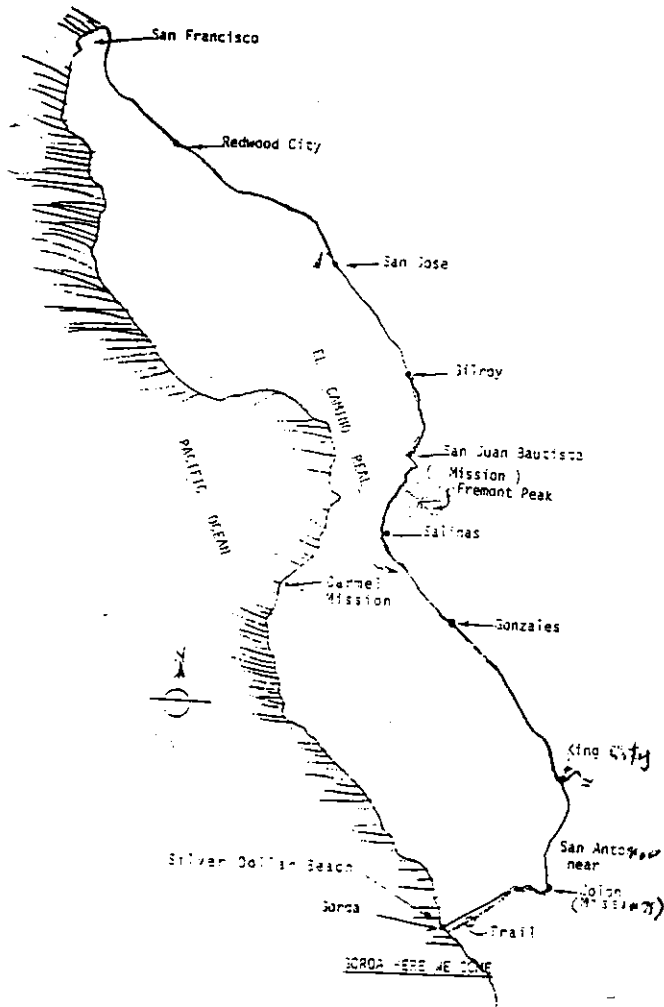
Recorders Office of Santa Clara.

San Jose Historical Museum. (Receipts attached)

EPILOGUE Page 36.

Capecal/erskine

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TREASURE AT SILVER DOLLAR BEACH

"George, Mr. Yansey, Ira, the girls, and I are driving our old Overland car to the ranch at King City. Then we'll cross the Coast Range by horseback, to Gorda for a months vacation.

Lewellyn wants to ride his bike, alone, but we said "You can't even make it to Jolon in two days of hard riding, and then another two days of pedaling under a merciless July sun. You're only a freshman in high school. We won't let you go all alone."

"George, would you and Gene like to ride your bikes to the ranch with him? You're all in high school. It's a long ride, there and back. Four days of hard pedaling."

"Oh yes. I've never been on a cattle ranch, and I bet Gene would like to come too,"

Seven days later, before sunup we three, each with only a change of clothes rolled up in a blanket tied to the top crossbar, pedaled south on El Camino Real, from Redwood City at a

time when El Camino Real was the only road between Southern California and San Francisco. Not ten speed bikes, not three speed bikes. Only old single speed two wheelers, with coaster brakes.

"When I see that giant Sequoia redwood tree standing between the highway and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, I know we're leaving San Mateo County. Be careful crossing Francisquito Creek. Timbers on the bridge are rough, don't ride too fast."

"The Spanish padres named that tree "Palo Alto." Palo is tree and alto is high. That's how this city got its name. This may have been the tree Portola camped under on November seventh to eleventh, 1769.

We passed Stanford University founded in 1891. Our trip was before Hoover Tower or the Stanford Shopping Center was built or the underpass at University Avenue under the Southern Pacific Railroad was constructed. We continued pedaling south, and as far as the eye could see, fruit orchards stretched to the foothills to the east, and the foothills to the west, on our right. Apricots, peaches, pears, and plums. The fragrance of those in bloom wafted to us on cooling breezes. Artichokes and apples and other delicious fruit and berries grew south of San Juan Bautista.

"Do you think that anyone would throw us in the slammer if we took a few [\]cots?" (apricots). We hesitated, but nobody saw us. We wheeled south along The Alameda, through the University of Santa Clara where we met John, a Land Surveyor student. As we four rode along he regaled us with local history.

"This area is the select residence avenue of the community. The word *alameda* means a public walk shaded by trees." He told us.

We pedaled past magnificent homes.

"That is the University of The Pacific. It was founded as the California Westleyan University, and had a famous Female Institute or girls school," he said.

This was before it was moved to Stockton, California.

We continued past the Schiele subdivision, which is now The Garden Alameda. On past other beautiful mansions, and the original two story Hester Elementary School at the corner of Pershing Avenue and The Alameda, named after John Joseph (Black Jack) Pershing, the Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, the AEF, in Europe in the First World War. Pershing Avenue was originally named Brown Avenue in the Brown subdivision.

"Watch out for trolleys coming in and out of the trolley barn. We're no match for them," Gene shouted.

A crossing guard waved us down.

"Be careful of the tracks, and don't get tar on your tires. You ain't got no fenders, and the wheels will throw creosote all over your pants."

Wheels squealed as the streetcar rounded the curve coming out of the big barn, and the car screeched to a halt. We stopped to watch the track crew at work.

Men passengers rolled their own cigarettes from tobacco in small sacks of Bull Durham, or puffed contentedly on their corn

cob pipes, and made snyde remarks. Women fanned themselves, boys razzes us, and girls giggled.

"Where are you loonies going with your bedrolls strapped to the bikes and rucksacks on your backs? You're all decked out like a bunch of hoboes. You wanna handout? Why don't you dummies stay over in the shade? We may be here a while."

"Ding ding ding," we shouted, as the motorman clanged the bell.

The conductor waved, men knocked ashes out of their pipes, women folded their fans or parasols, boys punched each other, and girls screamed when the trolley started jerkily on its way again.

"Hasta luego," we shouted, and hatless, off we pedalled.

HUNGER GNAWED AT OUR RIBS, AND SWEAT ROLLED DOWN OUR CHEEKS.

This was long before the underpasses at West Taylor, West Julian and West Santa Clara Streets, and the one at West Park Avenue had been constructed, and before the pedestrian underpass from the east end of Hester Street to the school had been constructed for the safety of the elementary school children and the general public. This, only after two children had been killed by careless speeding drivers. This was long before the greatly increasing amount of traffic made it necessary to construct overpasses across the railroad tracks at San Antonio Road, Lawrence Expressway, Hedding Avenue, and other locations.

We made downtown San Jose in time for breakfast.

El Camino Real (now Monterey Road) ran parallel with and on the east side of the railroad tracks, and at Morgan Hill it ducked under the tracks in what was one of the first construction

projects to eliminate a road or street crossing at grade at railroad tracks. Now we pedaled along the west side. We pushed on south, sweating under a cloudless July sky. Would anybody miss a few wrinkled prunes? Our dry throats cried out for them. We pushed on further south ,and made Mission San Juan Bautista by ice cream time, in mid afternoon. In those days El Camino Real meandered through the village of San Juan Bautista. Sometimes, people in pickup trucks offered us a ride, but we waved them on, we were determined to ride our bikes for as long as it took to get there. The grade up to the Mission was so steep, that we couldn't pedal. We sweated, swore, and pushed our bikes uphill alongside the road.

We heard a rumble and a roar as a big old car, a jitney, packed with passengers and their luggage, came careening downhill towards us. Brakes squealed and tires smoked. The driver had lost control of the car and ran into a power pole. We dropped our bikes, and rushed up to the wrecked car. Passengers, badly shaken, staggered out into the road. I jumped up on the runningboard, and there on the back seat, a young lady clutched her screaming baby, which had been thrown against the back of the front seat. She handed the baby, all bloody, to me. When I stepped down with it in my arms, the poor infant threw up all over me. I thought that I too, was going to be sick. Firemen grabbed stretchers, the town doctor his case, and they rushed down the hill to the wreck. Everything was bedlam.

"Come on, let's get the hell outta here" Gene said.

We pushed our bikes and slogged wearily up hill. At the first house we came to, those screwballs turned the garden hose on me. I was drenched, but without stopping to dry off, we pushed on over the hill. Fremont Peak with its head in the clouds, loomed high and mighty on our left. We saw Salinas 'way down in the distance'. What a relief it was to ride downhill all the way into town just at sunset. We supped at the Bell Cafe, and bedded down on the soft earth between rows of tomato vines behind the high school. Now homes have squeezed the old farm out of existence.

"Look, there's an old grass mat we can spread under our blankets. That's a goza. A Japanese custom. They always spread a mat. They never sit or sleep on bare ground." Now we knew that Japanese people worked on this farm, or maybe they owned it.

Up at dawn, we three shucked our clothes, jumped into a long wood trough put there for water for the horses, and shivered in the chill morning air. Without stopping to dry ourselves we dressed hurriedly, and were on our way again. Hour after hour, we pedaled along El Camino Real, south through Soledad, Gonzales, and King City. We rode wearily into Jolon, near the site of the ruins of old Mission San Antonio, just before the sun slipped behind the Coast Range.

Louie knew Senor Don Pedro, who rented us one of his cabins overnight. We made friends with him and his brothers, Joaquin and Carlos. They took a shine to us and we, to them. Joaquin and Carlos worked underground mining silver, over on the coast, in wet shafts, tunnels, and addits. They were rough men, with rough

gnarled hands from swinging a pick and pushing a mucky stick (shovel). With no sun, their pallid complexions and snow white beards, made a ghostly appearance. They recovered the silver by roasting the matrix and melting the silver over a roaring manzanita wood fire. They were desperately poor, owned no horse or car, had no transportation, and therefore had great difficulty in getting the booty, safely to a bank. We didn't know it then, but we were about to be drawn into an illicit bootlegging scheme. Only Don Pedro and Joaquin knew.

"We'll stay in one of Senor Don Pedro's cabins tonight. I hope Gramps brought horses for us." Louie didn't bother to ask if we had ever ridden a horse.

Don Pedro, an undersized greaser, with twinkling brown eyes, a smile from ear to ear, shaded by a monstrous sombrero, greeted us three gringo's warmly. "Come een! You stay weeth me tonight. Old man brought horses."

Gramps, Louie's grandfather, had hobbled three riding horses and a pack mare, in Don Pedro's pasture. Before sunrise next morning, our burnished friend called us in to a big breakfast in his kitchen. The table groaned with food--bacon, eggs, unpasteurized milk, hot from his cows udders, flapjacks, wild honey from a comb, and a cantaloupe, for each of us.

"Senor Don Pedro, this is a fine breakfast," I said.
"and the beds were soft too. How much do we owe you?"

"No, no, de nada!"

We grabbed our bedrolls, and headed for the horses in the

pasture. When we started for the coast each time, Don Pedro slipped a large brown envelope into my saddlebag for his brothers, and tied it with cat gut. When we returned from the coast on each trip, Joaquin slipped a package into our saddlebags, which he also tied with cat gut. We then unknowingly 'bootlegged' it to his brother, Don Pedro, at Jolon.

"Hijos, amigos, por favor. ¿You know my brother Joaquin-- yes? ¿You give him letter?"

"Sure."

"You no show nobody!"

"Nobody!"

"Promise!"

"Promise!"

He drew his finger across his throat, and winked at us. He slipped a big brown envelope into my saddle bag, and tied it with a string of cat-gut. With that he put us on the trail for Gorda, where Gramps owned one of his two cattle ranches. The trail was rough and steep, and madrone or dogwood tree branches slapped at us as we rode by. When we came to Squirrel Springs and every time we crossed San Miguel Creek, we removed the bit from the horses mouths, and they, and we, drank noisily. Then we all emptied our radiators into a poison oak bush, and saddle sore or not, we pushed on. When we topped the crest we saw the sparkling blue Pacific Ocean, we dismounted and walked, and led the horses a spell.

Gramps owned one car, and his neighbor another, and there were no other cars there. Because there was no road across the

mountains, only a horse trail, both vehicles had been disassembled, packed over on horses or mules, and reassembled there. A dirt road extended twenty five miles north, and twenty five miles south of Gorda. This was long before Highway One skirted the coastline.

"Pete, You and Jasper each have two ends. One to think with, and one to sit on. Even though there are only two cars here, if you and he get drunk and have a colission, you'll have so much buckshot at the ends you sit on that you'll never be able to sit again," the ranch foreman threatened.

When we got to Gorda I put the envelope under my mattress in the bunkhouse. We three had the jitters. Where was Joaquin? He was as elusive as a pickpocket, and about as visible as a ghost. However he had a habit of always being on hand whenever horses arrived from the valley, or started back for the flat land. He'd seen us, but we'd not seen him. He lived in the entrance to a tunnel into the hill, and permitted no one to enter beyond the entrance.

Jackson's stinking old row boat reminded us of smelly fish long since dead. With its dirty white peeling paint, it lay forlornely, with four beatup old oars, on the beach below the high cliff. The boat intrigued me, and when I asked him if we three could use it, he told us that it couldn't be launched in a calm sea. That it was only safe for use in a storm with howling winds and high seas.

"If a big storm hits, I'll take all of you out."

For ten days we'd had fun, but there was work to be done at

home. After pitching hay, and herding cows, we figured that we were real cowpokes, and we were ready to saddle up, and bid our kind hosts farewell.

When Joaquin led the four horses to the ranch house for us, he slipped a heavy canvas wrapped package into each of our saddlebags, and one into the pack-saddle on the mare, which he marked with catgut.

"¿ You give Pedro, por favor?"

"Si, senor!"

He grinned, and drew his finger knowingly across his throat.

We crossed the mountains again, and spent another night with our old friend in Jolon. When he saw us coming, he jumped on a black stallion, and rode out to meet us.

"Buenas tardes amigos. Me da gusto de veriesotra vez! Mi casa es su casa!" (Glad to see you, my house is your house.)

He tethered the horses in the shade of a giant old live oak, and unsaddled them. After supper he casually asked if we had something for him.

Indeed we had.

The next year, 1923, Molly invited us again, but Gene's folks said no, so only Louie and I made the trip, down and back. Four days of hard pedaling. We were old hands at it by now.

Once again Senor Don Pedro slipped a big brown envelope in my saddlebag, tied it with cat-gut, crossed himself piously, and gave us 'the sign'. Three stallions and a mare with a packsaddle grazed in the pasture. Soon we were on our way again.

In 1924 Louie decided to go down with the family by

car so I went alone. I rode my bicycle to the now familiar cabins. By now Don Pedro owned a few more, to which he later attached lean-to-sheds. They glistened in the new coat of white lead and oil, with the window trim and barge boards painted purple. Later he upgraded them to the status of a motel.

My wizened friend swept his sombrero off his grizzly gray locks, bent low, and said, "Buenas tardes querido amigo! ¿ Como estas? ¿ En que te puedo servir?" (Good afternoon, how are you? What can I do for you?) Then with a worried look he said, "But they haven't sent a horse for you." He brightened, and chuckled, "But you are de nada to stay weeth me. We'll have fun together."

(you are no trouble, you are welcome)

"Oh no, Senor Don Pedro, thank you. They're expecting me, I must go. I'll walk over the mountains."

"No es possible que vayas por alli! Es muy lejos y peligroso por los leones, en el sendero de la montana. Las week, Joaquin my brother, drove two heifers over the trail to Gorda. Allí dos leones killed one of hees cows. You mus stay here weeth me."

(it's very far and very dangerous in the mountains)

With a grubby hand, he pulled a sack of Bull Durham and a packet of cigaret papers out of his blue overalls pocket.

"¿ You wanna cigaret? ¿ You roll your own?"

"No, thank you, Senor. I don't smoke. "

"OK, you good boy, don never smoke!"

Next morning, he, still grumbling, scrambled two eggs, and fried potatoes for me, put sandwiches, a jar of milk, and another

brown envelope into a rucksack, and sent me on my way.

"You mus walk fast. Don dawdle along the way. Es a good veinte millas, and you mus get there before dark. Buena suerta amigo, hasta luego."

After a few uphill miles I began to sweat. Each pool in the arroyo invited me. Sometimes I simply couldn't resist the temptation. I dropped my rucksack, dove in fully clothed, jumped out, and pushed on. By late afternoon my feet hurt and I was tiring, but I had passed the summit, or had I? Would I make it before dark? The sun in my eyes made shadows behind me grow longer. How welcome the sight of the ranch house, on the cliff, overlooking Silver Dollar Beach, and that lovely long stretch of gleaming golden sand below where the cold Pacific Ocean licked at Plasket Rock.

In the late afternoon, as they sat on the shady side of the house, someone remarked, "Who the heck can that be coming down the trail?"

"Oh my Goodness. We forgot to send a horse. I'll bet it's that crazy kid George Erskine. Bet he's beat. Quickly Lewellyn, go and get him. You can both ride bareback, don't wait to saddle up."

How good it felt to have horseflesh under me again.

"Are Carlos and Joaquin still mining?" I asked Louie. I have the usual envelope for you know who."

"Yes---darn it. I'd like to know just what's in those canvas wrapped packages, tied with catgut."

DOWN ON THE BEACH

Almost every evening after work, some of us wandered down on the beach south of Plaskett Rock where children screamed, and ran in and out of the cold Pacific waves. We in hip boots, walked knee deep into the sea. Each of us carried a hemp gunny sack. This was before plastics ruled the world. With a car leaf-spring we pried abalone off the rocks. There was no limit on either size or quantity. Rock cod, bass, bullhead or capazone attached themselves to our lures.

"He'll be disappointed when he sees me leaving alone, on a horse."

"You can't go alone. I'll go with you over the mountains, to Don Pedro's place. I'll ask dad for a couple of guns. Someone may have noticed what Joaquin does, and how heavy the packages are."

We wondered what Joaquin did, and where the tunnel might lead. Maybe it led to the beach, and he worked with rum-runners. But no. It couldn't be booze in those packages. Maybe he had an opium connection with Chinatown. No, San Francisco was too far away, and opium wouldn't be that heavy. Louie just remembered: Years ago, his dad had told him about an abandoned mine tunnel. Silver he thought. Chances were that our co-conspirator had struck a rich vein. Soledad or Alcatraz beckoned.

When we rode down into Jolon I asked Don Pedro outright, what they were up to.

"Amigo, you good boy. You good friend. I tell you. You no tell nobody!"

"No body."

"¿ Promise?"

"Promise."

He told me about his brother Rodrigues in Monterey. "He counterfeit coins and money."

Don Pedro sent the raw silver by train to his brother who retorted it to pure silver. The residue or slag if allowed to accumulate into a pile, would have exposed their operation. They sacked this into canvas bags, and dumped it out to sea in Monterey Bay.

"Then the pure silver is cast into twentyfive cent pieces, (quarters) of almost pure silver which contains much more silver than minted two-bits pieces contain. Then we ship all the counterfeit coins to Mexico, and exchanged them for American silver dollars. We make mucho dinero. We are a rich family in Mexico, but we must not buy horses or cars here."

I didn't think the I.R.S. would take kindly to this. We might be put away for two life sentences.

"Por favor amigas. ¿ You sign papers for Don Pedro?.

Hm. A mining claim form. Had they been mining illegally, without filing a mining claim?

Had we been trapped, with our eyes closed, into dealing with contraband?

We shivered. A prison term at Soledad or Alcatraz loomed ever more threateningly.

At that time the government did not print any paper two-dollar money. Rodrigues et al, printed one-dollar and five-dollar counterfeit bills so skilfully that they were almost impossible to detect as being counterfeit. To counter this deception, our

treasury department printed paper money in the value of two-dollar notes or warrants for the first time.

In 1924 I was pleased to see Jackson's boat again, now glistening inside and out with a new coat of white-lead and oil paint, and sporting four new oars. The smell of fish long dead was gone. I prayed for that big storm, and the monstrous waves. About a week later skies darkened, winds drove us off the beach, and that night in the bunkhouse I reminded Jack of his promise. I woke up to the sound of shutters banging, and felt the bunkhouse shaking. The gale was screaming outside.

"Jack, Jack, wake up! Can you and I launch the boat all alone? Let's go."

He opened one eye, cursed me, and rolled over in his bunk, but the cowhands wouldn't let him go back to sleep. "You promised the boy. You can't back out now."

Jack and I dressed, donned hip boots and slickers and stumbled for the beach in the darkness in a howling gale. The waves were licking at the boat at the foot of the cliff. With a heave and a shove we jumped in, each grabbed an oar and were caught in a trough. With each wave we were carried to the height of a four story building, and each trough pitched us down to the level of a sub sub basement. We rowed and rowed until my hands blistered and my back hurt. I stumbled to the stern and fed the fish.

"Well boy, I hope you're happy now."

The storm was letting up. The waves were not so high and the troughs not so deep. All the cowhands were on the beach waiting

for our return. The boat crunched on the sand, Jack and I jumped out and Tex roared above the gusts, "Jackson, you old slob. You took a boy out, and brought back a man among men."

When I bade Don Pedro goodbye to return to Redwood City, I knew that there were still two days of hard riding ahead. By mid afternoon of the second day the sweltering heat had sunburned the left side of each leg, both legs, and burned my behind. I jumped off my bike, and hot and tired I lay in the shade of the Cycamore Platinus Acerbolio trees in front of the Hester Grammar School on The Alameda. They spread their welcoming shade and I heard the street car bells clang as they rumbled past. I was nearing home, my mind a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors when San Jose, the Garden City was young and beautiful.

Hope this finds you in good health, and that you enjoyed the story.

Affectionately

George S. Erskine

P.S. There's something I forgot:

One day Gene said, "Look at that heavy black smoke. Can you tell from the smell if it's oak or madrone they're burning?"

"I don't care what kind of wood they're using, but why would two old bachelors light such a big fire to just cook a meal?"

George chimed in.

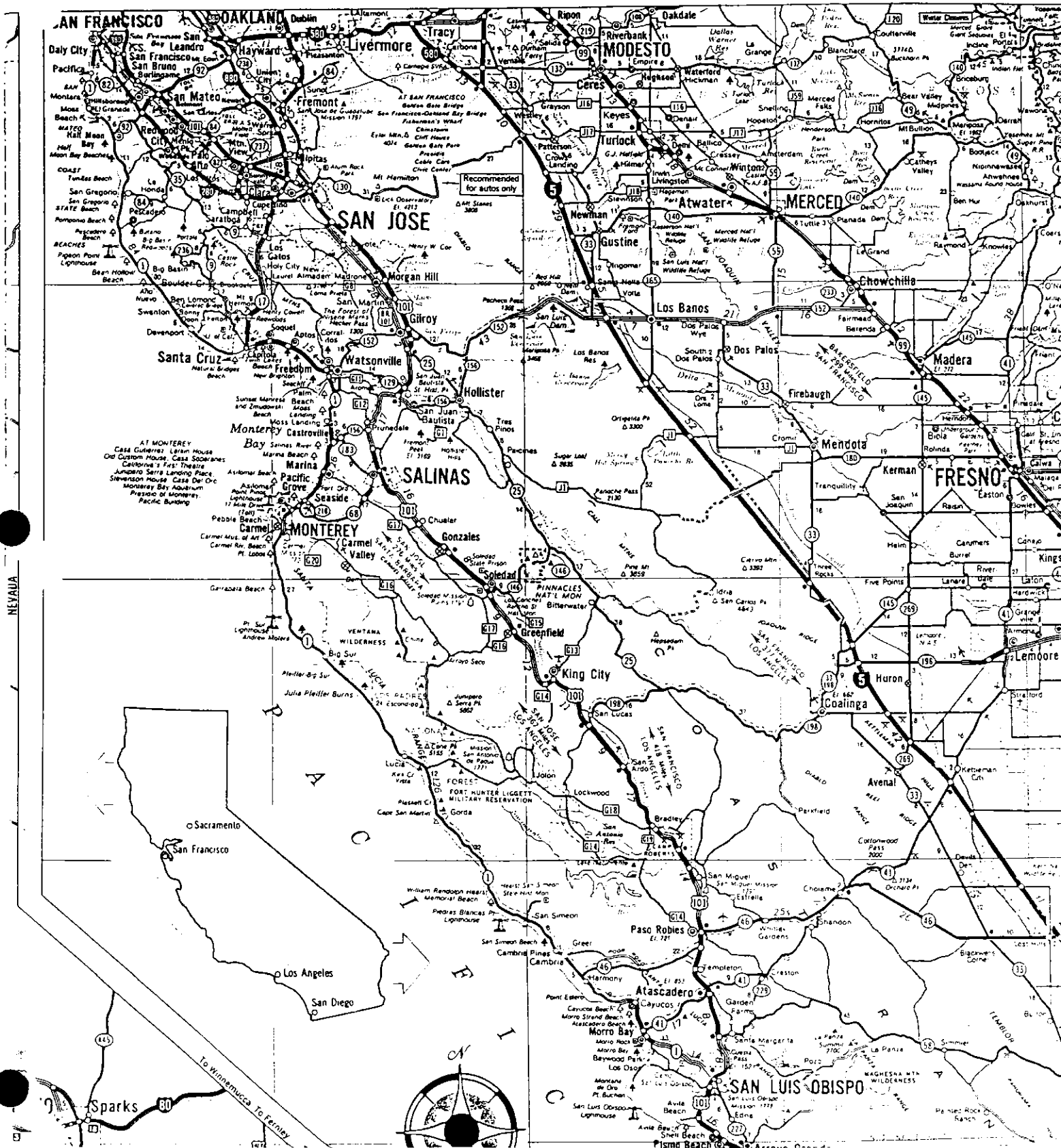
"Maybe they're drying meat for jerkey," Louie wise cracked.

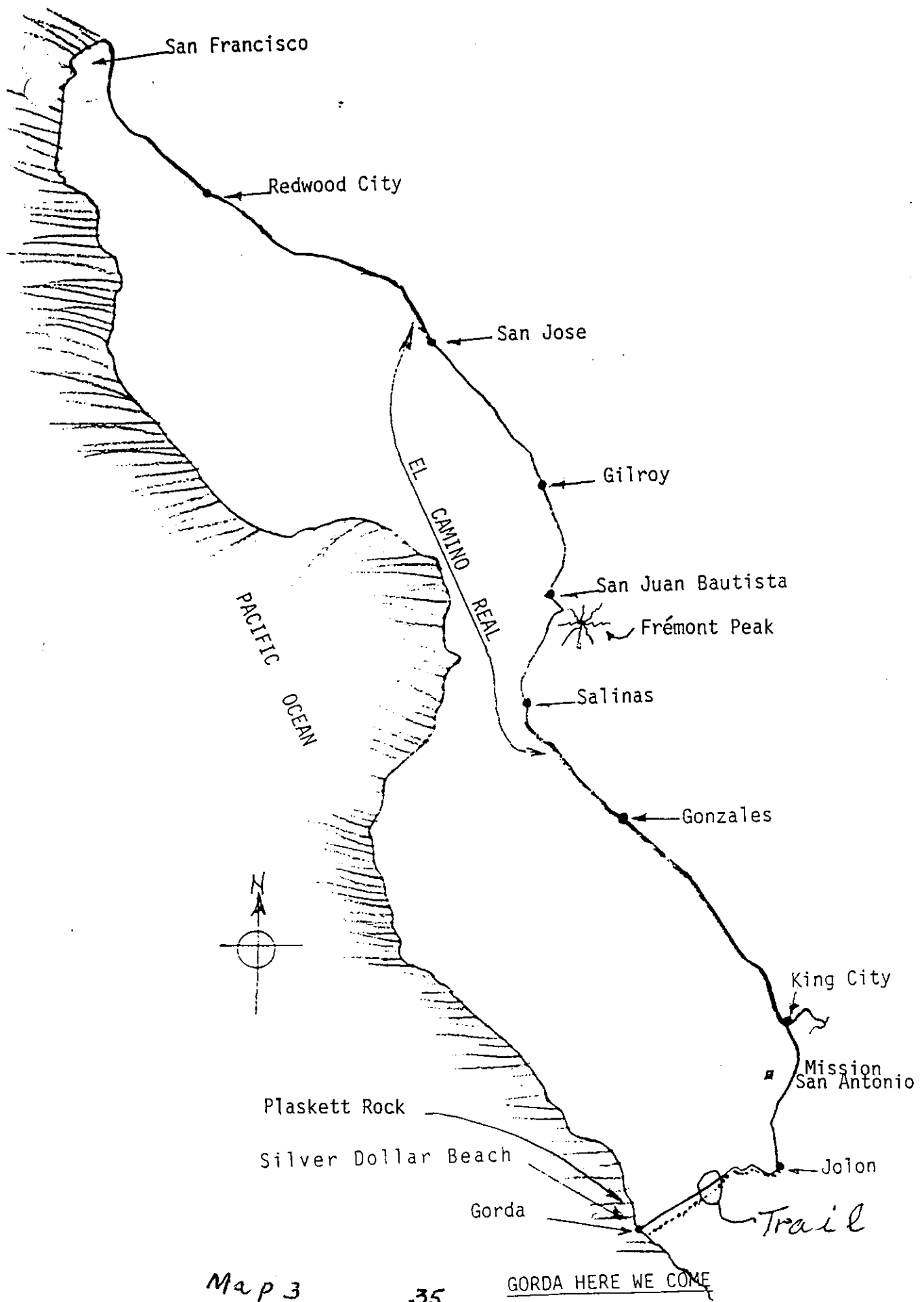
Capecal/erskine

It never occurred to us that they were melting or smelting silver from the ore.

P.P.S. There's something else I forgot:

Some maps of Monterey County showing Squirrel Springs, San Miguel Creek, Gorda Mine and Plaskett are included. This may help. See maps 1, 2, 3.





EPILOGUE

Now, almost three quarters of a century later, we own our home on Pershing Avenue across from Hester Elementary School.

The sounds of the children playing happily in the school yard are a joy to all of us.

The modern Garden Alameda Office Complex was the estate of William F., and Winifred Mc Laughlin Leet. (circa 1922)

See: Map of THE ALAMEDA PARK in the RANCHO POTRERO DE SANTA CLARA. Surveyed May 1922, by Charles Herrmann, of Herrmann Brothers. Licenced Land Surveyor.

 OFFICIAL RECEIPT COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA		NUMBER 121114
DEPARTMENT <i>Assessors</i>	FUND <i>Cash</i>	DATE ~~4/4/95~~ <i>4-4-95</i>
RECEIVED OF: <i>George Eskine</i>	ADDRESS	
FOR: <i>① Microfiche</i>	\$	<i>1.75</i>
REMARKS		TOTAL AMT. RECEIVED \$ <i>1.75</i>
RECEIVED - COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA BY <i>PN</i>		

CODE 983217 FORM 5500 REV 9/80

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SANTA CLARA COUNTY RECORDER
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 MAPS COPY - FEE 2.00
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 PAID CASH 20.00
 CHANGE 18.00

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261-06

WINIFRED McLAUGHLIN LEET
(261-06-027)

SCHIELE SUBD
 "D" - M-31

ALAMEDA PARK
 "R" - M-4