



Before the Spanish explorations of the San Francisco Bay Area region, the land on this eastern shore of the bay was occupied by the Coastanoan tribes of the Penutian family. Remnants of the Penutian civilizations are to be found in the large mounds of dirt containing relics of their tribal life.

The Spanish explorations into California began with the expedition of Don Gasper de Portola in 1769. In 1772, Pedro Fages, who had been invested by Portola with the government of the Alta California, set out with Father Juan Crespi and twelve soldiers to explore the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay. This was their first exploration of what are now the counties of Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa. On march 27, 1772, they halted at the base of a small hill on the creek opposite of the Golden gate—the present site of the city El Cerrito and the "little hill" from which it derives its name.

At the time of the Mexican revolution, the area now known as Contra Costa County, appears in the records as a grazing land for sheep and cattle belonging to Mission Dolores across the bay. It was about this time in 1823, that Don Francisco Castro, a former soldier at the San Francisco presidio and alcalde of the pueblo of San Jose, was a member of an exploration party through this area. Later that year, he received a provisional grant for approximately four square leagues (19,394.40 acres) from the Governor of April 15, 1823. The present city of El Cerrito fell within the limits of that grant which became known as the San Pablo Rancho, and which became final in 1843.

Don Francisco Castro took possession of and old mission dwelling on this rancho north of El Cerrito in the present town of San Pablo.

In 1839, a son Don oVictor Ramon Castro, chose the edge of his father’s sprawling rancho near Cerrito Creek on San Pablo Road to build a hacienda for his wife Luisa, the daughter of Don Ygnacio Martinez, their neighbor to the north. The tw-story adobe remained for 117 years until it was burned to the ground in April 1956. Today one adobe brick remains on the site marked by a brass plaque in the El Cerrito [Plaza] Shopping Center. Victor raised cattle and vegetables; he also owned a schooner-launch and a whale boat which he employed ferrying passengers to various points on the bay when the gold rush hit California in 1848.

William F. Rust, a journeyman blacksmith from Hanover, Germany, is designated as the grounder of El Cerrito. He came into the area in 1883, and later chose a location for his blacksmith shop on the main road between Oakland and San Pablo (San Pablo Avenue) near the county line (The current site of Pastime Ace Hardware). As Rancho San Pablo was excellent farming land, Rust began making farm implements to meet the increasing demand.

In 1909, a post office was established in William Rust’s store and he became a postmaster of the station which was called Rust. The little community grew until August 23, 1917, when after a spirited contest, the unincorporated areas of Stege Junction and Rust Narrowly voted for incorporation. Starting with and estimated population of 1,400 in 1917, the area grew slowly, reaching a population of 3, 852 in 1930; 7,00 in 1940. During the war years, the population sku-rocketed to 16,624 with approximately half that number living in temporary war housing or government trailer parks. Then came the post-war housing boom. Population in permanent housing jumped from estimated 7,000 in 1945 to 18,00 in 1950.

During the 1930’s and early 1940’s, the community was perhaps best known for its casinos, poker parlors, and dog racing track. The Castro adobe was one of the gambling spots at this time. In 1946 the slogan "City of Homes" was adopted. One of their first major acts was to outlaw poker and to embark on vigorous enforcement campaign against all gambling activity. Two years later, the Council-Manager plan was adopted to aid in streamlining the reorganization of City Government.

Residents of the community embarked on a program of civic improvements to provide the facilities needed in growing, a modern, urban community.

As a result these efforts, El Cerrito, with its population of 23,000 has evolved into a prime residential community and is still "A City of Homes"



This footer does not appear when using a registered version of Web Snapper.



© Copyright 2008 TastyApps.com (TM). All rights reserved.

