

PORTOLA VALLEY



DOROTHY REGNERY, the late Portola Valley historian, chronicled the history of Jasper Ridge.

BY MARION SOFTKY

"Searsville, 1887: ... a blustering, fighting, whiskey-loving town, in which every other place was a bar room, or a hotel, where glasses clinked all day and all night and the fires never went out."

This colorful image of life in the old town of Searsville — now mostly drowned by a lake — is one of many nuggets in the last book by the late Portola Valley historian, Dorothy Regnery.

In the book Mrs. Regnery carries the reader from the time the first "foreigners" observed Jasper Ridge in the Spanish Portola expedition of 1769, to its rescue in 1976 as a Stanford biological preserve under pressure from scientists — including her husband, David, a retired professor of biology from Stanford.

"The History of Jasper Ridge: From Searsville Pioneers to Stanford Scientists" has been published by the Stanford Historical Society in connection with Stanford's 100th anniversary.

An attractively produced paperback, the book features lots of historic photos. The

pages of each chapter show a faint picture suggesting its subject — a horse and buggy, or the building blocks of Searsville Dam.

While Jasper Ridge is best known today as the undeveloped ridge with the rocky outcropping south

of Sand Hill Road, the book covers a larger area as shown on relief maps. Located between the Baylands and the valley of the San Andreas earthquake fault, Jasper Ridge is approximately one and three-quarters mile long. It is bounded by the valleys of three creeks: Corte Madera, Los Trancos and San Francisco.

Besides Searsville Lake and the biological preserve, the area covered by the book also includes the present Webb Ranch, the Sand Hill Christmas tree farm, the Stanford Linear Accelerator, and the communities of Stanford Hills, Ladera and Westridge — where Mrs. Regnery and her family lived for more than 40 years.

Starting with the first Indians, who were traced to Jasper Ridge about 900 A.D., Mrs. Regnery leads the reader through the early settlers and settlements, through the rise and fall of the town of Searsville, the purchase of much of Jasper Ridge by Leland Stanford

Lighthouse; most of the town of Pescadero; and California's largest landmark: the 7,000 acre Steele brother's dairy on the Coastside, much of it now preserved as Cascade Ranch State Park.

Her book, "Enduring Heritage," won the 1976 award of the American Society of University Professors for one of the 25 best books published that year. The coffee-table histories of local buildings was sponsored by the Junior League of Palo Alto in cooperation with the National Park Service.

Mrs. Regnery donated many of her files and pictures to Portola Valley. Town Historian Nancy Lund describes them as "so wonderful." When you look something up, "it spirals out like pebbles in a pond," she says.

Dorothy Regnery: 'An enduring heritage'

Dorothy Regnery is well known to people who value the Peninsula's historic heritage.

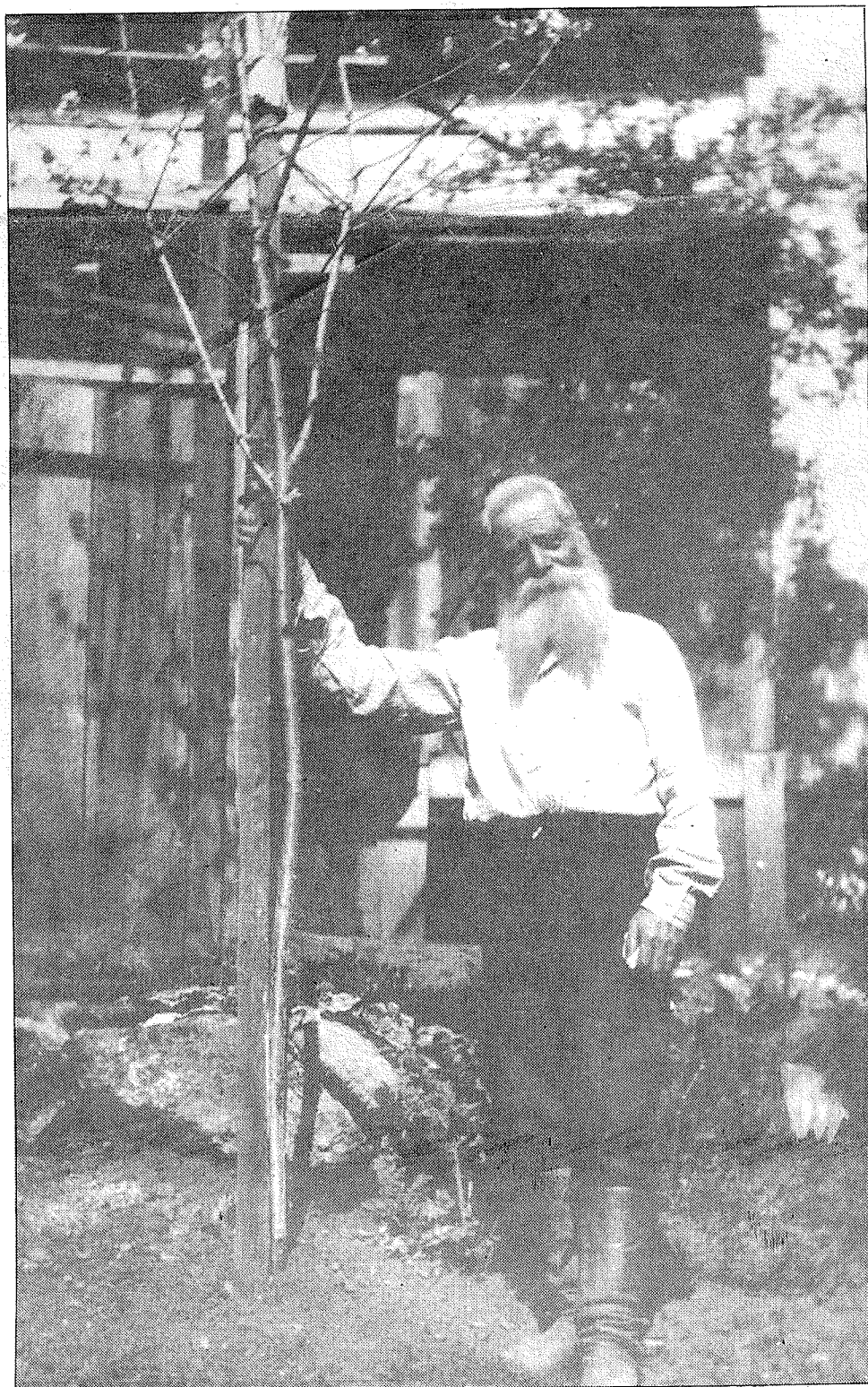
Over more than 30 years, the Portola Valley chemist-turned-historian meticulously documented the people and structures that preceded today's suburbia. She pursued her findings through state and federal bureaucracies and obtained official historic status for 57 different sites.

What she called her "scorecard" included two national landmarks, 16 state landmarks, 32 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, and seven Points of Historical Interest.

Most people are familiar with some of these: the Alpine Inn and Red School house in Portola Valley; Filoli; Nativity Church and the historic train station in Menlo Park; six buildings in Palo Alto; the Pigeon Point

JASPER RIDGE COMES ALIVE

Portola Valley historian Dorothy Regnery tells of the lives, loves and conflicts of the people of Jasper Ridge, from Spanish pioneers to Stanford scientists



"DOMINGO" GROSSO, the hermit of Jasper Ridge, entertained generations of neighbors and Stanford students at his cottage on Jasper Ridge.

COMMUNITY

New classes in rearing children for fathers, nannies, working parents

BY KATE KIMELMAN

Full-time working parents, Dads of 2-year-olds, and nannies and au pairs are the focus of a new series of classes offered by the Child Rearing Program of the Children's Health Council this year.

All classes will include guided discussion, mini-lectures, and observation of the children through a one-way window in an adjacent playroom.

B. Annye Rothenberg of Woodside, director of the Child Rearing Program says there is a great need for the classes.

"Many parents go to childbirth education, but after the baby is delivered, questions begin to snowball," she says. "Parents need thoughtful discussion and feedback to develop their own parenting philosophy."

The series for full-time working parents is six sessions and is divided into groups based on the age of the child. Topics ad-



PHOTO BY CAROL MIE

EXAMINING stuffed animals used in parenting classes are, from left, Annye Rothenberg, director of the Child Rearing Program; Lela Sarnet, a teacher; and Joanne Mintz, an administrative coordinator.

ressed include working with the child's caregiver, balancing home and family life with tight work schedules, and making effective transitions from one activity to the next. Arrangements can be made to provide dinners for both parents and children, since the classes run from 6 to 8 p.m. The class size is limited to 12 parents.

"You need to have time, energy, and creativity to come up with those special techniques that are necessary for young kids," says Dr. Rothenberg. "Working parents are often more in the mode of productivity and it's hard to shift out of that mode to get into

a more playful way. It is very important for parents to meet with each other, share ideas, and find out what's realistic. They start to build a support network that they'll be able to call on for years."

Menlo Park resident Clare Warner, who just finished one of the classes says, that as a full-time working mother, she hasn't had the time to get together with other mothers. "This class sets up the time for me," she says. "Observing my child through the one-way window to see the interaction with other children and with caregivers, and having a chance to sit and talk with other parents were most helpful to me."

Joanne Donsky of Portola Valley, who attended the class with her husband Stuart Oremland, says, the classes are invaluable. "The mothers from an earlier class I took still get together, and we go to the park with our children."

A special class called "Dads Parenting Two-Year-Olds" emphasizes an understanding of the 2-year-olds emerging needs for independence, setting limits, encouraging positive self-esteem, and maintaining a balance between father's work and home responsibilities. Other issues include how to make time with your wife and how to adjust when you have a second child.

"Mothers and fathers parent very differently," says Dr. Rothenberg. "Dads really don't want to learn about child rearing from their wives. Dads want to learn on their own."

The third new series, which will be offered in the spring session in April, is an eight-week series for in-home caregivers, nannies, and au pairs. The class will include discussion of the developmental needs of

children from ages 1-1/2 to 5: appropriate play and learning activities, guiding sibling relations and play, safety issues, food and nutrition, and working together with parents in setting limits and sharing values. Problems addressed in this class include language differences and cultural differences in discipline.

The Child Rearing Program was started in 1973 by Dr. Rothenberg and Children's Health Council Director Alan J. Rosenthal, M.D., of Portola Valley. Out of 2000 child rearing programs in the United States, this program was selected by the Family Resource Coalition in Chicago, as one of 10 nationally recognized models for family-support programs.

Major influences on the philosophy of the program include authors T. Berry Brazelton, Selma Fraiberg, Stella Chess, and Alexander Thomas.

"In our classes and counseling, we look at problems from the point of view of both the child and the parent," says Dr. Rothenberg.

Dr. Rothenberg and her staff conduct workshops for community pediatricians and other professionals, and each year train 80 students from local colleges, including Stanford.

Other related services include Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, and day-care and nursery-school consultation.

FOR INFORMATION on these classes, call Doris Kohlmoos at 688-3608. Classes are held at the Children's Health Council in Palo Alto, located near the Stanford Shopping Center. Fees range from about \$50 to \$130.

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"The History of Jasper Ridge: From Searsville Pioneers to Stanford Scientists" by Dorothy F. Regnery. Published in 1991 by the Stanford Historical Society, P.O. Box 2328, Stanford, CA 94309. Available for \$9 from the Stanford Historical Society, Bldg. 170, Stanford, CA 94305; or at \$14.95 from the campus bookstore.

in 1882, and the construction of Searsville Dam in 1891.

Mrs. Regnery describes the intricacies of the old families and their shifting battles over land. Their marriages, quarrels, feuds, lawsuits and bankruptcies are painstakingly recorded.

The earliest use of the area was for cutting wood to support the Spanish missions of San Francisco and Santa Clara. Hence one of the ranchos was named "El Corte de Madera" — wood-cutting place.

Later settlers engaged in ranching, farming, silkworm-growing, and lumbering the redwood forests to rebuild San Francisco whenever it burned down. Mining was another activity as prospectors sought gold, silver, coal and other minerals. There was even a "silver-strike" in 1875 — which quickly fizzled.

Certain characters stand out. The enterprising Irishman Dennis Martin became land rich but eventually lost out, thanks to boundary disputes and crooked lawyers. He gave his name to a mill, a bridge, a lane, a cemetery and St. Dennis Church. The church is now located on Avy Avenue in Sharon Heights, where it has lost an "n" in the spelling.

Other characters include "Grizzly" Ryder, who wrestled a grizzly bear near the creek later to be named "Bear Gulch"; August Eikerenkotter, who operated the hotel in Searsville and introduced wealthy San Franciscans to the joys of hunting and fishing in the hills; and "Tidie" Ayres, almost the only teacher who stayed for more than a semester at Searsville School.

Perhaps the most colorful character of all was the hermit, "Domingo" Grosso. As his bushy beard gradually changed from bright red to white, the hermit decorated his cabin with rocks and sea shells, built elaborate walks, whitewashed the trunks of his fruit trees, and raised the flags of four nations. While he nursed the legend of a rich mine — later shown to be unfounded — Domingo played host to generations of locals and students at the brand new Leland Stanford Jr. University.

Many people remember Searsville Lake as a popular swimming hole and party place for 50 years. In 1923 a three-tier diving tower on the dam was used for national high-diving championships and trials for the USA's Olympic team.

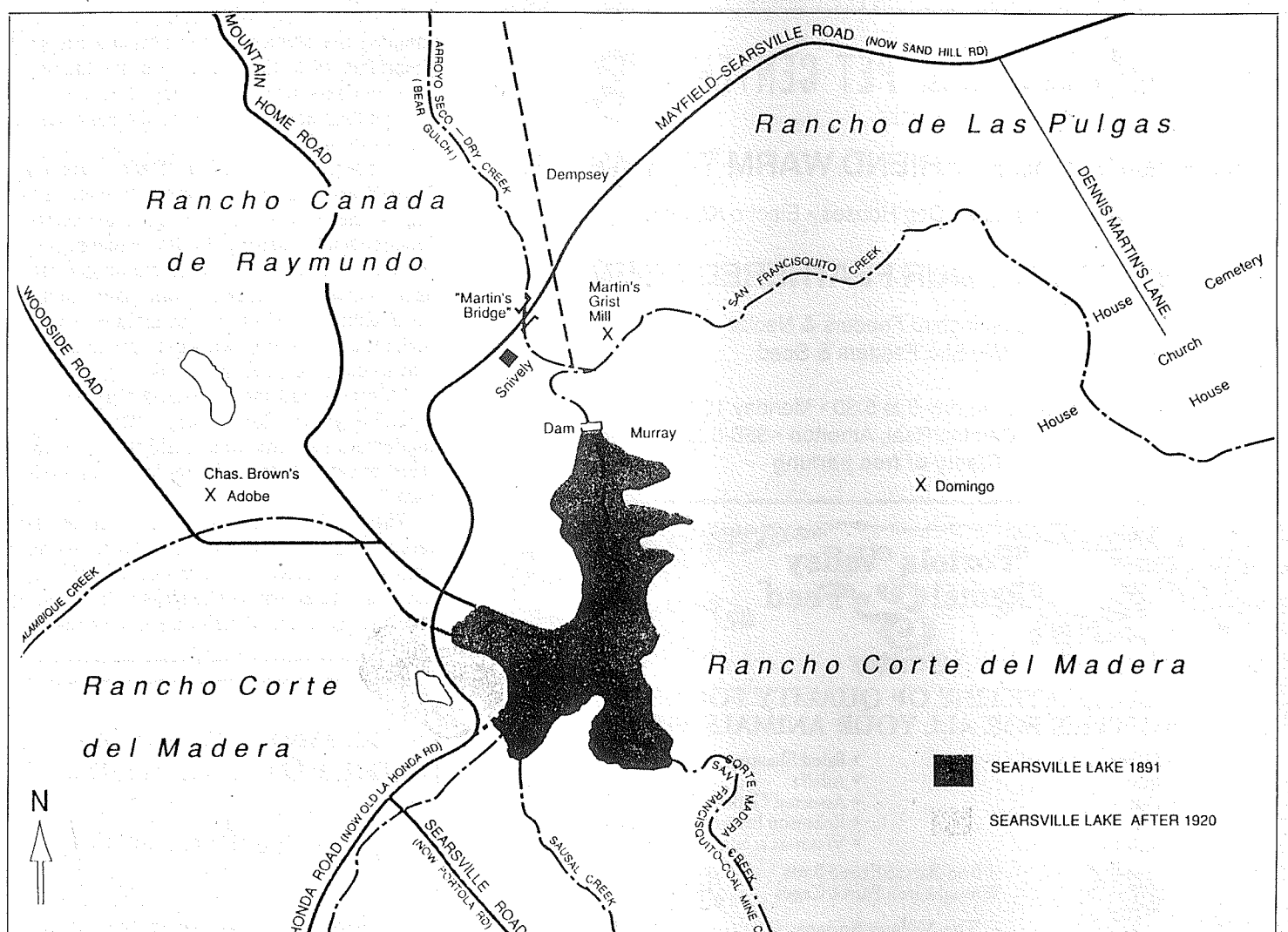
In 1976, thanks to an anonymous donor, Stanford was able to buy out the concession and return more than 1,000 acres on Jasper Ridge to nature.

"Many claim it to be the finest biological preserve in the nation," Mrs. Regnery's book concludes. "Within its confines there now exists a beautiful and untrammelled microcosm of old Northern California."

Historic photos are courtesy of Dorothy Regnery's archives, Portola Valley Library.



SEARSVILLE LAKE first filled in 1891, marking the end of the old town of Searsville. The dam, shown here in the early 1900s, was raised by 3.5 feet in 1920. The whole area is now off limits to the public as part of Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.



THIS HISTORIC map of Jasper Ridge is in Dorothy Regnery's book and is derived from a map she drew in 1970.