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HAMLET: 1844-1988



A History of "Jensen's Oyster Beds"
Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California

by Douglas (Dewey) Livingston

Historic Resource Study
Point Reyes National Seashore

POINT REYES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1989

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By
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	2
II. Administrative Section	3
III. History of Hamlet	4
A. Rancho Nicasio 1844-1862	4
B. Ownership of Hamlet 1862-1873	6
C. Warren Dutton at Hamlet 1873-1877	7
D. Abram Huff at Hamlet 1877-1907	9
E. The Jensen Family at Hamlet 1907-1988	12
F. The Public Road Through Hamlet 1873-present	23
G. The Railroad at Hamlet 1874-1930	24
H. Hamlet Post Offices	29
I. Hamlet as a Fishery	29
1. Herring	29
2. Oysters	34
3. Clams	39
J. Commerce at Hamlet and Other Tomales Bay Communities	40
K. Historic Photographs	46
IV. Buildings and Historic Resources	69
A. Description of Complex	69
B. Description and History of Individual Structures	70
C. Photographs	79
D. Significance	97
E. Recommendations	98
V. Maps	100
A. Contemporary Maps	100
B. Historic Maps	106
VI. Bibliography	121

*The illustration on the title page is a photograph of the railroad depot sign,
courtesy of the Tomales Elementary Local History Project*

I. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hamlet, one of the oldest settlements on Tomales Bay, held a prominent position in the early days of western Marin County. As a flag stop on the North Pacific Coast Railroad, Hamlet was a shipping point for dairy products, poultry and fish from the northern half of Tomales Bay; it had a long life as a favorite recreation spot and appeared on virtually all of the maps of the area; it was the site of a mercantile, a dairy, the location of a satellite plant of one of the most respected fish canning companies in the state, and of one of the earliest and longest-lived oyster beds on the Bay. At Hamlet lived Coast Miwok Indians, Marin County pioneers, families, respected businessmen and women, artists and craftspeople, and it had its own share of eccentric characters. For such a small place Hamlet has a many-faceted and captivating history.

In researching this history, which developed into a much larger project as I found Hamlet's local importance growing with every reference or interview, I met and was helped by many people. For some it was their job to assist me in my questions, but for most of them it was a volunteer effort at my request, and I thank them very much. Lois Parks and Georgia Marino at the Tomales Elementary Local History Center in Tomales, California, gave me not only support and interest but most of my fruitful "leads." Marin County historian Bill Allen offered much to aid the research, coming up with gems out of the old Marin Journals that I would have never had time to find. Jocelyn Moss at the Marin County Library's Anne Kent California Room and Dorothy Morgan at the Marin County Historical Society were of special help to the project. Tom Riley and Ellen Straus helped by providing information and recommending local people for interviews.

The local people who allowed me into their homes for interviews were interested and often quite enthusiastic, and I thank them all; meeting such friendly "pioneers" such as Gene Poncia, Hazel Martinelli, Margaret Matteri and Harry McDonald was the high point of the study.

At the National Park Service, I would like to acknowledge Don Neubacher, Chief of Interpretation at Point Reyes National Seashore, for all his supportive supervision, and Terry Edinger for her vast computer skills and patience, and Marin Kuizenga of the interpretive staff. At the Western Regional Office, Gordon Chappell, Thomas Mulhern and Richard Borges contributed direction through their comments and expertise.

Most of all, I thank Virginia Jensen and her family, who allowed a stranger to dig into the family's hardworking past; and Albert Spiegel, whose enthusiasm, memories, photographs, and general friendliness made this project a most memorable one.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION

Hamlet, called Jensen's Oyster Beds since the 1930s, is a small cluster of buildings lining the shore of Tomales Bay, located 3 miles south of Tomales and 13.5 miles north of Point Reyes Station. The site is adjacent, to the south, with the mouth of Keys (or Walker) Creek, and is directly across Tomales Bay from Point Reyes National Seashore.

County of Marin parcel 104-110-08 (approximately 40 acres, of which approximately 21 acres are tidelands), surrounding and containing the village of Hamlet, was purchased in October 1987, by the United States, Department of the Interior, National Park Service as the northernmost section of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and is designated GGNRA tract 18-101. The parcel is administered by the Superintendent, Point Reyes National Seashore. The 20 structures at Hamlet have been vacant since January 31, 1988.

This Historic Resource Study will fulfill the requirements of the National Park Service Management Policies and NPS-28, Cultural Resource Management Guidelines, concerning proposals to affect cultural resources. The Study will also assist the National Park Service in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and in the associated consultation process with the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Research notes and materials have been deposited by the author in the files and archive at the Point Reyes National Seashore.

HISTORY OF HAMLET

III. HISTORY OF HAMLET

A. Rancho Nicasio (De la Guerra to Halleck) 1844-1862

Hamlet lies in the northwestern corner of the Rancho Nicasio, granted in 1844 to Pablo De la Guerra and Juan B.R. Cooper. The 56,807 acre rancho had been in dispute for a decade, following Mexico Governor Jose Figueroa's 1834 decree that the Marin County Indians be given a property of their choice; the chiefs chose 80,000 acres ranging from Nicasio Valley to the area surrounding Tomales. The Indians were subsequently duped out of the land by Don Mariano Vallejo and Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado, a scheme which was discovered in 1843; while this affair was under discussion, the disputed lands were quietly granted to De la Guerra, an aristocratic Spaniard, and Cooper, an Irishman who already owned the Rancho Punta de Quentin near San Rafael.¹

De la Guerra and Cooper hired government surveyor Jasper O'Farrell to survey the rancho in 1847. Two years later the survey was submitted to the alcalde at Sonoma. The rancho was divided into five lots, two of which, including the Hamlet site, went to De la Guerra, two went to Cooper, and one to O'Farrell as payment for the survey. De la Guerra's property now measured out at over 30,000 acres. Jack Mason, a Marin County historian, described De la Guerra as follows:

De la Guerra was . . . ill-suited to life in the wilderness. Born of a Spanish father, he was the aristocrat of the Marin grantees: probably the most accomplished of the Mexican delegation at the Monterey constitutional convention of 1849. Educated chiefly in England, he preferred the English to the Americans, refusing to give over the customs house flag at Monterey where he led a protest in 1846 against the American victors, finally fleeing to Santa Barbara.

Nevertheless he served notably during the early days of California statehood: he was a state senator for four terms, acting lieutenant governor, United States marshal, and, from 1863 to 1873 a district court judge.²

Evidently Pablo De la Guerra never used his land, and he sold his lots on December 1, 1850, to Henry W. Halleck.

Jack Mason called Henry Wager Halleck "the most illustrious American ever to

¹Jack Mason and Helen VanCleave Park, Early Marin (Petaluma: House of Printing, 1971), pp. 59-71. The Nicasio grant was signed on August 30, 1845.

²Mason, Ibid., pp.64-65.

own a piece of Marin County real estate." ³ Halleck arrived in California in 1847 as a lieutenant in the United States Engineers, accompanied by his friend, Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman. Halleck made surveys of the Monterey and San Francisco Bay areas and provided recommendations for coastal defense, and made good use of his growing knowledge of coastal properties by purchasing a dozen waterfront lots in San Francisco while still an Army officer. He also served as secretary of state of the Territory of California under Col. R.B. Mason, wrote a definitive report on Mexican land titles, and was a joint author of the California Constitution. Halleck was the director-administrator of the New Almaden Mine, largest quicksilver mine in the western hemisphere.⁴

At the time of his purchase of the Rancho Nicasio, Halleck was a partner in the San Francisco law firm, Halleck, Peachy & Billings, the largest on the west coast, and still an army officer. In 1853 Halleck resigned from the army in the rank of captain to focus his energy on his law firm, which specialized in California land grants and participated in more than half of the 1,400 land cases that arose after the American government took over California. At the outbreak of the Civil War Halleck rejoined the army as a major-general of the Regular Union army, and was promoted by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to general-in-chief of the armies of the United States. Historian John D. Yates credited this move "as a result of his strong administrative skills and strategic brilliance." Halleck "eventually produced for Grant and Sherman a superb professional army out of a rabble of ill-disciplined draftees."⁵

Halleck paid \$30,000 to De la Guerra in 1850 for nine leagues; one-half of the sum was paid in advance.⁶ After two years of falling real estate values Halleck offered to return his share to De la Guerra at a loss, as there were still questions of the validity of the grant (due to the 1834-1844 Indian/Alvarado scheme). The question was answered when the Land Commission issued the patents for the rancho, confirming 30,848 acres to Halleck. It has been speculated that Halleck received his property in lieu of legal fees; he also gained ownership of the 35,521 acre Rancho Rio de los Americanos in the Sierra foothills.⁷

Halleck apparently enjoyed his Marin properties, building a house on the creek near Nicasio, now called Halleck Creek. According to Jack Mason, Halleck came to

³Mason, Early Marin, pp. 68-69.

⁴John D. Yates, "Insurgents on the Baja Peninsula: Henry Halleck's Journal of the War in Lower California," California Historical Quarterly, Fall 1975, pp. 223-224.

⁵Yates, Ibid., p. 224.

⁶Paul W. Gates, "Carpetbaggers Join the Rush for California Land," California Historical Quarterly, Summer 1977, p. 115.

⁷Gates, Ibid., p. 115.

hunt and fish on his land, "riding over the hill from San Rafael with a rifle slung over his shoulder."⁸ It is unknown whether he ever occupied the area around Hamlet, although he had a tenant at the site; the dwelling of a Calvin Pierce is shown at Hamlet on the 1859 map confirming title to Halleck. Pierce does not appear in any census or voter registration. He may have been a Coast Miwok Indian.

Hamlet lies in Tomales Township, established in 1850. The Halleck School District was formed in 1862, the year Henry Halleck sold the Hamlet portion of Rancho Nicasio. A schoolhouse was built c. 1867 about two miles southeast of Hamlet; Hamlet children attended Halleck School until it closed in 1941.⁹

B. Ownership of Hamlet, 1862-1873

During 1861 or 1862, Halleck was called to Washington, D.C. to act as general-in-chief of the Civil War, leaving his attorney David Blair Northrup to sell most of the Nicasio rancho in small parcels averaging 300-400 acres. Edwin Moore purchased 321 acres from Halleck for \$2,270.38 on August 23, 1862, this being the initial subdivision of the Hamlet property as it stood until 1955. Moore was born in Clinton County, New York, on December 26, 1826, and raised in Michigan. After working for many years as a carpenter, he came to California in 1852 and worked as a miner. Munro-Fraser's Sonoma County history says that Moore bought a ranch in Marin County in 1858, although his purchase at Hamlet occurred four years later. Moore and his wife Catherine had four children, Charles B., Betsie E., Edwin, and Mary Edwina. The family apparently moved to Petaluma in 1866, and later sold the Hamlet ranch.¹⁰ Henry W. Halleck died in Louisville, Kentucky in 1872.

Moore, living in Sonoma County, sold the property for \$9,000 to Samuel Stephen Nowlin on August 3, 1869. Nowlin, a farmer born in Tennessee in 1833, owned property north of Marshall known as Muldro City, and was listed in the 1870 census as a dairyman; the value of his property was listed at \$18,000, which leads one to believe that he kept his Muldro City property after his purchase of Hamlet. Nowlin and his wife Louisa had five children: John, Samuel, Jane, Minnie and Hiram. Evidently the Nowlins did not live at Hamlet. The 1870 census indicates that James Henry Nowlin, probably Samuel's brother two years younger, lived at Hamlet with his wife Nancy, 22, and 2-year-old daughter Mary. A son, Joseph, was

⁸Mason, Early Marin, p. 69.

⁹School Districts of Marin County, 1893, p. 16; Dennis Foley and Perry McDonald, Pictorial History of Marin County Schools (1976); Records of Marin County Office of Education, San Rafael; J.P. Munro-Fraser, History of Marin County, California (Oakland: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1880).

¹⁰J.P. Munro-Fraser, History of Sonoma County, California (Oakland: Alley, Bowen & Company, 1879), p. 573.

probably born at Hamlet, or at least born while the family resided there.¹¹

On July 23, 1870 Samuel Nowlin sold the property to John Hamlet for \$9,000 in gold coin; according to voter records he left the county in 1872. James Nowlin moved to a ranch in Tomales.

John Hamlet was a dairyman born in Tennessee in 1834. His name appears in the 1860 census as a farmer in Tomales, the earliest indication of Hamlet's residency in Marin County. It is possible that he came to California with the Nowlins as they share the same ages and birthplaces and bought adjacent properties on Tomales Bay in 1865. Like Nowlin, Hamlet also owned property and a home down the bay near Cypress Grove,¹² which he sold to C.S. Miller two days after purchasing the Nowlin place at Hamlet. At the time of his purchase Hamlet had a wife, Martha and five-year-old son Thomas, both born in Illinois.

It was during this period that the name Hamlet was established to identify the property; even after Hamlet sold to Warren Dutton in 1873 the area was known as "Hamlet's." John Hamlet moved to Sonoma County in 1876, a number of years after he sold to Dutton.¹³

C. Warren Dutton at Hamlet 1873-1877

Canadian-born Warren Dutton came to Tomales in 1852 at the age of 28 and entered in a partnership with Tomales co-founder John Keys. Keys had arrived at the site of Tomales with Alexander Noble in 1850, and erected the first dwelling and staked out claims. Keys and Dutton operated a store which was supplied via the schooner Spray; at this time small ships could enter Tomales Bay and navigate all the way up Keys Estuary to the first Tomales townsite on Keys Creek, called Lower Town. The partnership dissolved in 1857 and turned into a rivalry, events which would lead to the founding of present-day Tomales.¹⁴ About Dutton, Jack Mason wrote:

Dutton was to get about everything he wanted in life: money and political clout. He was county assessor for several terms, a member of the State Board of Equalization, and a founder and owner of the Bank of Tomales. For now he laid claim to land just north of

¹¹1870 Census, California State Library.

¹²Plat, "Marshall's warehouse to Walker Creek road," blueprint at Tomales Elementary Local History Center, Tomales.

¹³Marin County Journal, various news articles in 1874. Great Register of Marin County, California State Library.

¹⁴Dickinson, p. 1, 6; Jack Mason, Earthquake Bay (Inverness: North Shore Books, 1976), pp. 67-72.

Keys', and opened his own store. In 1864 he replaced it with a fine one of stone, with iron shutters on doors and windows. His brother, an oldtime army surgeon, had offices and pharmacy nearby. There were two hotels, the Union and the Continental, the latter with a bowling alley and upstairs auditorium.¹⁵

With Dutton now a rival, Keys stepped up improvements at Lower Town, building a warehouse, hotel, a blacksmith shop and carriage works. This rivalry had as its focus the navigable waterway of the estuary; Keys was in a vulnerable position at the head of the creek and was already experiencing the need for dredging in order to reach his wharf. An item from the Marin County Journal of May 20, 1871 illustrates the flavor of the Keys vs. Dutton rivalry:

One day last week John Keys had a gang of "Duttonites" arrested for obstructing a branch of the Keys Creek. Again?

The bickering continued for years, while all the commerce and roadbuilding activity was silting up the creek. Here Dutton took his advantage: in 1870 his syndicate built a 350 foot wharf completely enclosed by a 60 foot wide warehouse at Ocean Roar, near the mouth of the estuary. He also built a two-story hotel, which was operated by Henry F. Clouette & Company. The Marin County Journal described the promise of the operation:

We interviewed Henry [Clouette] upon his new location, and feel convinced that he's on the tide that will bear him on to fortune. Ample accommodations can be made here for excursionists, and a more pleasant resort cannot be found. The firm have several boats, intend erecting tide bath-houses, and as game and fish abound, Clouette's "Ocean Roar" will undoubtedly become the Long Branch of California.¹⁶

But the forecasts did not come to be; Hamlet would inherit Ocean Roar's destiny. On September 1, 1873 Dutton bought John Hamlet's property for \$9,600, perhaps knowing that even Ocean Roar would not survive the advancing silt.

The North Pacific Coast Railroad Company was formed in 1871 by a group of entrepreneurs, many with interests in harvesting redwood timber in the Russian River area of Sonoma County. A narrow gauge railroad was built in 1873-74 from Sausalito, in southern Marin County, to Tomales. The line was eventually extended to Duncan's Mills and Cazadero, Sonoma County. Hamlet was chosen as a site for a side track, and it was Warren Dutton who developed the rail stop and facilities at Hamlet.

¹⁵Mason, Ibid., pp. 67-68.

¹⁶Marin County Journal, November 17, 1871.

Dutton, for many years a potato farmer, was an active supporter of the developing North Pacific Coast Railroad. He built a huge warehouse at the Tomales depot where a side track ran right through the middle. When the first short freight train ran to Ocean Roar wharf in 1874 it was with a cargo of potatoes. At his new property at Hamlet, Dutton built a wharf and station buildings, and hired Peter Morrissey of Tomales to move the hotel from Ocean Roar. In 1876 the Hamlet post office was established, with Eder H. Herald as postmaster; whether Dutton ever resided at Hamlet has not been found.¹⁷

D. Abram Huff at Hamlet, 1877-1907

Abram Huff, born in New York state on November 15, 1830, came to Point Reyes via Michigan in 1869, employing himself as a cooper and operating a dairy, possibly the N ranch owned by Charles Webb Howard. He was elected, though may not have served as, justice of the peace for the Point Reyes township. In 1877 he was elected, along with fellow Point Reyes dairyman Henry Claussen, as vice president of the Dairymen's Association.¹⁸

On October 6, 1877, Huff purchased Hamlet from Warren Dutton for \$12,000, moved in to the old Ocean Roar hotel, and was subsequently appointed postmaster.¹⁹ The local newspaper commented on Huff's arrival:

The purchase of the Hamlet place by Mr. Huff, and the Covey place by Muscio, together with the removal of John Patten's harness shop from Main Street . . . will give a different aspect both to the creek and town [Tomales].²⁰

Huff's first year at Hamlet was an eventful one. A storm in February of 1878 demolished Huff's cow shed, and "a large section of one side of it (was) probably blown out to sea, as it has never been seen since."²¹

During the next few years Hamlet was developed into a visitor-oriented destination on the train, as reported in the Marin County Journal:

¹⁷Munro-Fraser, p. 407; Marin County Journal, July 8, 1875; H.E. Salley, History of California Post Offices 1849-1976 (La Mesa: H.E. Salley, 1976), p. 92.

¹⁸Munro-Fraser, History of Marin County, p. 498; 1870 Census, California State Library; Official Map of Marin County by Hiram Austin, County Surveyor, 1873, shows Howard's "N" ranch occupied by "Hough;" Marin County Journal, November 18, 1875; Ibid., October 25, 1877.

¹⁹Marin County Journal, November 1, 1877.

²⁰Ibid., October 25, 1877.

²¹Ibid., February 21, 1878.

Mr. Huff is making substantial improvements, repairing his house, adding to barns, straightening fences, and setting things generally in order. Hamlet is one of the most inviting places on the bay for aquatic sports, and Mr. Huff has pleasant and safe boats for sailing and rowing parties. He does not keep a hotel, but we do not think he would refuse accommodations if applied for. Mr. Huff has a good country store with a general line of merchandise adapted to his locality and does not sell drinks.²²

It appears that Huff developed the dairy at Hamlet into one of high quality, as he came from a tenancy at one of Charles Webb Howard's carefully controlled Point Reyes dairies; Howard's dairy business was famed for its volume and fine products.

The first decade of railroading at Hamlet put the place on the map and in the public eye. Huff was appointed as agent for Wells Fargo & Company in 1878, the Marin paper noting that Hamlet "needs a freight agent as there is a large amount of business there and Mr. Huff is just the man."²³

Huff was described as a leading citizen of the area in a 1904 coastal directory, which marked some of his accomplishments:

It would be difficult to find in Marin County a more popular or better informed man than Abram Huff, at present engaged in farming in the Tomales township, but who has been in almost every line of frontier life during more than a quarter century since he left his eastern home for the wild, free, untrammelled life of the west. Rancher, miner, dairyman or merchant, Abram Huff has been the same hearty, whole-souled gentleman, making and retaining friends wherever his fancy has led him to sojourn for a time, and to-day he stands as the best type of the self-made American . . .

[Huff] conducted a butter and cheese store in San Francisco for four years, also operated a creamery in connection with his dairy at Valley Ford, and at one time had a general merchandising business in Hamlet. At present he milks about fifty-three cows [at Hamlet] and is in very comfortable circumstances as the result of a long life of industry and business ability.²⁴

Mention of Hamlet occurred frequently in the Marin County Journal during the

²²Ibid., June 20, 1878.

²³Ibid., November 7, 1878.

²⁴J.M. Guinn, History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Coast Counties (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1904), p. 768.

years 1874-1890. For a short time the Journal printed a regular short column datelined "Hamlet." In 1890 the Journal described Hamlet in an article on Camp Temperance, a fun-loving encampment across the bay at White Gulch:

Hamlet is a go-ahead little town on the N.P.C.R.R. about forty miles from San Francisco, in Marin County. A word about Hamlet will not be out of place here. Any town that has a slaughter house, a storage house for all kinds of freight, grain and fish under one roof - size 14 x 20 - is worthy of a whole column in the Journal, and next week we will perhaps give it . . .²⁵

Unfortunately, they did not.

Huff opened a store in San Francisco, the Sunset Cream and Butter Company, at 6 Golden Gate Avenue. The enterprise is listed in the Crocker-Langley San Francisco directories for 1898 through 1900. For two of those years the manager was George W. Dutton, probably Huff's son-in-law, a widower. Huff had maintained a residence in San Francisco at 215a Guerrero Street, until at least 1904.

The earthquake of April 18, 1906 caused considerable damage at Hamlet. The depot was pitched into the bay and destroyed, the wharf broken up, and a large landslide covered the railroad tracks south of Hamlet, taking the county road above with it. The railroad quickly repaired its damage, but it took almost a year to have the road repaired. No reports have been found indicating any other damage to Huff's property, although at many locations on the bay there were complaints of damage to the clam beds.²⁶

Huff was married to Eugenia A. Goff and had two daughters, Ettie, who married George Dutton and died in 1888, and Luella, or Louella, who was about fifteen years old when the family moved to Hamlet. A male infant born at the Point Reyes ranch apparently died. Mrs. Huff died in 1904; Luella moved to Oakland. Luella, a spinster, worked as a stenographer and bookkeeper in Oakland until 1945, when she either moved to another location or died.²⁷

After his wife's death Huff sold his Hamlet ranch and 60 head of cattle, including 21.80 acres of tidelands,²⁸ to George L. Russell of Petaluma in 1904. The selling price was \$20,000, with Russell putting \$6,000 down. Russell continued the

²⁵Marin County Journal, September 25, 1890.

²⁶Photographs in the Bancroft Library and the Tomales Elementary Local History Center show earthquake damage at Hamlet, including a view of the road damage on the hill overlooking Hamlet; California Earthquake of April 18, 1906, Volume I pp. 80, 197; San Francisco Call, November 30, 1907.

²⁷County records; 1870 census; Oakland business and phone directories.

²⁸See tidelands survey no. 226, April 12, 1901.

Hamlet store and dairy, but failed to keep his contract; Huff foreclosed the property in 1905. On May 17, 1907, Huff sold Hamlet and the Huff ranch to Hans L. Jensen for \$10.00, a transaction which has not been explained. If an obituary of Huff is to be believed, he relocated to Ocean Roar;²⁹ he also had a residence at this time on Guerrero Street in San Francisco. He died on July 14, 1909 at Hamlet or Ocean Roar. His death was not mentioned in the Marin County newspapers, but the Petaluma papers eulogized him as "one of the prominents of Marin County . . ."

Mr. Huff accumulated a large fortune by careful business dealings and close attention to business. He was well liked and had many friends in Marin and Sonoma counties.³⁰

In an obituary in The Grizzly Bear,³¹ Huff was misidentified as Abraham Huff, who was a '49er living in El Dorado County; in fact, Hamlet's Huff was often mistakenly called Abraham.

E. The Jensen Family at Hamlet, 1907-1988

Hans Larsen Jensen, born in Denmark on September 2, 1859, came to California in the 1880s during a period of expansion in the dairy industry. A wave of Swiss, Portuguese, Swedes and Danes arrived from the old country to find work on Marin dairies, and many eventually purchased their own ranches. Hans Jensen was no exception. At some point after his arrival in California he leased a ranch near Tomales from Jane Marshall Paxton, of the landowning Marshall family for whom the town south of Hamlet is named.³²

Jensen's dairy was the Canyon Ranch, also called Rancho Nicasio for the original land grant of which his ranch was a part. The house and barns were located in a steep canyon which drained into Walker Creek; just over the hill to the west was the Halleck school and, on Tomales Bay, the McDonald train stop.³³

Hans Jensen was married to Annine Marie Johnson, born in Denmark in 1862. They had three children, all apparently born in California: Hans Peter, Agnes Marie, and Henry Julius, who was born on November 16, 1890. Of their life on the Canyon Ranch, nothing is known but that Henry attended, and advanced

²⁹Petaluma Daily Courier, July 15, 1909.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹The Grizzly Bear, September 1909, p. 24.

³²Marin County Book of Leases, Volume J p. 249; Mason, Earthquake Bay.

³³Interviews with Harry McDonald, Clarence Pensotti and Franklin Burns.

"conditionally," from Halleck School during 1904-1905.³⁴

Jensen moved to the Hamlet ranch some time around purchase in 1907, and operated the dairy; family tradition places the date of arrival at Hamlet as 1906, the year of the earthquake. The son Hans apparently left not long after the move to Hamlet; he was married twice, had three children, and reportedly disappeared after some bad business deals concerning his employers, the Vonsen Feed Company of Petaluma and Point Reyes Station, for which he was a salesman. Agnes stayed on the ranch for a number of years and "married late" to John Siemsen, of an old Tomales family, and moved to nearby Blake's Landing where they operated a ranch. Henry, as we shall see, stayed at Hamlet.³⁵

Hans Jensen and his wife were remembered in many interviews as a hard-working old fashioned couple; Hans kept the dairy in top shape while Annine, dressed in a neat white apron with her hair pulled tight in a bun, kept her house exceptionally clean and hospitable. Their upstairs guest room was occasionally used by the schoolteachers of Pierce Ranch, stranded on the east side of the bay by bad weather or train schedules. Alma Lauritzen remembered the comfortable goose-down bed;³⁶ Margaret Poncia Matteri, raised on the ranch on the hill above Hamlet, recalled hearing that Mrs. Jensen cooked in the shed behind the house, in order to not dirty the kitchen. Helen Smith, a teacher at Pierce Point in 1916-17, recalled:

The Jensens were beautiful people. Mrs. Jensen's house was so clean you could eat off the floor. She was a Scandinavian of some sort, and she was just a beautiful person . . . When I was coming back and forth, of course, I would ride the launch back and in the meantime sometimes I'd have to wait, and so I'd go into Jensen's and she'd always make coffee for me and that sort of thing.³⁷

Margaret Matteri recalled:

It was like a town, this was a beautiful place. Around the house all of the fences were white; every year I think they painted, it was beautiful. They kept it nice . . . they were clean people . . .

It was during the time of Hans Jensen's ownership that the Hamlet that

³⁴School Registers, Marin County Office of Education.

³⁵Interviews with Harry McDonald, Franklin Burns, Hazel Martinelli and Virginia Jensen.

³⁶Interview with Clifford Conly.

³⁷Richard A. Borjes and Gordon Chappell, There is No More Extensive Dairy in the Township, the History and Architecture of the Pierce Ranch 1856-1986 (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1986), p. 39.

remains today began to take shape. During Hans' first years at Hamlet, the place was a dairy and railroad stop for shipment of local produce; it is unlikely that Hans continued Abram Huff's boat rental business, until his later years when he turned the dairy over to his son Henry; according to Albert Spiegel, Hans did own a motor launch which Spiegel's father, a machinist, worked on. Photos of Hamlet in 1906, a year before Jensen's purchase show only one building on the bay, probably the depot; a detailed railroad map of 1912 shows the Jensen dairy, a short wharf and railroad depot building, and two cabins on the bay.

Beginning around 1912 Hans Jensen leased pieces of his waterfront to various individuals and companies to erect cabins or commercial buildings on pilings along the waterfront at Hamlet. The lessee paid a yearly rent, and apparently ownership of the structure reverted to Jensen when the lease expired. One of the first to enter such an agreement was Julius Spiegel, a businessman from San Francisco. Spiegel and a hunting friend, Harold Ladd, built a five room cabin north of the depot in 1913;³⁸ Ladd subsequently left the partnership, and the Spiegels maintained the house for friends and family for weekend and summer visits for forty years. Spiegel's second cousin Albert Spiegel (Albert called Julius "uncle") told the story of the cabin's early days:

[Julius] and another fellow named Harold Ladd, they built this together, and Harold Ladd owned a gun store out on Kearney Street in San Francisco, it was called Ladd's Gun Shop . . . after about a year went by Ladd would come up by train and go duck hunting, and my uncle, they wouldn't check their schedules; he'd come up with six people and my uncle had six others. After about a year they says, "One of us has to go." So my uncle bought him out . . . it was nothing to have fifteen, twenty people up here for a week, I don't know where they all slept. These are the abalone crowd, see.

North of Spiegel's was an older small cabin; Virginia Jensen had heard an oldtimer tell that this was built by the railroad to house crews, but this has not been confirmed. This little cabin was added to, possibly by O.H. "Slim" Price of Healdsburg, who owned the cabin for many years c. 1920-1950. Price was the Mayor of Healdsburg from 1946-1954, and had a concrete business. His cabin was notorious for wild drinking parties³⁹.

A local man named Jack Junta reportedly did most of the building during 1914-1918 at Hamlet. According to Clarence Pensotti and Gene Poncia, Junta built the

³⁸Albert Spiegel places the date at 1913, based on knowledge from his close contact with Julius Spiegel during the 1920s; the Northwestern Pacific right-of-way map of 1912, drawn in great detail, shows two houses on the sites of Spiegel's and the next cabin north, bringing up the possibility that the houses were erected by early 1912.

³⁹Interviews with Hannah Claybourn, Ernie Frandsen and Albert Spiegel.

cannery building for the F.E. Booth Company and extended the wharf to a length of 1050 feet in 1917; "he hammered every piling by hand." Pensotti says that Junta used materials reclaimed from the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. Junta also built the three matching cabins south of Spiegel's and moved them to Hamlet from Preston's Point, across the estuary, probably in 1917.

Frank E. Booth was a pioneer in the fish and vegetable canning industry; his was the first sardine cannery at what became Cannery Row in Monterey. Capitalizing on the need for herring products as a result of the war in Europe, Booth's company established the cannery at Hamlet, utilizing local fishermen and a crew of packers drawn from the local ranks. The cannery was abandoned by Booth at the end of the war, and possession of the building and wharf went to the Jensen's.⁴⁰

Some time before 1921 a cabin similar to Spiegel's was built south of the cannery. This became the residence of Henry J. Jensen, after his service in the European war. Jensen married Gertrude (Gertie) Guldager, of the pioneer family of Tomales, and the couple moved into the house on the bay. Hans and Annine continued to live in the big house across the county road. Evidently Henry paid rent to his father for the house.⁴¹

A tiny cabin existed south of Henry and Gertie's house, used as a washroom and guest cabin. South of that the Morgan Oyster Company of South San Francisco built an oyster house, according to Pensotti. The Morgan Oyster Company, one of the large oyster growers in San Francisco Bay, apparently built at Hamlet because of pollution in its old beds. In the oyster house, according to Pensotti, lived Frank Erickson, who worked as Morgan's oysterman. Apparently there were a number of other employees, some living in Junta's three small cabins north of the fish cannery. By 1926 the Consolidated Oyster Company had taken over the Morgan beds. The oyster house burned down in about 1935 and was rebuilt as the structure that is currently on the site. San Francisco butcher Ed Bean, son of a popular pioneer Tomales butcher, spent weekends in the house for many years.⁴²

Just south of the Morgan oyster house was erected a pleasant four room cabin, with tongue and groove paneling on the interior and attractive arched windows with decorative shutters. It was the vacation home of a Dr. Hubbell, and later, Martinez schoolteacher Jenny Howe and her husband, Paul Lacey. It was built sometime between 1912 and 1925, according to interviews and old photographs.

⁴⁰Clipping files, "Booth, F.E.," California Historical Society; interviews with Spiegel and Pensotti. See "Fisheries" section of this report for more on Booth and the packing plant.

⁴¹Interview with Hazel Martinelli.

⁴²Interviews with Albert Spiegel, Clarence Pensotti, Eugene Poncia. The presence of Consolidated Oyster Company at Hamlet is described in Northwestern Pacific Headlight, April 1927, page 5.

After the Laceys left in around 1948, a couple named Christiansen moved in. Virginia Jensen remembered the Christiansen's:

One of the tenants from Pittsburg, they were both schoolteachers, they had the second cabin towards the south down there and they used to have it fixed up as a little doll house, I mean it used to be cute and really immaculate; they showed up just on weekends and maybe summer vacations . . . they wanted to buy the cabin which, probably at that time you could but it was still in the middle of the property . . . I think we owned it at the time and anyway wouldn't sell it to them because like I say it was out in the middle of the property and so they got mad from that and bought a place up above Bodega Bay . . .

According to local legend Hamlet was quite active during Prohibition, 1919-1933. Jack Junta, who built many of the buildings at Hamlet, allegedly built a "cannery" out on Pierce Point, where incoming boats would drop off the whiskey. Frank Gee had a little place in Sugar's Bend, between Preston's and Tom's Points, where the booze came in. The long wharf at Hamlet was an ideal place for the big boats. Henry Jensen reportedly had a 33 foot double ended Monterey boat which he sold after prohibition. Stories abound among Tomales Bay oldtimers of hearses and limosines heading south from the Hamlet area full of liquor. One of those interviewed was willing to tell a story:

[Larry Jensen, no relation] lived at Camp Pistolesi during prohibition and he had a speakeasy there, everybody was in on it, you know, even Henry [Jensen] Senior was getting the Johnny Walker in, because, during the prohibition days I'd row out to the end of the wharf and see these forty foot boats parked there with twin diesel engines in them that could outrun any prohis, and there was always one of them anchored out there. I was told not to go near those boats . . . they'd come in at night and they'd meet the boats so many miles out and bring in the Johnny Walker, then everybody got their cuts . . .

Perhaps it was the end of Prohibition and the presence of the Morgan Oyster Company that inspired Henry Jensen to transform a little cabin on the rocks next to his house into a bar. Originally the cabin had a washroom with a pump which sent graywater up to the hillside, and a bunk for visitors. The Northwestern Pacific Railroad abandoned the line from Point Reyes to Tomales in 1930, and the highway through Hamlet was improved a few years after that. Some time in the 1930's Henry started to serve beer and wine to visitors, and apparently planted a few oysters himself. He connected the bar and house together with a small sheltered oyster processing area. Virginia Jensen described the place:

That bar was real small at that time, three stool bar I think it was, and there was a couple of tables . . . the oyster building used

to be in between the bar and the house but it was out in open space which we've had to seal in years later with all the new laws and what not . . . it was just a little work counter, a little straight counter with the sink, in fact the original sink is still in there. It was just that little, where the sink portion was, that was all it was . . . it had a couple of windows looking out into the water. When you parked and walked into the oyster place you'd just walk down, it was all cemented out front, you just walk down the cement thing there . . . and get your oysters or whatever you were getting there . . . and then you'd go off to the little side there, like I say, it was just a three stool bar . . .

Henry Jensen took over most of the duties at the dairy, as Hans was getting older. Apparently, Henry wasn't much interested in the dairy and didn't do much of the work, instead relying on the help of local hired hands, including Clarence Pensotti and John and Gene Poncia. Milking was done by hand until the 1940's. Hans worked around the ranch, fixing fences and performing various other tasks. He also operated a boat house, renting rowboats to visitors and tenants. A popular pastime was to collect abalone near Bird Rock or spear angelfish near Tom's Point. Albert Spiegel described a favorite journey:

. . . everywhere you went there you rowed. We had five rowboats under the house and scull boats for duck hunting . . . we always rowed double sets of oars everywhere we went . . . they'd row clear down to Dillon's beach, or we used to go many times at low tides right straight across to White Gulch and that's when the duck club was there, and they had a wharf there, that was McClure's place . . . and we'd tie up to the place there, leave all our stuff in it, and hike over the hill and get abalone and mussels and fish off the rocks and come back and, nobody would ever think of touching the thing, we knew that boat wouldn't be touched. Those days you could leave anything around . . . that was a full day's trip, row across that good mile, then hike up that hill, then down the trail to McClures beach . . . we spent many a time fishing, getting cabazone and stuff off those rocks . . .

Later Henry ran the boat rentals, as Spiegel recalls:

Henry had about fifteen rent boats where you could rent these skiffs for a dollar and a half a day, and then in the wintertime he'd haul them all up into the cannery . . . and then he'd work on them . . .; summertime he'd put them back out the end of the wharf, and they all had their moorings out there, and one boat in the wharf. If you wanted to rent a boat for a buck and a half a day you paid him and he'd take you out there and row you out to one of them and then when you came back you just tied them up to the wharf, and he'd put them out again the next day. You had to

pay in advance to get them or you wouldn't get a boat, they'd all be taken way ahead, you'd have to phone up to get a boat for the weekend . . . everybody rowed, there wasn't an outboard motor to be heard.

The business of selling oysters to the public was started after the railroad was eliminated in 1930. Customers eventually came from all over the San Francisco Bay area to sample Jensen's oysters. Albert Spiegel recalled:

Every Sunday in the summertime [the Philipino laborers from Sebastopol] . . . they used to come out, oh five or six carloads of them, and Henry knew they were coming, and they'd buy about five or six sacks of those oysters and take them down the railroad track past my uncle's place. He [Henry] had little places with rocks around them there, there was always wood around, and they'd spend the whole day there steaming these with seaweed; they'd put the oysters in and then get the coals in there and put the seaweed on top and steam them . . .

Jensen's Oyster Beds gained popularity during the 1930s and 1940s, although the business closed down for World War II. Henry's helpers Manuel Figereti, Pensotti and Poncia and the Belman brothers, Lawrence and Eustace, did most of the planting, harvesting and opening, although his wife Gertie was reported to be a very hard worker as well. In addition to the oysters, there were the rental boats, the dairy, and for fourteen years, the Telmat post office to run. While Henry was officially Postmaster from 1917 to 1931, evidently his sister Agnes and wife Gertie did all of the postal work.⁴³ People say Henry was a heavy drinker, and the Jensens apparently spent most of their time in the little bar, as Albert Speigel recalls:

. . . that's where they ate all their meals, they never went into the house, they only used the house for bathroom facilities and sleeping. It was years after I got into the house finally and there was a piano in there and they heard I was taking piano lessons, they told me they had a piano, I couldn't believe it, here was a beautiful upright piano sitting in the house so out of tune it was pathetic, it had never been used . . .

Henry and Gertie had a son, Henry Francis Jensen, in 1930. Young Henry grew up in the Jensen's house on the water and attended Halleck School from 1936 to 1941, when he was expelled, and then to Marshall School for a year and finally Tomales schools.⁴⁴

⁴³Interviews with Albert Spiegel, Hazel Martinelli.

⁴⁴School Registers, 1936-1945, Marin County Office of Education.

Hans Jensen's wife Annine died in 1934 at the age of 71. Hans kept working on his old ranch until, in May of 1937, he fell from the roof of the horse barn, which he had been painting. He died in a Petaluma hospital a week later, at the age of 77. In his will he left the Hamlet property and ranch to Agnes Siemsen and Henry, and divided his money between his grandchildren in Seattle (the children of Hans Peter Jensen), and his son and daughter.⁴⁵

In 1943 Henry Jensen leased his father's long-unused dairy for \$800 per year, to Tony and Margaret Matteri; Mrs. Matteri was a Poncia from the hill above Hamlet. The Matteri's moved into Hans Jensen's big old house across the highway and went to work restoring the dairy operation. Mrs. Matteri recalled her first year at Hamlet, when practice bombing was occurring on the bay adjacent to the wharf during World War II:

They used to go by in airplanes and let bombs fall . . . ooh, that was scary, I used to say, "I wish I never moved here" . . . they let them drop right here in the yard . . . that was dangerous!

Tony and Margaret Matteri worked the dairy themselves, with the help of their children, and only hired out during haying time in the fall. Matteri had three hayfields, the smallest of which was next to the spring house above the oyster beds. The hay was cut and gathered into shocks, then transported to the hay barn (Huff's old horse barn), where it was thrown into the haychopper and sent up into the back of the barn. Matteri would then spend up to two months plowing the fields for the next crop. He also cultivated about an acre of potatoes next to the spring house.

Matteri milked from 40 to 70 cows, depending on the season; Henry Jensen restricted the number of cows. Twice a day the cows were marched almost a quarter of a mile down Highway One, from the pasture on the east side of the road to the milking barn on the other, and back; one of the family's greatest fears was of a speeding car running in to the cows, which did happen once, causing the death of one cow. The Matteri's used electric milkers, then carried the cans across the yard to the milk house, where the fresh milk was strained and cooled. The milk was picked up in cans by a truck from Tomales, then taken to Point Reyes Station or Petaluma for processing.

In 1952 dairy inspectors condemned the Matteri dairy due to the condition of the old ranch: the concrete was cracked, and Henry Jensen didn't want to build a new barn across the road as the inspectors demanded. The Matteri family moved to the old Steele ranch at Marshall, where they stayed until recently.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Interview with Eugene Poncia; Petaluma Argus-Courier, May 28, 1937; will of Hans L. Jensen.

⁴⁶Interview with Margaret Matteri.

In the late 1940's a heavy storm destroyed the F.E. Booth cannery building. It had been used by the Jensens for boat repairs and storage, and a number of duck boats stored underneath were crushed when the building fell on them. Evidently Henry Jensen didn't take care of the building, or the wharf, which had been falling down for a decade and finally disappeared by 1952.⁴⁷

Henry's son, Henry F. Jensen, spent time in the service and married Virginia Jason, a young woman of Coast Miwok ancestry born March 16, 1938, in 1953 after he was discharged. The couple moved in to Hans' old house that the Matteris had vacated, and began to remodel. According to Virginia, they were surprised to find out secondhand that the place was for sale. Henry subsequently sold most of the property, 280.66 acres which lies east of the highway, to Joe Beretta, a beef rancher from Santa Rosa. Henry sold the bayfront property to Henry F. and Virginia in 1955 and moved to Morro Bay, California, where an oyster boom was commencing.⁴⁸ Apparently he rarely came back to Hamlet, and died in Morro Bay in 1979, at the age of 88.

With his purchase in 1955 of forty acres of land and tidelands, young Henry began putting the place into the shape that would suit his needs. Virginia went to work on the oyster business, and had her first child, Helen. One of Henry's first projects was to increase the parking capacity for the oyster business and bar; he removed the two large barns and the milk house, and took down the grove of cypress trees which lined the creek down to the bay. Albert Spiegel recalled the area before it was changed:

... You drove into a beautiful grove of cypress trees, it was a wind block, it was nice and calm and you could put almost fifty cars in there, and on a Sunday, why that parking lot would be loaded while the people come in to buy oysters; they were a dollar and a half for a hundred.

The trees were cut up and the stumps pushed down to the bayshore where the cannery had stood; the concrete base to the dairy silo went there too. Part of the south slope adjacent to the bar was cut away for a new, wider driveway which led directly to the oyster bar, which was expanded into a larger room using lumber from the barns. The short, narrow wharf next to the restaurant was rebuilt. The Jensens bought the old Guido Matteri shoe repair shop in Tomales and moved it down on a truck, to be installed as the southernmost cabin on the water.⁴⁹ All of the cabins had reverted to Jensen ownership by now and were rented out mostly as part-time retreats, as Virginia Jensen recalled:

⁴⁷Interviews with Albert Spiegel and Virginia Jensen.

⁴⁸Elinore M. Barrett, California Oyster Industry, Fish Bulletin #123 (Resources Agency of California, Department of Fish & Game, 1963), p. 59.

⁴⁹Interviews with Virginia Jensen, Bea Phillips.

The individual different cabins there, people had them rented and showed up on weekends and whatnot . . . there was a family from Pittsburg, several families from Sacramento, one man from Oakland or somewhere down in that area, and another man that I'd only seen two or three times from San Francisco that had one of the cabins . . . [they came] weekends, summer vacations, you know whatever time that they had off . . . families and all.

Carrying on the tradition of young Henry's father, the Jensens offered reasonable rates for the cabins:

. . . One outfit down there I can remember, rents were twelve and a half a month when we first bought the place, that was what Henry's father charged it, Henry charged it . . . that went on for quite a few years . . .

Henry and Virginia saw a growing market for oysters and did fairly well, although for Virginia it was an incredible amount of work. Not only did she plant, harvest, open and can the oysters, she made deliveries, took care of the cabins and raised five children: Helen, Holly, Pamela, Henry Jr., and Judge.

Henry worked as a commercial fisherman, bringing in herring, perch and smelt. He had a number of boats, including a power landing barge he called "The Crab Pot," and a 52 foot boat he kept at Nick's Cove. He also raised sheep and cattle. While fishing at the mouth of Tomales Bay near the end of November 1971, Henry's boat capsized; Henry and a companion drowned.⁵⁰ Virginia, pregnant with their fifth child, carried on the business alone. She remembers:

I was it for a lot of years: dishwasher, cook, bottle washer, open oysters, go pick the oysters, run down to paint a cabin or do whatever you want . . .

Restaurant hours were trimmed down by necessity, and Virginia and her children struggled to keep up with the demands of keeping rental cabins and running a business.

The oldest daughter [Helen] did one hell of a lot of work out on that oyster beds, from the time she was six, seven years old she was always out there with me picking oysters or she'd be out herself . . .

Virginia Jensen worked hard enough to get the restaurant open five days a week, where a customer could choose between oysters cooked any method, chili,

⁵⁰News articles concerning the drownings in Independent-Journal, November 22, 1971, Petaluma Argus-Courier, November 22, 1971, Point Reyes Light, November 25, 1971.

steaks and an assortment of beer and wine.⁵¹ A display counter held large jars of fresh oysters, opened, cleaned and packed by Virginia. On weekends, business could be heavy:

We'd fill up half of that bar floor with nothing but jars, and go through them, they wouldn't last no time at all . . .

The rigors of keeping Jensen's Oyster Beds and restaurant running were beginning to show during the 1970's. Henry had not put any improvements into the cabins while he was alive and, while Virginia tried to improve things as best she could, Hamlet became dilapidated. The County of Marin took notice and issued notices of numerous code violations, including sewer, electrical and water quality. The State Department of Health Services closed the oyster beds temporarily in 1981 for alleged contamination from sewage. Heavy storms in 1982 and 1983 destroyed the oyster beds, thus ending that long-time source of income.⁵²

Mrs. Jensen put Hamlet on the market in 1980 for \$875,000. This price proved to be too high for the market at that time, and the asking price was reduced to \$750,000. The property was zoned C-RCR, Coastal, Resort and Commercial Recreation District. During the next seven years the property was on the market, while Mrs. Jensen was granted extensions from the county for reasons of hardship. In 1984 the Jensen's Oyster Beds property was designated for purchase for inclusion as part of the North District, Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Pleas by the owner and her agent to have the purchase priority moved up from #17 were sent to park officials and to Congresswoman Barbara Boxer. In 1987 the Jensen property was advanced to #1 for priority purchase, and was sold to the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, in October of 1987.⁵³

Virginia Jensen and her family, as well as about thirteen tenants, moved from the property in January, 1988. It was not an easy time for anyone involved; some of the tenants had been there for over thirty years, and the community at Hamlet was considered to be tight-knit. The tenants over the years included artists, writers, musicians, fishermen, family members; Hamlet was still like a small town after more than a hundred years. Mrs. Jensen moved to nearby Tomales, sad to leave Hamlet but relieved to no longer be a landlord.⁵⁴

⁵¹Empire Farmer, September 1979.

⁵²Memos and reports contained in Appraisal document for Jensen property; Point Reyes Light, December 17, 1981.

⁵³Appraisal; notes in GOGA File L1425 at Pt. Reyes National Seashore.

⁵⁴Interview with Virginia Jensen.

F. The Public Road through Hamlet, 1873-present⁵⁵

The earliest known road at Hamlet is found on the 1862 U.S.Coast Geodetic Survey chart, which shows a road leading easterly up the gulch from the dwelling ("Lone Ho.") to the ridgeline. This chart and its 1863 and 1878 versions are the only sources where this road is seen.

Marin County Road Districts were established by the Board of Supervisors on February 2, 1868. The Tomales area, including Hamlet, was denoted as Road District #4; A.S. Marshall was appointed first roadmaster. A much-needed road to Marshall's warehouse and wharf at the southern part of the district was one of the first established, on November 5, 1868. This route led from Tomales to the mouth of Walker Creek, crossed a bridge, then wound up the hillside to the north-south ridgeline between Tomales Bay and Walker Creek; it followed the ridge south through Clark's ranch (today's Poncia ranch), past the Halleck schoolhouse, then descended gradually back to the bay at John Hamlet's first dwelling near Cypress Grove; it then followed today's route from Cypress Grove marsh to Marshall. A contract was awarded to G. Warner in June, 1869, and construction was completed by September.

In 1870 Samuel S. Nowlin was appointed roadmaster of District #4. At this time a survey was completed for a new route to Marshall's, this one following the bayshore rather than the ridgeline. It is not unlikely that Nowlin, who owned what was later to be called Hamlet, had a hand in redirecting the road. He would certainly have gained from the road going through his property. On February 6, 1871, John Hamlet, Jeremiah Blake and others petitioned the county supervisors to adopt the new route; by this time, Hamlet was the owner of Nowlin's bayfront property, and Blake was the long-time owner of the parcel directly to the south.

John Keys opposed the road on the grounds that construction along Keys estuary would quicken the siltation and virtually doom his shipping operation at Lower Town Tomales, which was already practically inaccessible. In fact, Keys had opposed construction of the earlier road to Walker Creek for the same reason; that road would (and did) benefit Keys' competitor, Warren Dutton.

The new route was approved and established in May 1871. The supervisors ordered the county to pay damages of \$500 to Keys, as well as \$400 to Samuel P. Taylor, owner of property south of Hamlet, and \$1950 to Warren Dutton. Keys refused the payment, for reasons unknown. The contract for construction was awarded to Warren Dutton and work apparently began in April of 1872. The road was completed in June, and \$3390 was paid to Dutton. The three-year-old ridge road was ordered vacated in early 1873.

⁵⁵Sources for this chapter are: Marin County Supervisor's Minutes and Road Minutes; Marin County Department of Public Works; charts and maps in various collections; newspaper reports; interviews with Harry McDonald, and Robert Halligan of CalTrans.

This 1872 alignment through Hamlet was different from the route today, from near the Huff house to near the southern boundary of park property. Originally, the wagon road veered west as it left the eucalyptus forest at the southern end of the property, rounded a steep clifftop, then descended slightly into the gulch .2 miles north of the Huff house; 100 yards out of the gulch it met the present alignment.

The earthquake of 1906 caused a large landslide at the clifftop, sending rock onto the railroad tracks below, and taking the road with it:

At Hamlet quite an extensive landslide has started in the hillside above the track. The railroad cut is in old rock, and the arch of the head of the slide is some seventy feet above the track. The country (sic) wagon road has been carried away by the slide for possibly 100 yards.⁵⁶

Evidently the local populace made do with a cow path which bypassed the slide. In September of 1906 Silvio J. Maggetti of Marshall and others petitioned for the opening of a new road through Abram Huff's Hamlet property; three viewers were appointed to lay out the bypass, and the new route was approved in March of 1907. Abram Huff was compensated the sum of \$365 for a right-of-way 40 feet wide and 1,432 4/10 feet long.

During the 1920s a movement was started to create a state highway, to be called the Shoreline Highway, on the Marin County and California coastline. The state established Legislative Route 56, State Route 1 in 1937. The road was improved by widening, minor realignment and paving, and is basically unchanged today (John Vilicich of Reynolds places the date of realignment and paving at 1933).

The remains of approximately half a mile of the original 1872 wagon road, complete with slide damage, are intact in the south/central portion of the park property.

G. The Railroad at Hamlet, 1874-1930⁵⁷

When the North Pacific Coast Railroad was incorporated in 1871 the major intention was to provide a means of freighting redwood lumber from the Russian River area to San Francisco. The original route proposed started at Sausalito,

⁵⁶The California Earthquake of April 18, 1906 - Report of the State Earthquake Investigation Commission. Volume I, page 80.

⁵⁷General information for this chapter was found in: A. Bray Dickinson, Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods (Glendale: Trans-Anglo Books 1967); Gilbert Kneiss, Redwood Railways (Berkeley: Howell-North 1956); Fred A. Stindt, The Northwestern Pacific Railroad, Redwood Empire Route (Redwood City: Fred A. Stindt, 1964). Other sources noted.

traveled north through San Rafael to Petaluma, then headed northwest across Sonoma County to the Russian River. James McMillan Shafter, a railroad director and one of the owners of the vast Point Reyes tract of dairies, lobbied for a different route via Tomales Bay, to better serve the dairy interests. The Tomales Bay route was the one eventually adopted, against much opposition and the threat of losing a county subsidy.

Construction on Tomales Bay started in 1874; crews worked south from Tomales and north from Lagunitas Creek. The first locomotive was delivered to the wharf at Ocean Roar, a mile north of Hamlet, on November 11, 1874. Three days later the locomotive made its first run to Hamlet's on tracks that were laid on right-of-way purchased from Warren Dutton. The first freight, a load of potatoes, was transported from Tomales to Ocean Roar on December 2.⁵⁸

Heavy storms caused damage to the new grade, most of which was built of fill at the very edge of Tomales Bay. The railroad company quarried riprap stone from near Hamlet's to repair the damage and strengthen the fills against the tides.⁵⁹

The last spike was driven at Millerton on December 29, 1874. The inaugural train left San Francisco (via ferry to Saucelito) on January 7, 1875 and arrived at Tomales for a huge celebration banquet hosted by Warren Dutton. Regular service began four days later; Hamlet was listed in the first timetables as a stop 51 miles from San Francisco. The Tomales Bay stops on timetables in 1875 were: Millerton, Marshall, Hamlet, and Tomales; Ocean Roar, although not listed on the early schedule, was still in use as a shipping wharf of importance to Tomales.⁶⁰

An undocumented and undated schedule in Stindt's The Northwestern Pacific Railroad lists "Pierce" as a stop .2 miles south of Hamlet; this could be the original wharf and loading point for the A.J. Pierce Ranch on Point Reyes before Dutton made improvements at Hamlet. Better evidence is revealed in Timetable #4, Southern Division, dated October 1908, which lists "Pierce" as a flag stop .25 miles west (south) of Hamlet; one could speculate that "Pierce" was used as a temporary stop after the Hamlet wharf was destroyed by the 1906 earthquake. No siding or platform is shown on a 1912 NWP survey, but railroad maps denote the section as "Pierce" until abandonment in 1930. No other mention of the stop has been found.

With the railroad in service, Warren Dutton went to work on improvements at Hamlet. He moved the Ocean Roar Hotel on lighters to Hamlet, then erected "nice station buildings . . . and is constructing a wharf for the convenience of shippers."⁶¹

⁵⁸Marin County Journal, November 19, 1874, December 3, 1874.

⁵⁹Ibid., December 11, 1874.

⁶⁰Ibid., December 31, 1874, January 14, 1875, June 8, 1876.

⁶¹Ibid., October 28, 1875.

Ocean Roar, however, remained the major shipping point on this portion of the bay until siltation in Key's Estuary forced the schooners to Hamlet. By this time most freight was carried by the railroad anyway.

Abram Huff was the station agent and Wells, Fargo Express agent at Hamlet during many of the years he owned it. The twenty-one station agents were paid an average of \$1.90 per day between the years 1890-1905.⁶²

Hamlet was chosen as a site for a siding, 936 feet in length. Many railroad writers report that the siding was used as a passing track for the northbound and southbound trains, although this has not been documented.⁶³ The east track was the siding until some time after 1906, when the use was reversed. Photographs from the 1920s show the Hamlet siding was used for car storage. Albert Spiegel recalled the nature of this siding, which ran directly in front of his uncle's cabin:

That spur track it went clear around the bend, and clear up the other side, it was a good half a mile long . . . they used to spot 50-60 freight cars on that thing. They'd stockpile them until they had a whole bunch, then they'd take them all out at one time . . . when they spotted them in front of the house we barely had room to get into the house, it was only this far [indicates about a yard distance] from the porch!

According to the company's annual reports, the North Pacific Coast Railroad shipped grain, flour, hay, fruits and vegetables, potatoes, livestock, dressed meat, butter, milk, lumber, wood, charcoal, bark, merchandise, eggs, poultry, game and fish. Shipments of fish first appeared on the records in 1892, and volume of fish shipped on the line surged during World War I; the fish plant at Hamlet no doubt added greatly to these figures.

The North Pacific Coast Railroad Company struggled through the years 1889-1902, losing money and reputation and making virtually no repairs on the line.⁶⁴ Accidents were common, many resulting in death or injury. In 1902 a syndicate was formed by electricity magnates John Martin and Eugene de Sabla, which purchased the N.P.C. and renamed it the North Shore Railroad Company. The new owners immediately began to revamp the line, electrifying the southern portion (and contributing significantly to the development of towns in southeastern Marin County such as San Anselmo and Fairfax) and rebuilding and repairing the line to Tomales and the Russian River. The trestle over Keys Estuary was relocated and replaced with a steel bridge and repairs were made as needed on the

⁶²Annual Reports, North Pacific Coast Railroad Company 1890-1902, North Shore Railroad Company 1902-1905. California State Archives.

⁶³Records of Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company; Stindt, p. 24; Mason, Earthquake Bay. p. 46.

⁶⁴Annual Reports, North Pacific Coast Railroad Company.

Tomales Bay portion of the line.

The earthquake in 1906 caused considerable damage to the railroad. At Hamlet a slide covered the tracks south of the depot and pitched the depot into the bay, also destroying the wharf. The fill just north of Hamlet sank about two feet, revealing the old trestlework that had been buried during the N.P.C.'s last major upgrading of the line in 1888.⁶⁵

In 1907 a new syndicate was formed by the Southern Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroads which purchased all of the railroad lines in Marin County, as well as other north coast lines, consolidating them as the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company and eventually standard gauging the track as far north as Point Reyes Station. 1907 was the same year that Hans Jensen purchased the property at Hamlet from Abram Huff.

Shipments out of Hamlet increased when the Morgan Oyster Company and F.E. Booth Company herring packing plant began operations at Hamlet around 1917. Booth built a large packing plant next to the tracks and depot and shipped herring to Booth company barges probably at the N.W.P. freight terminal at Sausalito, where the fish would be loaded and taken to the cannery at Pittsburg on the Sacramento River. Evidently the Morgan Oyster Company's products were shipped to their plant at South San Francisco by similar methods. Both of these operations were out of business at Hamlet by 1920.⁶⁶

The railroad was used for transportation by some of the local populace, although usually only for long trips (to San Francisco or beyond) or special occasions. Children rode the train to high school in Tomales. Edward Mossi recalled in 1972:

We were supposed to do some studying on the train, coming and going. But most of the time we were skylarking through the train . . . Once we hopped off at Hamlet (Telmat) to raid a carload of wine grapes. Back on the train Joe Adams heaved a bunch of grapes at Elmer Martinelli and hit the white silk waist of a lady passenger. The next morning "Sham" Brady, the conductor, solemnly told us that the railroad company would refuse to carry us if we didn't reform.⁶⁷

⁶⁵The California Earthquake, Volume I, p. 197; Annual Reports of North Pacific Coast Railroad Company, 1888-1902.

⁶⁶Interviews with Arthur Patrick, Eugene Poncia.

⁶⁷Point Reyes Light, March 7, 1972.

Passengers to Hamlet paid \$2.20 for a round trip from San Francisco in 1912. The train stopped at Hamlet to let off passengers, or if signaled.⁶⁸ The advent of the automobile took passengers from the N.W.P., although the train was still used during the winter, as Albert Spiegel recalled:

They came up by train, to hunt. You couldn't come up by car in the wintertime, when you got down around Marconi you had to go up the hill because the present road was the railroad, and it wasn't paved and you couldn't get up that hill on account of the clay, and so they used to come up in the wintertime by train . . .

Spiegel also recounted an informal "trade system" that his uncle employed during prohibition:

On the regular north bound run the train bound for Cazadero came through at eleven o'clock in the morning and came back down at four in the afternoon. And then there was a freight train, I don't know what time it went up, but it used to come back at eleven o'clock at night, and that's how we got these lanterns. They gave my uncle this one [clear glass] and they gave my uncle the one with the red glass and the one with the red glass he would hang out if we were there weekends. You'd hang it out at night and they would stop the freight train and the engineer, the fireman and the crew would come in and they'd have hot coffee and whiskey, and while they were doing that I was in there sacking up coal, and the longer they stayed the more coal we'd get [laughs].

The Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company, in a move to rid itself of non-profitable rail lines, abandoned service between Point Reyes Station and Tomales in 1930, leaving Hamlet as an attraction to motorists on the state highway (service to Cazadero had been eliminated the year before; service from Point Reyes Station to Manor [Fairfax] was ended in 1933; all interurban passenger service in the county ended in 1941).

Within a few years after 1930 the rails passing through Hamlet were torn up and sold for scrap, and railroad right-of-way and properties reverted to Hans Jensen. The station shed, used as a garage since abandonment, was torn down in the 1950s. The station sign HAMLET stayed in the Jensen family until the park purchase and is now in the collection of the Tomales Elementary Local History Center.

As was common along the line after abandonment, the redwood ties were pulled up and many were used for fencing; much of the Hamlet property is fenced with railroad ties.

⁶⁸Timetable, NWP Southern Division, 1912. California Historical Society.

H. Hamlet Post Offices⁶⁹

A United States Post Office was established at Hamlet on June 2, 1876. Eder H. Herald was appointed the first postmaster. The post office was located either in the depot building or in one of the large barns, recalled by Clarence Pensotti as the location of Huff's store. Abram Huff was appointed Postmaster in October of 1877. The post office was discontinued on February 18, 1886.

The post office was reestablished on December 28, 1917, with Henry J. Jensen, son of landowner Hans L. Jensen, as Postmaster. The name Hamlet was rejected by the U.S. Postal Service so the letters were switched around and the office called Telmat. This post office was located in what was apparently the original depot and post office building on pilings over the beach directly north of the F.E. Booth packing plant. Al Spiegel recalled that Agnes Jensen actually performed the duties of Postmaster, while Hazel Martinelli reported that her sister Gertrude (Mrs. Henry) Jensen did the postal work. Either way, it is not evident that Henry Jensen actually performed the job, at least in the last decade of its operation. The Telmat post office was discontinued on February 14, 1931.

I. Hamlet as a Fishery

1. Herring

An increased need for herring and mackerel products, especially byproducts, arose at the start of World War I, when the North Sea fisheries were shut down. F.E. Booth, a pioneer in the sardine canning industry (Booth's was the first cannery at Monterey's Cannery Row), chose Hamlet as the site of a herring packing plant in 1917. The San Rafael newspapers reported on the events:

BOOTH MAY ERECT PLANT ON TOMALES BAY. Ships Carloads of Herring and Sardines from Hamlet Each Month.

Mr. Booth, the well known Monterey packer, and one of the largest fish dealers on the coast, has been operating on Tomales Bay for several years in catching sardines and herring for the market. The herring and sardines are packed and shipped to San Francisco in carload lots. He has a gang of fishermen engaged in the work and it is not an uncommon thing for two fishermen to gather in six tons of herring in one haul . . .

We are informed in the past week that Mr. Booth is planning on increasing his business on Tomales Bay and may erect a small

⁶⁹Information for this chapter from: Salley, History of California Post Offices 1849-1976; interviews with Hazel Martinelli, Clarence Pensotti and Albert Spiegel.

packing plant near Hamlet. With the new plant the sardines and herring will be packed and shipped from Hamlet. At the present time Booth has a large plant on Monterey Bay.

Supervisor-elect Steele witnessed a net pulled in one day last week in which there were sixteen and a half tons of herring.⁷⁰

Another paper noted that the building will "entail the expenditure of thousands of dollars" and that the herring "are now eagerly sought and well paid for by the Booth Cannery Company." The article reports that the fishermen are paid \$7.50 per ton delivered on shore, and that \$8,000 worth of herring had been purchased since Booth contracted with the local fishermen. "In the past two weeks since the beginning of the winter run, three Tomales fishermen have made \$300 each from the sale of herring," they reported. Three train carloads of herring were being shipped daily at the time of the article, and an increase was planned:

There are two "runs" annually of the herring, one in the early winter and one beginning in May, and each run is about two months in duration. With the catch of four months, it is believed that the canning plant could be kept in operation with the Tomales Bay product alone about six months. The rest of the year's work would be devoted to caring for the shipments from other locations.⁷¹

Evidently the F.E. Booth Company hired local builder Jack Junta to build the 1050 foot wharf and large herring "cannery," which was actually a plant for packing the fish for transit to the cannery and reduction plant on the Sacramento River. Booth had plants at Pittsburg and Fremont as well as his Monterey sardine cannery; the Hamlet fish went to the Pittsburg plant via the Northwestern Pacific Railroad to Sausalito, where the Booth Company had barges for hauling fish to the Pittsburg plant.⁷²

Clarence Pensotti, born across the bay at Pelican Point and for years a fisherman on the bay, recalled operation of the herring plant at Hamlet:

They'd bail (the herring) out with mesh scoops made out of twine and then they'd go into the hopper there and the conveyor belt

⁷⁰The Independent, January 6, 1917, p. 1.

⁷¹Marin Journal, January 11, 1917, p. 1.

⁷²James E. Hardwick, "Biomass Estimates of Spawning Herring, *Clupea harengus* Pallasi, Herring Eggs, and Associated Vegetation in Tomales Bay," California Fish and Game, Volume 59 number 1, pp 36-61; Arthur F. McEvoy, "Law, Public Policy, and Industrialization in the California Fisheries, 1900-1925," reprinted from Business History Review, Volume 57, Winter 1983, pp. 504-509; clipping files, "F.E. Booth," California Historical Society; interviews with Clarence Pensotti, Eugene Poncia and Arthur Patrick.

would haul them up to the cannery . . . and those two men there used to haul them away on those carts, push carts, and they'd dump them in that big pile there. When Mr. Junta started operating there they used to gill those herring, take the gills out of them, and I think they used to keep the males and the females separate. Then they used to pack them in those barrels with salt . . . they used to put them in there, line them up and throw a batch of salt on, then another layer and another layer until you were up to the top . . . then the freight trains came down in the morning from Tomales . . . the workmen would load those big hogheads into the freight cars . . .

The herring were Scotch cured and canned, under advisement of the Federal Bureau of Fisheries. The Tomales Bay herring were considered to be the best in California.⁷³ According to Arthur Patrick, a manager at the Booth plant at Pittsburg from 1923 to about 1948, the herring from Tomales Bay was smoked for the Chinese market, a practice that was discontinued by 1923. The smoked herring was shipped with gills intact, which leads us to believe that the Hamlet herring was canned at Pittsburg to satisfy the wartime needs for canned fish and oil; the spoiled fish was reduced for chicken feed, another industry which Booth pioneered. Almost simultaneously the war ended and the California Fish Conservation Act of 1919 was enacted, dooming the Hamlet plant.⁷⁴ The number of canneries and reduction plants in California fell from 57 in 1919 to 34 in 1923.⁷⁵ Evidently the Tomales Bay herring used by the Booth Company after the war was shipped fresh from the herring boats to the cannery for smoking, eliminating the need for the packing plant.

The fact that evidence of machinery remained in the plant after its closing could indicate that wooden shipping boxes or hogheads were made at the plant, supplied by rail from the lumbermills in Sonoma County. Booth's Pittsburg plant had a cooperage, and Booth employees interviewed agreed that a major function of the Hamlet plant could have been as a manufactory of fish shipping boxes.⁷⁶

The F.E. Booth Company also built a wharf and fish house in Drakes Bay at Point Reyes, and shipped the fish out by truck. The operation was later sold to

⁷³Maxwell B. Eldridge and W. Michael Kaill, "San Francisco Bay Area's Herring Resource," Marine Fisheries Review, Volume 35 number 11, November 1973, p. 26.

⁷⁴California Statute 1203, which "prohibits use of fish for reduction without Fish & Game Commissioners' permission . . . regulate(s) and control the handling of fish and other fishery products for the purpose of preventing deterioration or waste;" Hardwick, "Herring in Tomales Bay," p.38.

⁷⁵McEvoy, "Law, Public Policy..." p. 509.

⁷⁶Interviews with Arthur Patrick and Arthur Mendonca.

the F. Alioto Fish Company.⁷⁷

The Hamlet plant measured approximately 30 by 60 feet, following the shoreline lengthwise. On both the shore and bay sides were large sliding doors; on the bay side was a conveyor and a boat ramp. Inside a motor, probably electric, drove a long shaft mounted to the ceiling, which in turn powered the various machinery via belts. The front door of the plant was within a few feet of the railroad tracks. The wharf accommodated boats at all tides, with a "t" shaped end with shed for use at low tide and a landing closer to the plant for during higher tides. A turning basin was dredged next to the building so the herring boats could tie up at the conveyor. Clarence Pensotti knew many of the workers at the F.E. Booth plant:

All them bay people worked there, Indians, some Italians, couple of, two-three men from Tomales, Larsen was one of them . . .

West Marin historian Jack Mason wrote about herring at Hamlet:

George Smith, 50 years a fisherman, remembers when the herring left Hamlet by the freight car load. Fourteen cars a day were not unusual around World War I. The fish were put aboard by machinery. A board in the doorway was raised notch by notch until the car was full. The cars had an awful smell that worsened with the years. The herring went from Sausalito to canneries on the Sacramento River delta.⁷⁸

During the years 1916-1919 over 1,000 tons of herring were caught in Tomales Bay. The industry was set back by the California Fish Conservation Act of 1919 which prohibited the use of fish for reduction without permission of the Fish and Game Commission. The following tables show the surge and sudden decline of canned herring from 1916 to 1920:⁷⁹

Amount of San Francisco Bay Area Herring to be Canned

<u>year</u>	<u>cases - 1 lb. oval</u>	<u>cases - 1/2 lb. oval</u>
1916	7,223	---
1917	61,317	1,334
1918	58,330	5,817
1919	28,236	1,589
1920	---	---

⁷⁷Anna Coxe Toogood, A Civil History of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore (Denver: National Park Service, 1980), Volume 1, p. 111. Nomination Forms for National Register of Historic Places: F.E. Booth Company/Alioto Fish Company pier, Point Reyes National Seashore; compiled by Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian, Western Regional Office, National Park Service, February 24, 1976.

⁷⁸Mason, Earthquake Bay, p. 62.

⁷⁹File F3735:678, Natural Resources, Fish & Game Division, State Archives.

At Hamlet the abandoned plant, stripped of its machinery, was used by the Jensens and their tenants for storage and boat repairs. Al Speigel described the interior:

There were counters everywhere . . . there was a great big shaft over your head with all these big pulleys and belts going down. The belts were just hanging now, they were still on there but just hanging, the machinery was removed . . . I'm guessing it was [electrical] powered . . .

The wharf and packing building fell into disrepair and, according to Virginia Jensen, fell down in a "hurricane" in around 1949.

The herring industry on Tomales Bay and at Hamlet, still one of the major herring shipping points after the Booth plant closed, continued to have thriving years. During the 1930s herring were smoked in a plant built for this purpose at Nick's Cove, directly south of Hamlet, and at a plant at Blakes Landing operated by Consolidated Fisheries, apparently owned by the Paladini Fish Company of San Francisco.⁸⁰ It was a common practice for local ranchers to collect spoiled herring for chicken feed at Hamlet, Nick's Cove and Reynolds, although the feed gave eggs a distinct fishy taste.⁸¹

Herring continued to be shipped out of Hamlet by truck, but on a smaller scale. Henry F. Jensen had a fishing boat and fished the herring season as part of his livelihood, and other fishermen used the facilities at Hamlet, including boat ways and loading apparatus, for many years. In the early 1950s the herring catch at Hamlet averaged 120,000 pounds per year.⁸² Today almost all herring is taken in at Marshall Boat Works, at Reynolds.

Fresh fish such as perch and smelt, and some salmon and albacore, were fished out the mouth of Tomales Bay and brought in at Hamlet, often home to a number of fishermen. Albert Spiegel lived at Hamlet after World War II and fished, and went after crab as well. He described his preparations for the season:

When Frank Gee lived next door in the ark, right after World War II, when I lived here, we'd sit in here in the wintertime, at nighttime, and we made twenty five crab nets, hoop nets, you know, weaving them [unintelligible] . . . this is where we sat, we'd put one in the sink here and the other over there, and we'd sit there and talk away and weave, he showed me how to make them.

⁸⁰A.L. Borkheim, Tomales Herring Plant (manuscript: 1938).

⁸¹Interview with Franklin Burns.

⁸²W.L. Scofield, California Fishing Ports, California Fish Bulletin No. 96 (California Department of Fish and Game 1954), p.51.

Then we commercialed, and I had only four left after twenty five, putting them out on an outgoing tide, and out they go [laughs].

The earliest reference found to fishing actually involved a mammal: in December 1858 a Mr. Pierce caught a whale 60 feet long in Tomales Bay, probably not far from Hamlet. This could be either Solomon Pierce, who earlier that month had bought 2,200 acres on the the end of Tomales Point from the Shafers' law office, or, more likely, Calvin Pierce, probably no relation, who lived in a lone dwelling at Hamlet in 1859. The whale was said to have a potential 75 barrels of oil; another was found the next year.⁸³

2. Oysters

The oyster industry has been active on Tomales Bay for about eighty years, and Hamlet's oyster history spans almost that amount of time. Much of the eastern shore of Tomales Bay has at one time been a growing ground for oysters. The State Department of Fish and Game described Tomales Bay as having "the longest record of Pacific oyster production of any California area, but its small area of tidelands has limited its production. It is the smallest of the present oyster producing areas."⁸⁴ Unfortunately, records and memories of the oyster business on Tomales Bay are often conflicting and subsequently confusing.

The first recorded oyster plantings on Tomales Bay occurred near Millerton Point in early 1875, when Messrs. Weinard and Terry planted "about 17 carloads" of Eastern oysters; according to various news reports, it was may have been Leo Gordon and others from San Francisco, who planted 20,000 Eastern oysters on that part of their claims which covered most of the tidelands in the bay. Initially the enterprise seemed to be a success; the newspaper reported that "the bivalve flourishes better there (Tomales Bay) than in any other place that has been tried on this coast. All the conditions are favorable, and Tomales Bay will no doubt have the most extensive oyster beds on this side." Another paper announced in 1876, "Oyster culture along Tomales Bay has become a reality, and shipments of oysters are being made to San Francisco." The experiment didn't last, as there is no more mention of oysters in Tomales Bay until after the turn of the century.⁸⁵

Pollution in San Francisco Bay, the prominent oyster growing area on the central coast of California, drove the oyster companies back to Tomales Bay. The

⁸³Sonoma County Journal, December 19, 1858, referred to by Dickinson, Tomales is 100 Years Old, p. 3.

⁸⁴Barrett, p. 56.

⁸⁵Townsend, Report of the State Board of Fish Commissioners, XIII, 1893-94; Marin County Journal, March 11 and October 14, 1875; Marin Journal, September 28, 1911; Sonoma Democrat, June 10, 1876.

Pacific Coast Oyster Company established a small secret bed of Eastern oysters in 1907 at the south end of the bay, a location to become known as "Bivalve." The Pacific Coast Oyster Company apparently claimed most of the bay and had it fenced, to the chagrin of local fishermen. The state fish commission investigated and decreed that the Pacific Oyster Company had no rights to their claims on the bay. At one point there was a physical clash between county agents attempting to tear down the fence and oyster company employees.⁸⁶ The company retained their beds at Bivalve and continued there until the 1930's or 1940's.

The Tomales Bay Oyster Company, incorporated in 1913, planted beds north of Bivalve, near the original 1875 beds. They are still in business today. Other oyster operations now gone include the Gilbert Oyster Company of San Francisco, which planted oysters in 1910 near Millerton; and the Buchan Oyster Company, with beds at Sugar's Bend between Tom's and Preston Points during the 1960s.

According to Clarence Pensotti and a vague recollection of Virginia Jensen's, the Morgan Oyster Company, the principal oyster producer on San Francisco Bay, planted beds and built an oyster house at Hamlet in about 1915. Apparently this operation only lasted about four years. Department of Fish and Game publications claim that the Morgan Oyster Company bypassed Tomales Bay and moved its operations to Humboldt Bay.

The Consolidated Oyster Company operated at Hamlet as of 1926-27, planting full size oysters imported from the coasts of New York and New Jersey. According to a 1927 magazine article, the oysters were "planted in the beds to remain and recuperate until gathered for market and sold in San Francisco as eastern oysters. The eastern oyster will not breed on the Pacific Coast. The oysters can be shipped to market thirty days after planting."⁸⁷

The timing of Henry J. Jensen's entry into the oyster business is poorly documented and most reports are vague. It is generally accepted by many of those interviewed that Jensen began planting in the late 1920s or some time during the 1930s. The Department of Fish and Game reports vary in the date from circa 1913 to 1939; Elinore M. Barrett wrote that "In 1939 Henry Jensen made small plantings of Pacific seed oysters on his beds at Hamlet, which are supplemented by an allotment of 88 acres of State tidelands."⁸⁸ In 1937 noted photographer Edward Weston made pictures of the Hamlet oyster beds, showing oyster fences on either side of the long wharf. It was in 1939 that Jensen obtained his first Mariculture Lease from the State of California.

⁸⁶Marin Journal, September 28, 1911; San Francisco Call, January 8, 1913.

⁸⁷Northwestern Pacific Headlight, April 1927, page 5.

⁸⁸Barrett, p. 61; Albert Spiegel recalls oysters grown by Henry Jensen in the 1920s. Photographs taken by Edward Weston in 1937 and published in Westways magazine and his book, California and the West, show oyster fences on both sides of the long wharf.

The State Department of Fish and Game inspects and regulates the amount of seed shipped and planted, collects rent on the leases, and issues and checks mariculture licenses.

Statistics show Tomales Bay oyster production rising from a small industry (6.1% of the California market) in 1915, with San Francisco Bay the major producer (93.9%), to being the largest producer in the state by the 1950's (79.3% in 1953). The oyster industry at Morro Bay began to rise in the 1930's, and oysters were planted at Drakes Estero in the late 1940's. In 1954-55 Morro Bay was the major producer, then Humboldt Bay production jumped to 80% of total state production. San Francisco Bay had not seen oyster cultivation since about 1940.⁸⁹

Henry J. Jensen sold oysters by the bag from an area developed between his house on the bay and the bar. Clarence Pensotti worked for Jensen as a harvester, going out on the mudflats at low tide to collect mature oysters. The oysters were picked up out of the mud and put into baskets:

First he had those straw baskets, but the damn things would float away! I don't know where he went and got those iron ones, they had handles, too . . . they wouldn't move, stay right there . . . then fill them up, go with the boat, throw them in the boat . . . [it was] too far to carry the damn thing . . .

Henry J. Jensen sold the waterfront portion of Hamlet to his son Henry F. Jensen and his wife Virginia in 1955. Henry J. moved to Morro Bay and kept working with oysters for many years, and died at age 88 in 1979.

Young Henry and Virginia made many improvements to the property, including enlargement of the parking area and expansion of the small oyster sales area and bar into a restaurant, bar and oyster bar. Virginia did much of the oyster work, and eventually did it all, with the help of her daughters. Mrs. Jensen described the process of planting and harvesting:

We grew them right on the mudflats, just broadcast them about the mudflats you know if they stayed there for the first six months or we didn't have any real hard storms then they got started, then we'd have oysters . . . just laying on top of the mud. We'd open up the boxes, the ones we got from Japan always came in boxes, we'd open all these boxes on the barges and go stake an area that you wanted to plant and go out during high tide or as long as the barge would float and go out there and start broadcasting them off, just shoving them off into the water . . . you'd put sticks down ever so often, you'd shovel and put sticks down then move your barge and put more sticks and shovel just to mark the area so you

⁸⁹Barrett, pp. 58-59.

wouldn't be going over it twice and, you know, they grew! Then you go out at low tide, when the tide was out usually you figured, well we'd figure pretty close to three years to have a large size oyster like we had, but some of them you could pick at eighteen months; you know, the deeper the water the faster they'd grow from the food and whatnot. We'd go out there at low tide, maybe before low tide, take the barge out and stake it in the area where we wanted planted or picked or take a skiff out with a bunch of baskets and then when the tide went out just walk out and start picking. It was all solid, there was just one or two places and we never planted there that was really soft mud . . .

They'd always grow in clusters, see, and after they get so big you had that . . . little hammer with the sharp point on it, and you'd separate them, give them a chance to expand.

The Jensens planted a number of types of oyster seed over the years at Hamlet: Pacific seed oysters were produced in Eureka and Willapa Bay, Puget Sound, Washington. Japanese seed, such as unbroken Miyagi seed, was imported under the direction of the Department of Fish and Game. The type of oyster seed determined the time of planting and the amount of time needed to reach maturity; usual harvest time was after eighteen months, or up to three years.

Jensen's Oyster Beds, with its large sign beckoning motorists passing on Highway 1, became a well-known stopping place for coastal travelers. Oysters were sold by the jar, rarely in the shell; until the 1960's barbecued oysters were scarce. "The oysters you buy today -- slept in Tomales Bay last night" was a slogan at Jensen's. The Jensens did a brisk business, not only selling to passersby, but to restaurants, as Virginia Jensen recalled:

Back in the '50s and probably the early part of the '60s we used to wholesale oysters out, delivering them to Nick's Cove, Tony's Seafood, Tides Wharf, we had several down in Princeton-by-the-Sea, I used to deliver oysters down there . . . we did quite well, I really can't complain, oysters at that time were, what, six dollars a hundred or something or other like that . . . weekends used to be quite hectic, but back in the 50's, '60s, even into the '70s I wasn't serving that much food at that time, so I was in the oyster business from the time I got up until the time I went to bed opening oysters; in those days everybody wanted their oysters opened, nobody, you couldn't con a person into buying an oyster in the shell to kill yourself with . . . every one was opened, maybe one out of every four dozen customers would ever buy a dozen in the shell . . . the whole thing has changed now, everybody's talking about barbecuing oysters like it's a great new thing well, what happened to the fifties, you know, nobody would do it!

Henry Jensen drowned in Tomales Bay while fishing in 1971, leaving Virginia and the children to operate the business. The restaurant was usually open on weekends, and eventually opened five days a week, serving a full oyster menu: barbecued, steamed or baked in the shell, raw on the half shell, or in a stew.

In November 1981 the State Department of Health Services investigated the origins of Raw Oyster Hepatitis A, and centered their investigation on Jensen's Oyster Beds. The report alleged that the oyster beds were contaminated by raw sewage from the restaurant toilets, which were apparently draining directly into the oyster bed. Jensen's attorney claimed that the inspectors were there the day that repairs were being made on the sewer system. In addition, greywater from the rental units was observed draining directly into the bay. Both oysters grown in the Hamlet beds or bought from other growers and "sweetened" in the beds were allegedly contaminated, and considered to be potential sources for Hepatitis A.⁹⁰

Mrs. Jensen had supporters during this ordeal. After a newspaper detailed the State's charges, a Hamlet resident wrote to the editor, claiming that the water tests were performed after a "powerful storm which affected water quality throughout the bay that day. Boaters and campers use the bay as their personal toilet; yet Mrs. Jensen was singled out for a missing clean-out cap on your front page . . . Mrs. Jensen is a competent and conscientious restaurateur . . ."⁹¹

Jensen's beds were ordered closed for a period of six months and the state sought \$100,000 in penalties for various health and business code violations. In addition, the Jensen's restaurant was barred from selling any oysters until the water supply, found to contain high levels of bacteria which could contaminate the oysters while being washed, was deemed to be safe.⁹²

In addition to the sanitation problems, Jensen's location at the mouth of Walker Creek proved to be a major problem. The mouth had been silting for over a century, resulting in less suitable areas for planting; the Jensen's allotment shrank from 88 acres in 1939 to 30 acres in 1980 (58 acres were declared abandoned by the Fish and Game Commission in 1979). During two days in early January of 1982 rainstorms dumped twelve inches of rain in the West Marin area, resulting in flooding, landslides, and mudslides; badly hit was the Walker Creek watershed, and the amount of debris emptying into Tomales Bay at Hamlet was huge. The oyster beds were mostly washed away and covered with mud and debris. The next year more heavy storms destroyed anything that was left. Virginia Jensen spoke of the time:

⁹⁰Memo to the record from Ronald Roberto, M.D., Deputy Chief of Infectious Diseases Section, State Department of Health Services, November 20, 1981; Point Reyes Light, December 17, 1981.

⁹¹Letter from Catherine Christensen, Point Reyes Light, January 7, 1982, page 5.

⁹²Roberto, Ibid.

The last oyster seeds in fact that I ever bought I bought from the hatchery up in Eureka and got them down here and . . . it would have been a marvelous thing just to see them grow; there was so much seed on each shell that they had to crowd each other out and they were coming along real good when we had that storm in '82 and it just took oyster seed and all . . . that was the end of them. Walker Creek had changed its course and come right through the oyster beds, right where I had them planted and and had washed them all away. But they were . . . three or four inch oysters and there were just gobs of them and I . . . God I kept looking at those things and, as I say, one day they were gone . . . I never planted after that; that was my last tally-ho as far as planting with oysters.

The Fish and Game Commission ordered the Jensen lease abandoned on October 7, 1983.⁹³

3. Clams

Clamming was popular at Hamlet and many other sites on the bay. Local Indians sold clams to passengers on the North Pacific Coast Railroad, and were sometimes referred to as "diggers."⁹⁴ From a railroad brochure from around 1900: "On (Tomaes Bay's) eastern shore are the towns of Marshall and Hamlet, with their numerous picturesque clam digging camps."⁹⁵

Albert Spiegel dug for clams during the years he visited and lived at Hamlet in the 1920's to the 1940's:

That was what they call cockles -- now they are almost extinct along the bay there -- he (Henry Sr.) had oyster stakes planted right up to the beach so the stingrays couldn't get in to get the oysters, and we were allowed to dig anywhere from the stakes on, but not inside the beds because that was his private cockle beds, and I'm talking an area not a half a mile of waterfront. So we used to go south just past his stakes, and you only had to dig a trench about eighteen inches wide and you had a limit of beautiful cockles . . . we just took what we wanted, didn't take any more than we needed so we always had them.

Virginia Jensen's father Ted Jason, born across the bay, dug 2-3" cockles in the west shore coves, but found the Hamlet cockles too small. Tomaes Bay clams

⁹³Document in Appraisal, 1986.

⁹⁴Dickinson, Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods; San Francisco Call, November 30, 1907.

⁹⁵From a brochure at Bancroft Library.

were considered to be smaller and tastier than other areas, but harder to harvest. In the 1880s 75 bushels per week of Tomales Bay clams were sold in San Francisco for \$3 per bushel. W. Allen of that city specialized in Tomales Bay clams.⁹⁶

J. Commerce at Hamlet and Other Tomales Bay Communities

The townsite of Hamlet is located in what was once a prime location for commerce: situated only about two miles from the Pacific Ocean in the protection of Tomales Bay; directly adjacent to the once-navigable waterway to Tomales, Keys Creek; on a rail line serving the north country and San Francisco markets; and close to a few large dairy ranches on the ridge to the east or across the bay on Point Reyes. Hamlet's proximity to Keys Creek was not, in the long run, good for the various industries there, due to siltation from Keys and Walker Creeks. The silting of Keys Creek led to the Hamlet's prominence in the 1870s, as shipping operations up the creek gradually moved down closer to deep water, pushed by advancing siltation. Later, the increasing shallowness of the bay in front of Hamlet led to the long wharf's ineffectiveness and a final end to the oyster business at Hamlet after the storms of 1982-83.

The North Pacific Coast Railroad and its successors, in operation from 1875 to 1930, brought changes to the nature of water transportation at Hamlet. Shipping before 1875 was handled by shallow draft schooners which could enter Tomales Bay and Keys Estuary and approach numerous wharves on the bay. The most prominent of these before 1875 was at Preston's Point, opposite the estuary from Hamlet. Others were at Marshall, Millerton, Laird's Landing and White Gulch. Many of these wharves stayed in use after the railroad began operation, although the nature of the commerce was different: rather than transport via Pacific Ocean to San Francisco, the small boats plied the waters within the bay, to and from the west shore to the railroad stops on the east shore.

The first train schedules of 1875 provided a blueprint for future commerce on the bay. Stops at the bay shore were, south to north, Millerton, Marshall's and Hamlet. Marshall's and Hamlet remained the major points of commerce, while impressive plans for development at Millerton were never realized. A number of other stops were added as the years went by, but none ever surpassed Marshall's, serving the mid-bay industries, and Hamlet, serving the northern part of the bay. W.L. Scofield wrote, "In the 1880s Hamlet and Marshall were the leading rail shipping points on (Tomales) Bay."⁹⁷

⁹⁶Interview with Virginia Jensen; John S. Hittell, The Commerce and Industries of the Pacific Coast of North America (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1882), pp. 362-366.

⁹⁷Scofield, California Fishing Ports, p. 51.

Hamlet served as a shipping point for numerous enterprises. McKenney's 1884-1885 directory listed eight poultry raisers, sixteen dairymen and four fishermen under the Hamlet listing.⁹⁸

The Pierce ranch across Tomales Bay shipped dairy products from their wharf in White Gulch to the Hamlet wharf for transfer to the trains. The Marin County Journal described the relationship between the Pierce Ranch and Hamlet in 1878:

No public road leads to the [Pierce Ranch], and if you approach it from the land side, about a dozen gates will need to be opened, in crossing the adjoining ranches. Yet the lintels of the Pierce homestead are but six hours from San Francisco, and a daily mail is maintained. The route is by sail to Hamlet, a station on the Narrow Gauge. Mr. Pierce has lighters, plungers, yachts and skiffs. His wharf is two miles and a quarter from Hamlet, and Capt. Saunders, his boatman, crosses in eleven minutes, with any load, from a letter to a sixty feet barn.⁹⁹

Harry McDonald, born in 1902 at McDonald, a flagstop south of Hamlet, described how in rough weather the boat from the Pierce Ranch had to put in at Marshall, four miles south of Hamlet:

. . . I did see their boats, the Pierce ranch boats, unloading in Marshall, along about 1915 . . . rough weather, it seems like it got pretty rough out there on Hamlet, it was pretty hard to cross the bay, and they had a boat in tow, is what they had all their freight on, and they would come down the other side, right along the Point Reyes, Pierce Point, then when they'd come to Marshall they'd come right straight across, in windy weather . . . I knew a man that run the boat, that was Ham Martins, he used to run the boat for his brother-in-law, that was Mendoza.

Al Spiegel recalled what he was told by George Hulbe, who was born on Hog Island in the 1880s, and subsequently lived at White Gulch below the Pierce ranch:

When Hulbe and his father had the milk cows . . . in White Gulch they had to bring the milk over so that the train could take it down at four o'clock every day, and they had a boat called the Plunger, a one master with a big centerboard, and they'd sail it across. Sometimes when the northwest wind was heavy, they couldn't tack into the wind to get to Hamlet so they had to settle

⁹⁸McKenney's 8-County Directory of Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, Yolo, Solano and Marin Counties 1884-1885 (San Francisco: L.M. McKenney & Co., 1883), n.p.

⁹⁹Marin County Journal, June 20, 1878.

for Marshall, drop the milk off at Marshall, and then beat their way back over again . . .

The wharves at either end were equipped to handle the produce with wooden hand-operated hoists. Clarence Pensotti, born at Pelican Point across the bay from Hamlet, described how the men unloaded the cream cans on the Hamlet side using the hoist:

It had a crank on there with a roller on it and a big arm sticking out. Drop that rope down in the boat and then hook the cream on, a couple at a time. Two men, one man now doing that and the other one up on top with that, [laughs] wrench that thing up . . . then they had that wagon there, and they'd load them on that four-wheeled wagon.

The cream was then wheeled down the length of the wharf to the freight siding, where it would be loaded onto the afternoon train for Sausalito and San Francisco.

For many years during the last half of the 19th century the 2,200 acre Pierce ranch had the largest production of any ranch in the Point Reyes area, manufacturing 61,000 pounds of butter in 1880.¹⁰⁰ Apparently only the upper and lower Pierce ranches shipped to Hamlet; the other Tomales Point ranches, the I, J, K and L ranches were in closer proximity to Marshall, and had use of a convenient wharf at Laird's Landing opposite.

Hamlet was connected by roads to the dairies and poultry farms on the east side of the bay, including the various Poncia ranches, Blake's and Conti's ranches, and the dairies on the other side of the ridge overlooking Walker Creek.

There were (and still are) several other settlements on Tomales Bay, some similar to Hamlet. North to south, they were:¹⁰¹

Camp Pistolesi. Located south of Tomales on the west bank of Keys Creek, Camp Pistolesi was established as a resort in 1902 by Sausalito politician Frank Pistolesi. The hotel and cottages were open to families during the summer, and to sportsmen in the winter. Rates in 1907 were \$8 to \$9 per week; camping was also available. Camp Pistolesi was reputed to have a speakeasy and bordello during prohibition, attracting prominent people from all over the San

¹⁰⁰Borjes and Chappell, History and Architecture of the Upper Pierce Ranch, pp. 6, 13.

¹⁰¹The references for the descriptions of the Tomales Bay settlements are: Dickinson, Narrow Gauge to the Redwoods; Mason, Earthquake Bay; Mason, Point Reyes, the Solemn Land; Munro-Fraser, History of Marin County, 1880; Stindt, The Northwestern Pacific Railroad, Redwood Empire Route; various pamphlets listed in bibliography; 1870 census; personal interviews. Specific newspaper references are footnoted.

Francisco Bay area. By 1928 it was called Camp Tomales, a name which it has retained to this day. Dozens of tiny cabins were available for daily, weekly and monthly rental; many remain, although in poor condition. The resort has been unused for decades, and the house is inhabited by a woodworker. Camp Pistolesi was a flagstop on the railroad, two miles south of Tomales.

Ocean Roar. Warren Dutton founded Ocean Roar on the east bank of Keys Creek around 1870 as a shipping point in competition with John Keys at Tomales. Siltation of the creek forced him to move to Hamlet in 1874. Shipping continued on a small scale from Ocean Roar into the 1880s; the area served as a private resort until a few decades ago, when it became a private residence. The Ocean Roar Ranch, built around 1870, still operates on the hill above Ocean Roar.

Preston Point (Preston's Landing). Directly across Keys Estuary from Hamlet, R.J. Preston established a wharf and store in the years after his arrival in the early 1850s. An uncited description in Mason's Earthquake Bay describes Preston's landing as having "a good wharf with eleven feet of water alongside where there is generally quite a fleet of schooners loading, this being the most convenient shipping point for Bloomfield (Sonoma County) . . ." Preston's was known for good accommodations and the bear pit in back of the store. The Marin County Journal of July 10, 1862, described Preston's Point:

Parties visiting the country will find it a nice drive of 18 miles westward from Petaluma to Preston's Point where comfortable accommodations and facilities for pleasure parties will be furnished for boat sailing, fishing or hunting. This beautiful Bay, and surrounding country is unsurpassed on the Pacific Coast. This is also the finest farming and dairy country in the state.

Preston's Landing was apparently out of use by 1880, and is now marked by a stand of trees on the point visible from Hamlet.

Cozy Cove. This is the small estuary directly to the north of the Hamlet property. A cabin was erected here at an unknown date. It was used by owner Otto Wohlers in the 1910s, and by fisherman Milton Moiles in the 1920s and 1930s. The cabin, in great disrepair, was taken apart by a neighbor at Hamlet in the 1970s.

Pierce. Listed in 1908 as a flag stop on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad .25 miles south of Hamlet. Only one other reference to it has been found in further research. The site would be on park property. Judging by the name, it may have been a temporary railroad shipping point for the Pierce ranch; if so, a wharf or some sort of loading apparatus would have been necessary.

Nick's Cove. The next settlement south of Hamlet, and perhaps the most similar: it was once a packing plant for smoked herring and has been a

restaurant and boat launch for about thirty years. Around 1935 Scotch cure herring were packed here by "red-cheeked 'herring chokers' who spoke with a burr."¹⁰² A string of rental cabins lined the shore south of the restaurant. Nick Kojich, a Yugoslav fisherman who raised a family across the bay, purchased the property from the Blake heirs in 1931 and moved his dwellings to the site from across the bay. Today the northern half of Nick's Cove (originally Huff/Jensen property) is Miller County Park, a public boat landing.

Blake's Landing. Jeremiah Ladd Blake bought 177 acres from his friend Henry Halleck in 1862, the first to obtain a parcel from Halleck's vast Rancho Nicasio. Blake was first a saddlemaker, duck raiser and dairyman; by coincidence, one of the duck men on his property in 1870 was named Hans Jensen, name of the owner of Hamlet from 1907-1937, but evidently no relation. Blake's Landing remained in family hands for a century; in 1917 the family planned a large subdivision which never came to be.¹⁰³ Today there are a few houses on the shoreline, some more substantial and newer than at Hamlet, and the William Straus family operates the old Blake dairy.

Bleu Baie. A string of homes and cabins, begun in 1948, are here. For many years the Bleu Baie Tavern was in operation here, run by oysterman Larry Jensen, no relation to Hamlet's Jensens. The tavern was burned in a much-publicized arson/attempted murder case which was recently in the news when the convicted arsonist murdered the lawyer who had prosecuted him in the 1950s.

McDonald. A flagstop on the railroad, serving the McDonald dairy and others on the ridge above.

Muldro City. Nothing remains of this settlement found on the 1863 U.S.C.G.S. chart of Tomales Bay. It is now on Audubon Canyon Ranch property.

Cypress Grove. Established after 1880 at a spot called Havenwood in railroad schedules, Cypress Grove was a quaint resort of matching Victorian cottages, most of which remain. It is privately owned today and will become part of Audubon Canyon Ranch upon the death of its owner.

Marshall's (called Marshall today). The oldest town on Tomales Bay, it takes its name from the Marshall brothers, Samuel and James, who owned large tracts of land from Marshall's to Tomales. The brothers built a store here in 1867. A road connected Marshall's to Petaluma after 1870, and is still in use. Marshall's eventually had a hotel, church and school. Today most of the old buildings remain, occupied by an oyster company, jeweler, and as residences.

¹⁰²Scofield, California Fishing Ports, p. 51.

¹⁰³Tocsin, February 10 & 17, 1917.

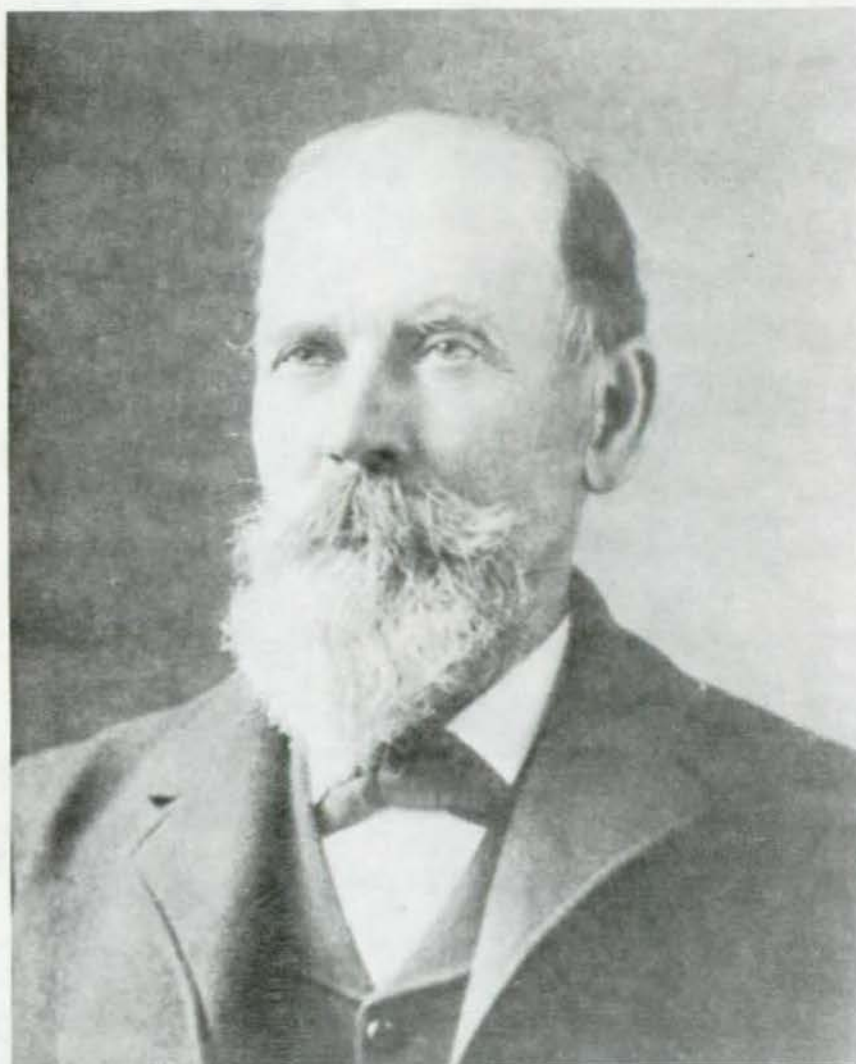
South of Marshall's are the settlement of **Reynolds**, a former Indian rancheria which is today Marshall Boat Works and Tony's Seafood Restaurant. **Marconi**, originally called **Fisherman's**, was an Indian settlement where railroad travelers could buy fresh fish and clams from the Indians at trackside. The Marconi Wireless Company built the first west coast overseas receiving station here in 1913, which is now being developed as a conference center by the California State Parks Foundation. Many of the original fishermen's shacks are still in use today, mostly renovated.

The Tomales Bay Oyster Company, in operation between Tomasini and Millerton Points since the 1920s, grows oysters by the hanging culture method, and is open to the public during the season. **Millerton** was the site of the first oyster plantings in 1875, and later housed the beds of the Morgan Oyster Company. James Miller built a wharf here and planned a town called Menlo Park; only his dairy succeeded, until recently as the DeGottardi ranch. Five cabins, very similar to the ones at Hamlet, lined the beach until destroyed by the State Parks ca. 1980. Today Millerton is Alan Sieroty Beach, a unit of Tomales Bay State Park. At **Bivalve**, the Pacific Coast Oyster Company planted their beds in 1907, employing Chinese oystermen to plant and harvest. A railroad flagstop served Bivalve, which went out of operation some time in the 1930s. Nothing remains at the site today.

K. Historic Photographs



Figure 1 - Henry Wager Halleck, owner of Rancho Nicasio 1850-62. Jack Mason Collection.



A Huff

Figure 2 - Portrait of Abram Huff, from History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Coast Counties, 1904.

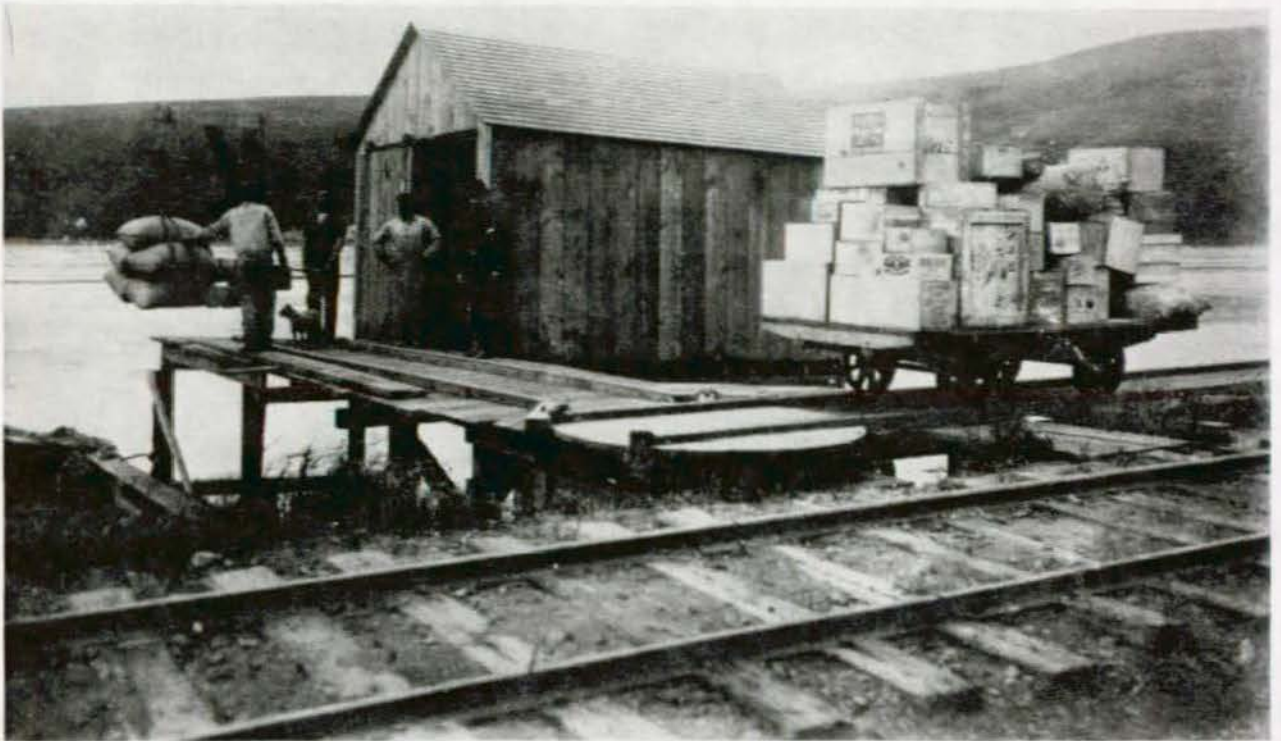


Figure 3 - Ocean Roar dock, c. 1890. This is the only photograph found of Ocean Roar commerce, depicting a wooden-rail system with turntable, hoist and warehouse. This operation was out of existence by 1912. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.



Figure 4 - Passengers for Pierce Ranch at Hamlet, c. 1902. The woman on the right is Martha Thompson, schoolteacher at Pierce School. Katie Bates Collection, Point Reyes National Seashore.



Figure 5 - Railroad depot at Hamlet, before 1906. Looking west. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.

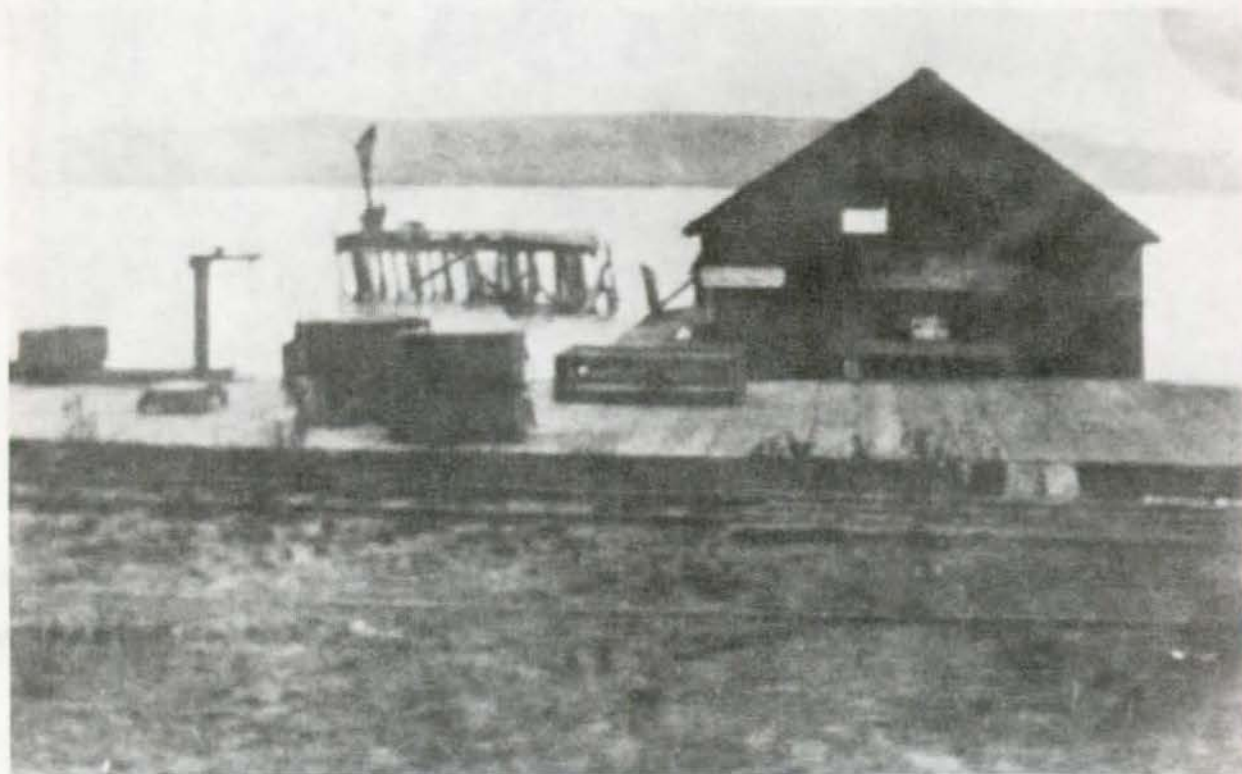


Figure 6 - Hamlet depot after 1906 earthquake, looking west. Marin County Library, Anne T. Kent California History Room Collection.



Figure 7 - Hamlet depot after 1906 earthquake. Tomales Elementary Local History Center Collection.



Figure 8 - Earthquake damage, 1906, showing the fallen wharf and depot. No other buildings appear at the water line. T.E.L.H.C.



Figure 9 - Earthquake damage on the Marshall-Tomales wagon road above Hamlet, 1906. The old road and slide still exist on the property. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.

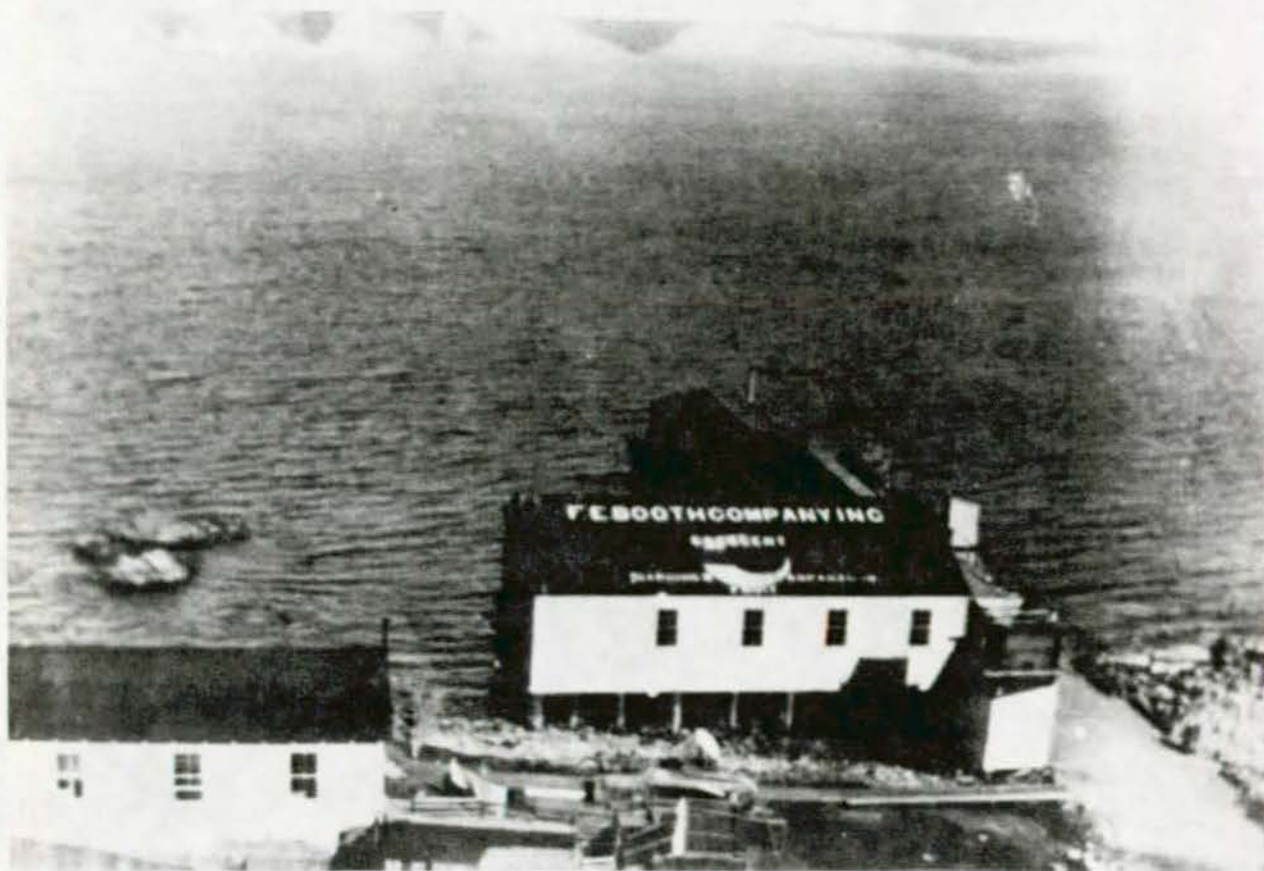


Figure 10 - F.E. Booth Company fish dock at Point Reyes, c. 1925. Point Reyes National Seashore Collection.



Figure 11 - (Left) The large building in the background is the abandoned F.E. Booth plant at Hamlet; in front of it is the post office/depot, the ark, and one of the small triple cabins; taken from the porch of the Spiegel house, c. 1940. Albert Spiegel Collection.



Figure 12 - The 1050 foot wharf c. 1921, from the Spiegel house. Albert Spiegel Collection.

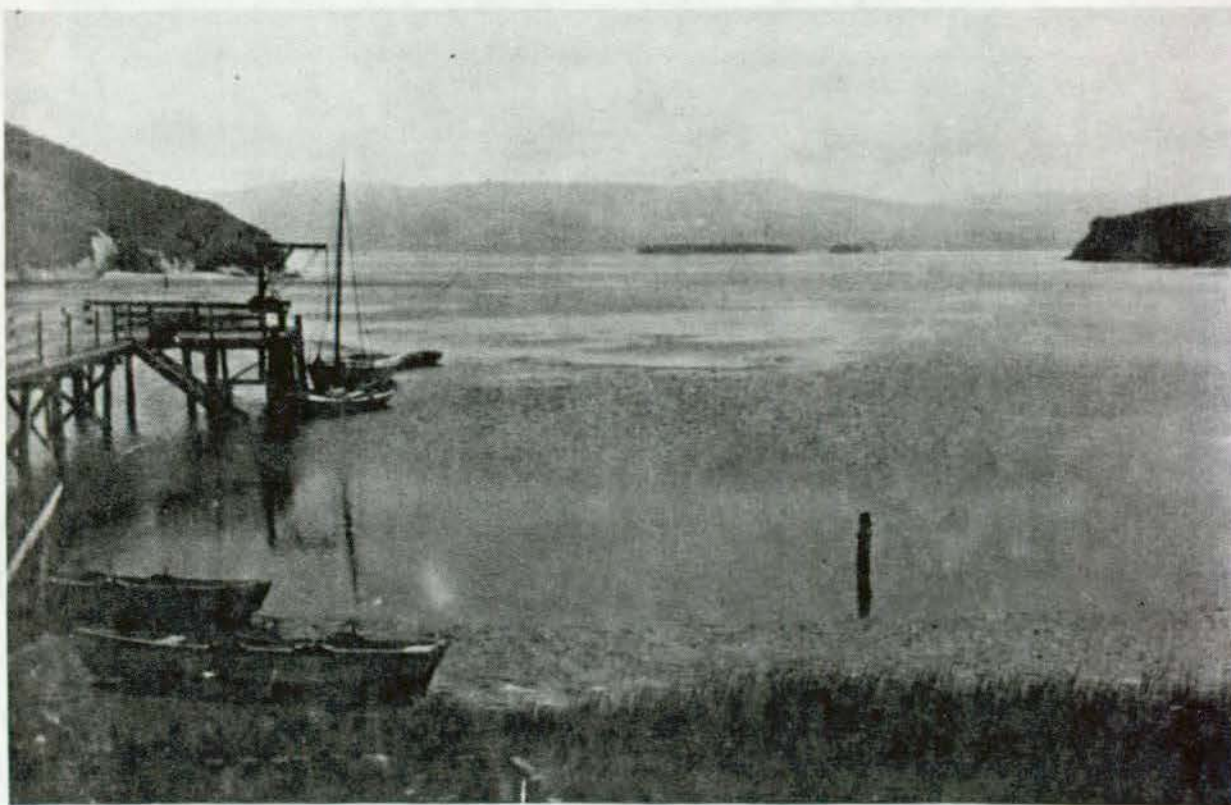


Figure 13 - Pierce Ranch wharf at White Gulch, looking east towards Hamlet and Hog Island, c. 1903. Point Reyes National Seashore Collection.



Figure 14 - (Above) Henry J. Jensen, right, and unidentified person, possibly Hans L. Jensen, on porch of the Jensen house, apparently when the structure was new, c. 1921. Photo taken from wharf, looking roughly east. Jensen Family Collection.



Figure 15 - Henry J. Jensen digging clams in Tomales Bay, c. 1920. Jensen Family Collection.



Figure 16 - Dr. Hulbert (Lacey) cabin and Morgan Oyster Co. house, 1920s, from train. Preston Point in background. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.

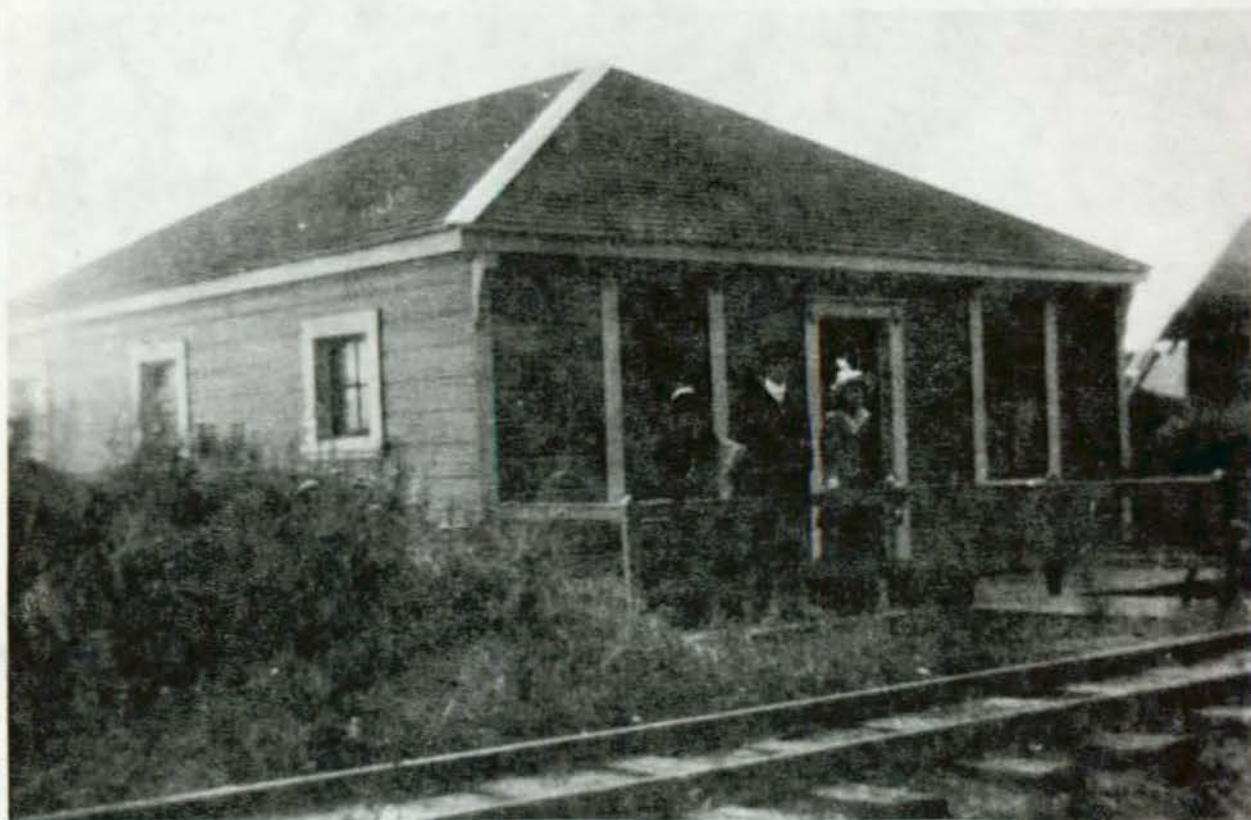


Figure 17 - Spiegel house after construction, c. 1913. Note the mound to left, removed when the three small cabins were brought to the site; and original size of Price cabin. Spiegel Collection.

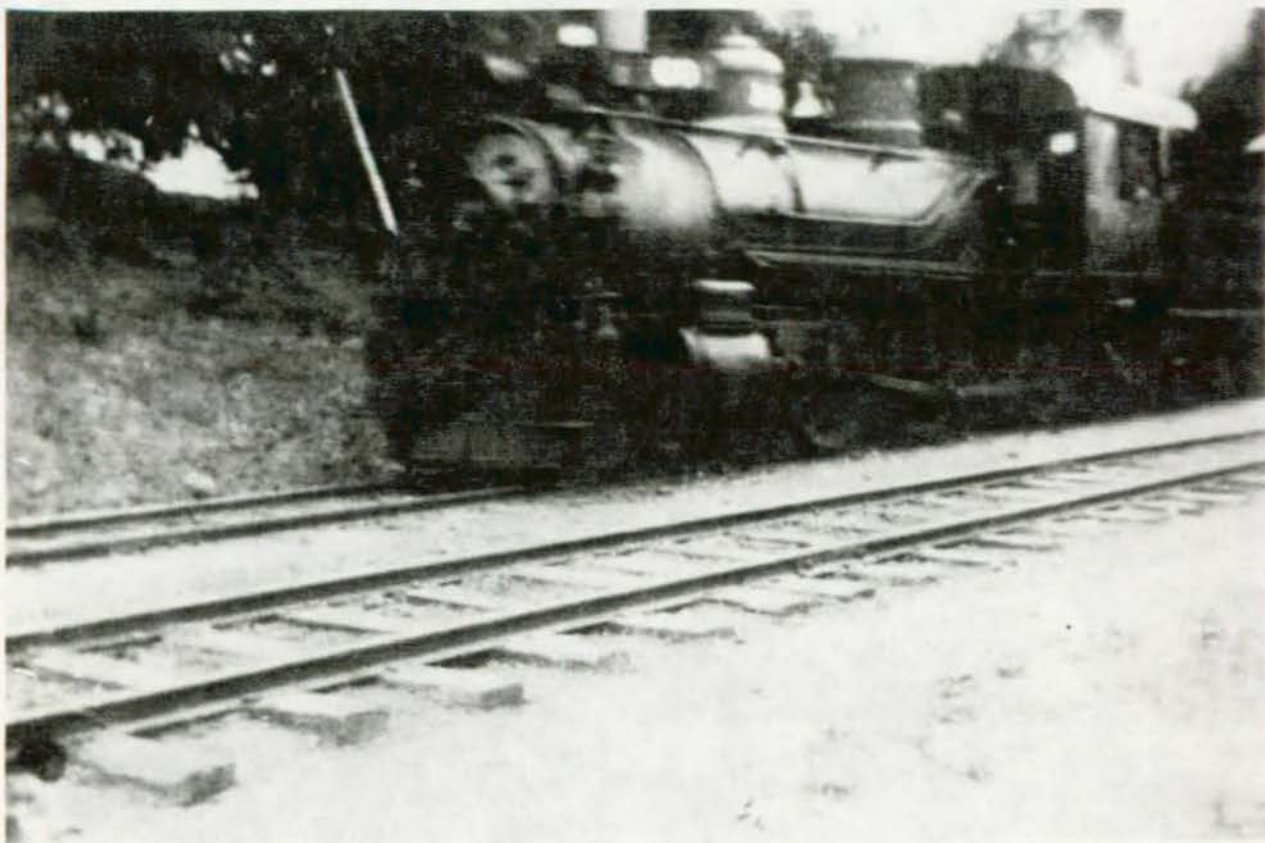


Figure 18 - (Top) Northbound locomotive at Hamlet, c. 1921. Albert Spiegel Collection.



Figure 19 - Agnes Jensen, in hat, with Albert Spiegel and his mother in front of NWP depot, c. 1921. Albert Spiegel Collection.

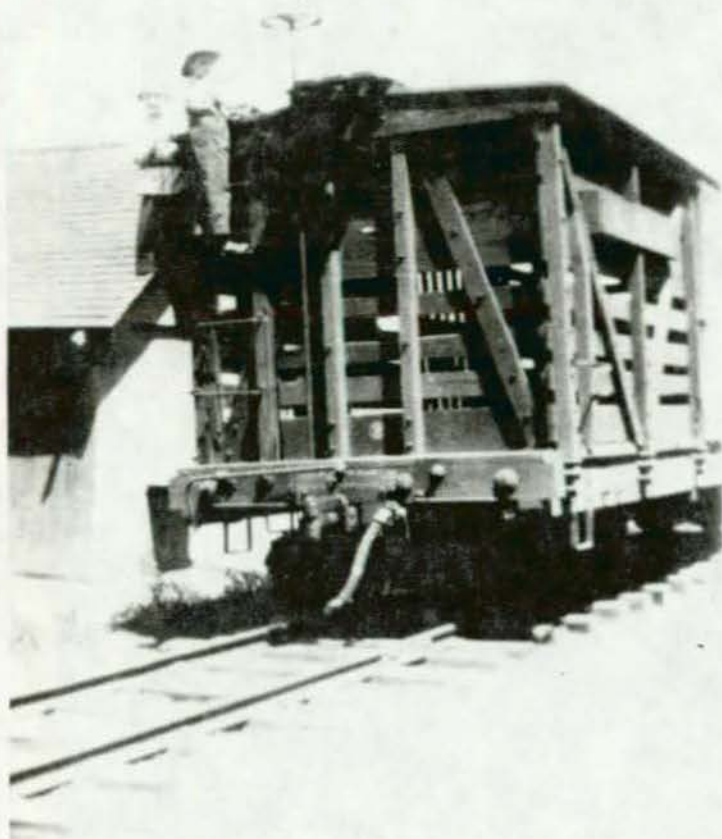


Figure 20 - Stock car on siding at Hamlet, c. 1921. The Price cabin is in the background. Albert Spiegel Collection.

Figure 21 - (Below) Julius Spiegel, center, and visitors pose in front of Spiegel's house, c. 1921. Albert Spiegel Collection.



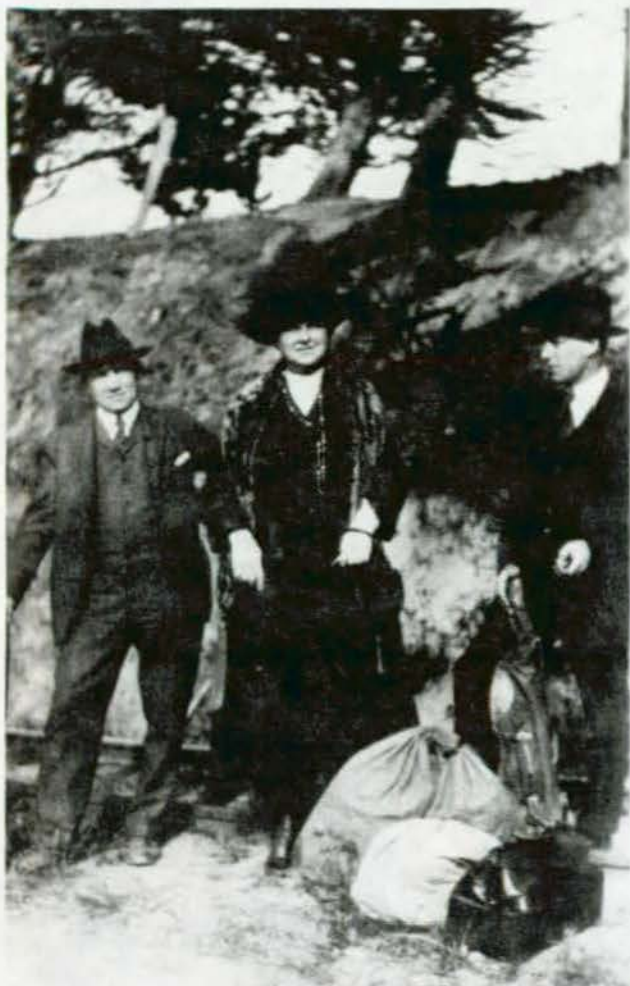


Figure 22 - Passengers arriving at Hamlet: Julius Spiegel and Harold Ladd, builders of the Spiegel cabin, flank Mrs. Spiegel, c. 1920. Albert Spiegel Collection.

Figure 23 - (Below) Julius Spiegel on porch of his house, c. 1925. Albert Spiegel Collection.



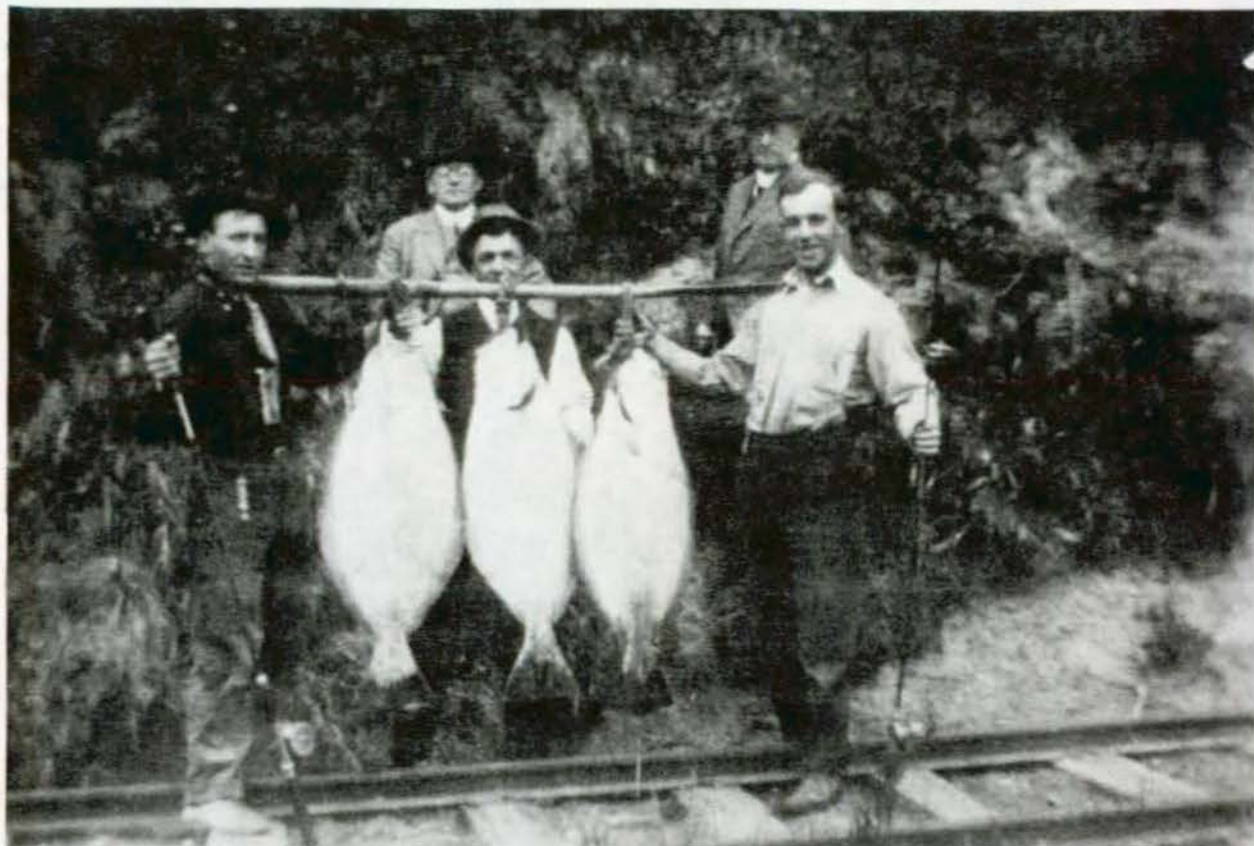


Figure 24 - Spiegel cabin visitors and their catch, c. 1921, Albert Spiegel Collection.



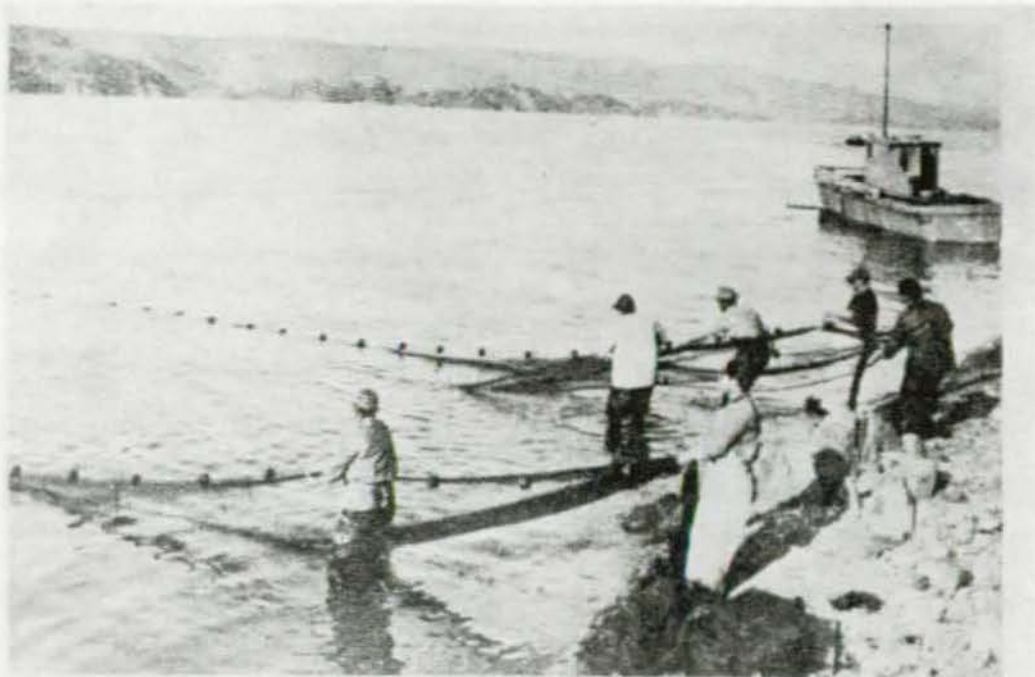
Figure 25 - Spiegel family friends have their picture taken, c. 1921; in the background is the cypress grove and Jensen dairy. Albert Spiegel Collection.



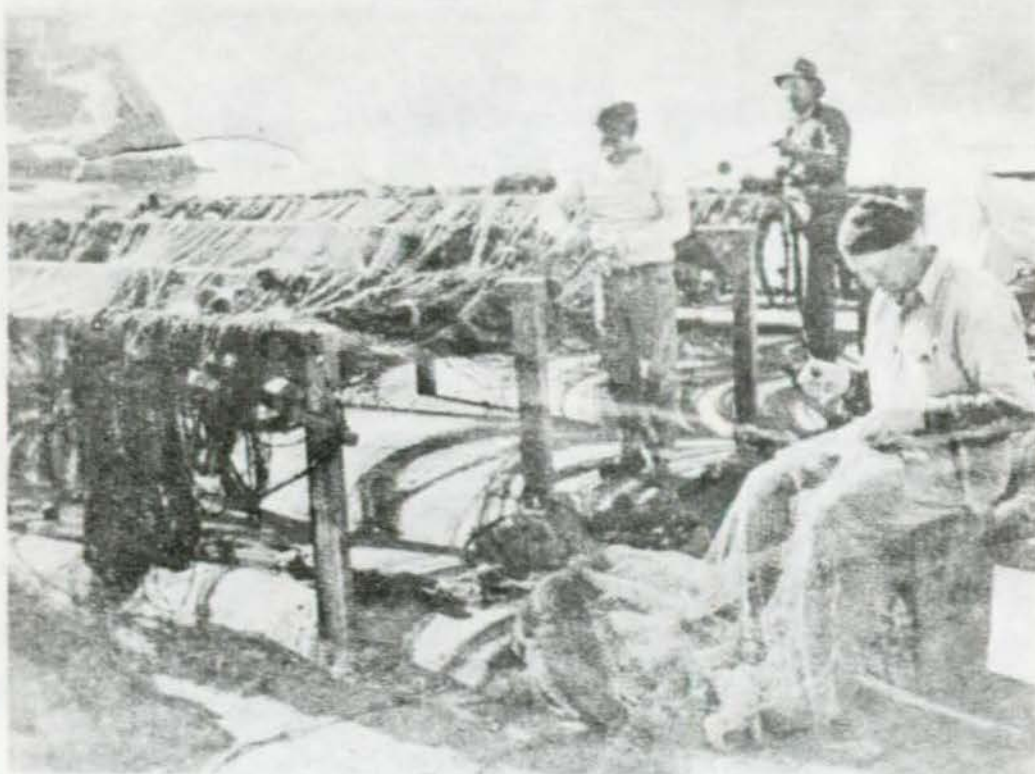
Figure 26 - Albert Spiegel and his sister fishing off the end of the 1050 foot wharf, 1921. Albert Spiegel Collection.

Figure 27 - (Below) Looking south from the end of the wharf, with Jensen's rental boats in the bay, c. 1921. Albert Spiegel Collection.





Three tons of fish were caught in this beach net operation.



Never an idle moment. Expensive nets forever need mending.

Figure 28 - Two views of herring fishing on Tomales Bay, from an unidentified magazine, undated. Collection of Merrel Rocca.



Figure 29 - View of Hamlet from wharf, 1929. Buildings, from left to right: Price cabin, Spiegel cabin, three identical rental cabins, Depot/post office (destroyed), fish packing plant (destroyed), Jensen house, bar, ark (destroyed), Morgan Oyster Co. house (rebuilt). In background are dairy barns and Hans Jensen (Huff) house. People are unidentified. Jensen Family Collection.

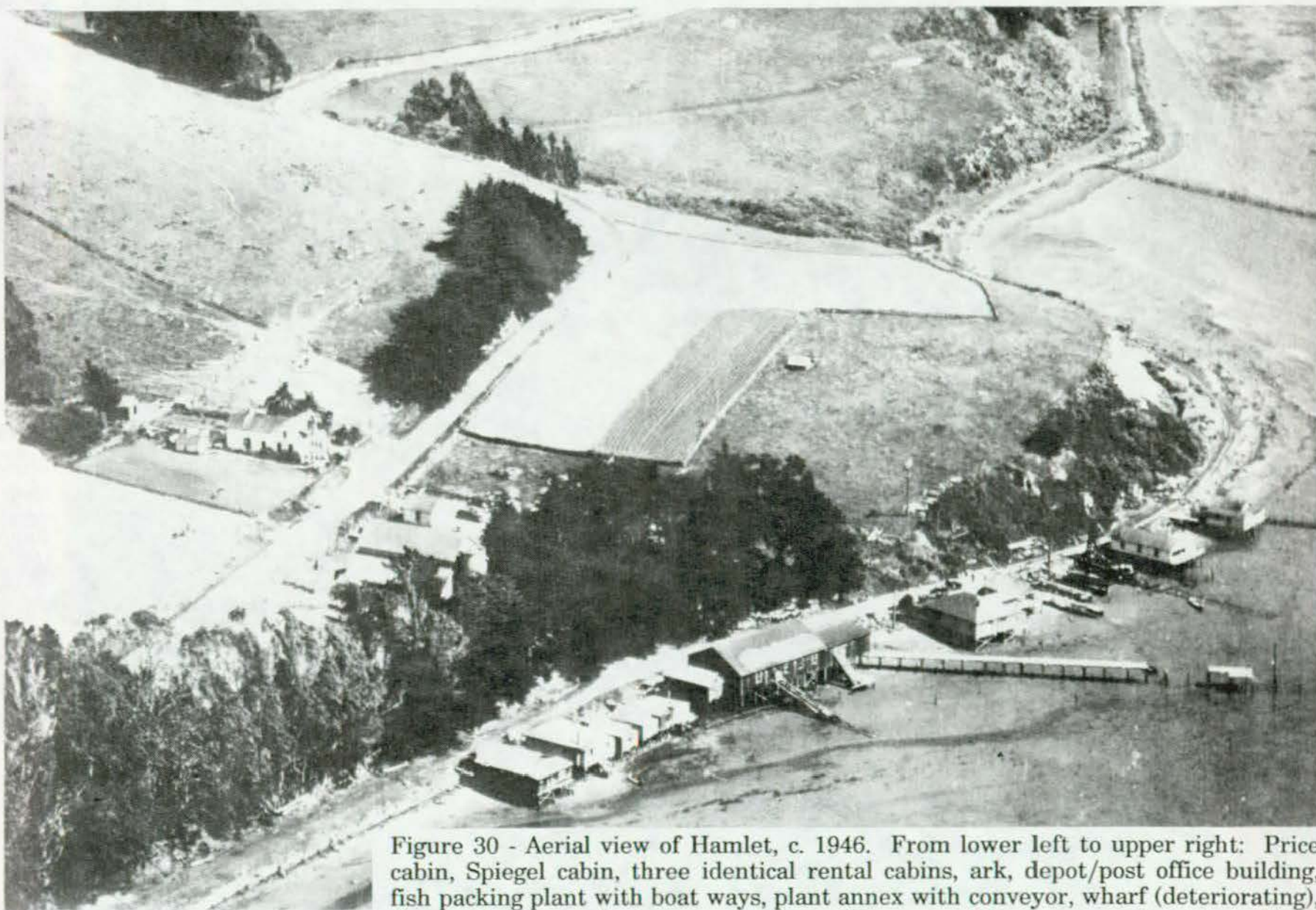


Figure 30 - Aerial view of Hamlet, c. 1946. From lower left to upper right: Price cabin, Spiegel cabin, three identical rental cabins, ark, depot/post office building, fish packing plant with boat ways, plant annex with conveyor, wharf (deteriorating), Jensen house, oyster annex and bar, wharves and boat ways, pile driver, Bean cabin, Lacey cabin, oyster fence. Dairy buildings behind trees including silo, Matteri (Huff) house center left. Water storage house on hill next to potato field. Matteri Family Collection.



Figure 31 - Aerial view of Hamlet dairy, c. 1946. Jensen's Oyster Company and wharf in upper left; horse barn, creamery (dairy house), shed, milking barn; Matteri (Huff) house at center. Matteri Family Collection.



Figure 32 - View from highway after barns and most trees were removed from parking area, c. 1956. The depot/post office, used as a garage, still stands in the center. Jensen Family Collection.



Figure 33 - Virginia and Henry F. Jensen behind the bar at Jensen's Oyster Beds, about 1965-1970. Jensen Family Collection.



Figure 34 - Jensen's Oyster Beds restaurant, about 1970. Jensen Family Collection.



Figure 35 - Interior of restaurant, 1986. From Appraisal.



Figure 36 - Looking north from parking lot, 1986. From Appraisal.

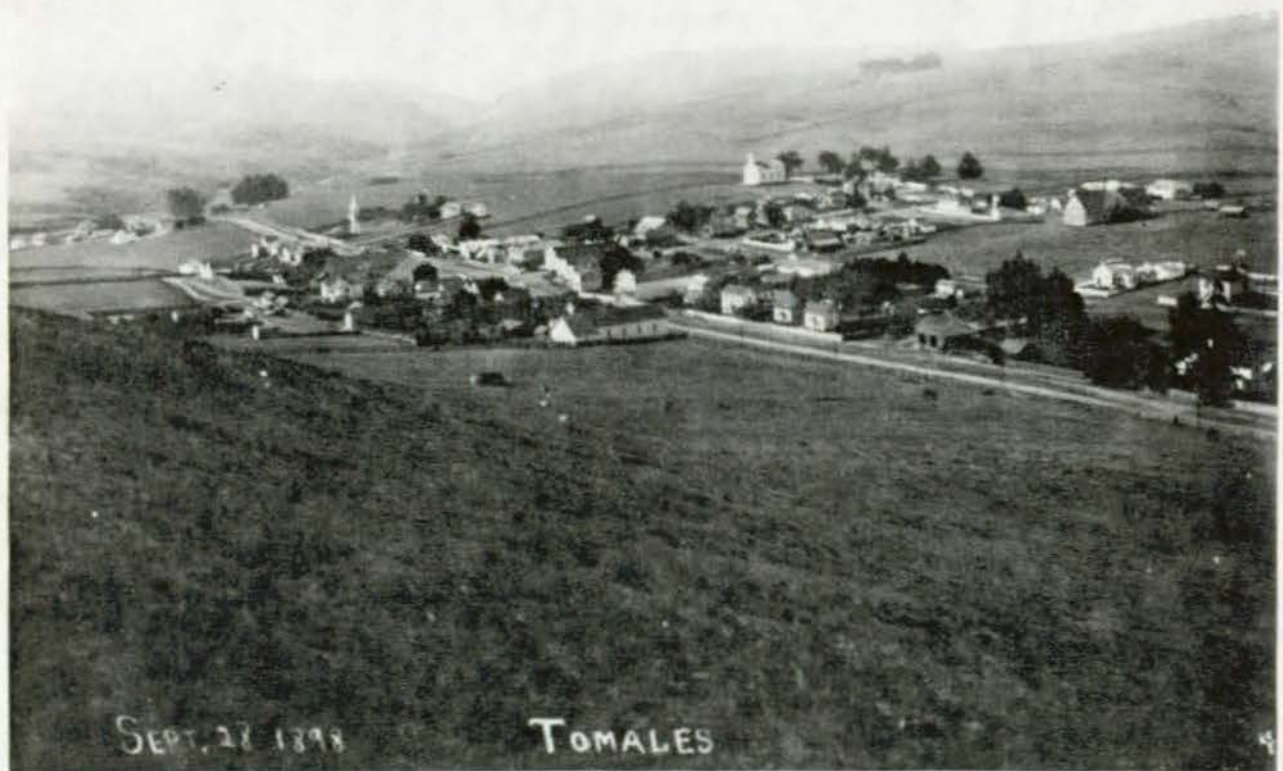


Figure 37 - Tomales in 1898, looking southwest. Keys Estuary drains toward Tomales Bay in the upper left. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.

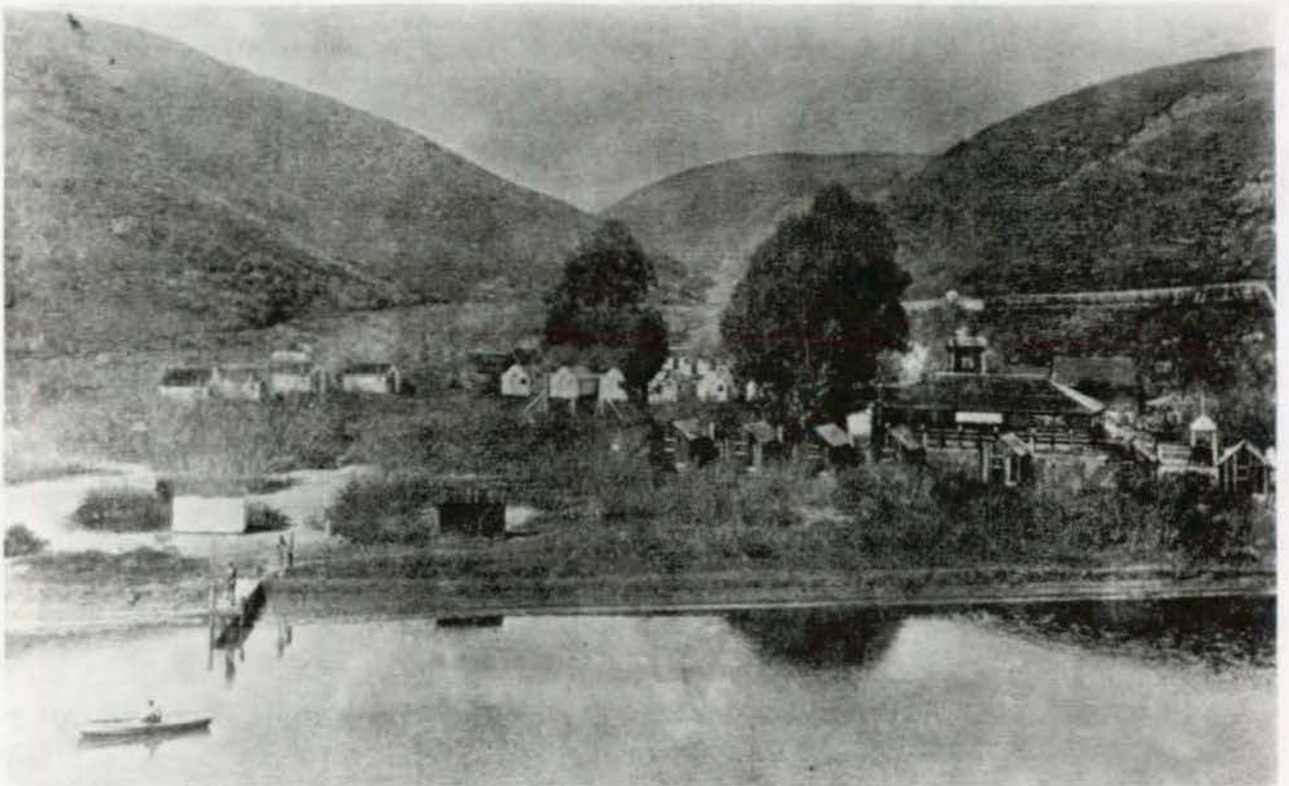


Figure 38 - Camp Pistoletti, c. 1920. Roy Graves Collection, Bancroft Library.



Figure 39 - Reynolds, 1929. Marconi in background. Jensen Family Collection.

BUILDINGS AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

IV. BUILDINGS AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

A. Description of Complex

Hamlet is a complex of cabins, houses, a restaurant and a wharf, built on pilings and lining the shore of Tomales Bay for approximately a quarter mile of the northeastern section of the bay, south of Keys (or Walker Creek) Estuary. Access to the structures is by a wide driveway connecting the bay shore with State Route 1, a two-lane asphalt road. A narrow road runs along the shoreline, this being the abandoned railbed of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad; past the structures in either direction the railbed exists as an undeveloped trail, and is eroded in many places. The complex of buildings run north and south of a small drainage originating on Bolinas Ridge to the east.

Of approximately 19 buildings on the site during the 1930s to 1950s, 11 remain. Those which no longer exist include the original (or post-1906 earthquake) railroad depot/post office/garage, fish cannery, and milking/hay barn and horse barn with post office and mercantile annex, probably dating from the Abram Huff era, 1877-1907. Of the remaining 11 buildings, not counting 9 additional structures such as outhouses and a wharf, most date from c. 1912-1925; 6 are original to their sites, while 5 have been moved to their current sites.¹

Site inspections have revealed that every structure, with the one exception of the wharf, is in fair to poor condition. All of the cabins except one are built upon eucalyptus pilings in concrete forms; some pilings have been replaced by 4x6 timbers or newer eucalyptus logs, but most are rotted or worn through. Of interest here are the eucalyptus pilings on structure 17, which were replaced in 1946 by Albert Spiegel, and appear to be fairly solid today.

All of the structures are dilapidated, although many are still of fairly solid framing; lack of paint has contributed to extremely weathered exterior walls and window frames. Each cabin is walled with either plywood, lap siding or board and batten, and no two are the same, with the exception of the two identical cabins 13 & 15. There appears to be a lack of extreme rot in the floor structures of the cabins; Albert Spiegel explained that sand wear is the major cause of structural failure on that beach. Apparently all of the cabins were heated by wood stoves.

At the time of this writing, most of the window glass has been broken by vandals since the occupants left, and many doors and much hardware have been taken.

Virginia Jensen, owner of Hamlet from 1955 to 1987, rented the cabins to various tenants, some of whom made simple improvements to the buildings. Mrs.

¹From personal interviews, historic photographs and maps.

Jensen told of her own attempts to keep the cabins in good order:

I tried to fix up a lot of the cabins like the one heading north the first little red one [11] I went in there after Henry had drowned [1971], actually he had done nothing with the cabins for literally years and so I say, well I'm gonna do something with these things here get them fixed up a little bit, the outsides didn't look like much but I tried to fix the insides. I went in and painted, you couldn't walk into the cabin because there was a big hole in the floor, so I pulled all the flooring up myself and I went out and bought tongue and groove flooring. I did it all myself, you know a lot of the paneling and all the painting . . .

B. Description of Individual Structures²

For the following report the structures have been numbered consecutively from south to north. Each structure was researched, inspected, surveyed, and photographed by the author between June and November, 1988.

- Structure 1: Outhouse/outbuilding. Built by tenant Dennis Chute c. 1971 from salvaged materials including walls from an old building possibly part of the Huff ranch. Central portion contains a toilet; south portion has concrete floor, and was used as a tool shed. North portion was an poultry shed.
- Structure 2: Cabin. This building was originally a shoe repair shop operated by Guido Matteri, located in Lower Town Tomales and in operation until about 1950-1955. It was moved on a truck to the current site by Henry F. Jensen about 1956-1960. It has been placed on a foundation of concrete piers with 6x8 posts, principal floor joists are salvaged railroad trestle timbers. Exterior walls are rounded 4" lap siding, interior walls are stained vertical 3" grooved lap fir or redwood. This cabin had only cold water and no bath facilities.
- Structure 3: House. This was built between 1912 and 1921³ and was originally occupied by a Dr. Hubbell, who was possibly the builder. It was rented by Jenny Howe, a locally-born woman who taught school in Pittsburg, during the 1940's, and after she was married to the principal of her school, Paul Lacey, until about 1948. It was then

²Information based on personal interviews, historic photographs and maps, and references cited in bibliography.

³Structure not shown on 1912 railroad map, but appears on 1921 county map.

occupied by the Christiansens for more than a decade. The house had other tenants including Stephanie Scott, an artist, during the 1970's. The building consists of a central room and two bedrooms, all paneled in stained vertical 3" grooved lap siding; the house is surrounded on the south, west and north by shed porches, used as a shower, porch, kitchen, workroom, and entrance hall. This house was equipped with a water heater and shower.

- Structure 4: Outhouse. Built by Henry J. Jensen about 1929 from salvaged vertical 3" interior lap siding, no framing, wood floor. Originally had shark fins nailed to exterior, shells in the interior. May not stand at original site.
- Structure 5: House. The original structure was built by Jack Junta in about 1915, as an oyster house for the Morgan Oyster Company.⁴ It was occupied by Morgan's oysterman, Frank Erickson. The oyster house burned to the flooring in the 1930's, and was rebuilt on the original pilings, by Henry J. Jensen. Fire scars remain on the floor joists. The house was occupied for many years by Ed Bean, a San Francisco butcher and member of a pioneer Tomales family. Albert Spiegel reported that many wild drinking parties went on here, so much that it drove out the Laceys next door. Ed Bean left by the 1950's and the house was occupied by various tenants since then. Exterior walls are horizontal lap siding. The interior walls are painted plywood. This house was equipped with a toilet and hot water heater.
- Structure 6: Boat ramp (ways). Built by Henry J. Jensen circa 1940-1946, possibly out of parts of the original ways on the cannery building. Jensen kept an A-frame pile driver here. The ramp was repaired by Henry F. Jensen in about 1955. The piles are eucalyptus, topped by 10x10 ramps with rails mounted above. The rails and timber are in an extreme state of decay.
- Structure 7: Shed. This was one of the original dairy buildings probably dating from the Abram Huff era at Hamlet (1877-1907). It is not impossible that the building could date from before 1877, but no documentation exists on the history of the original dairy structures. It is similar in shape and size to the original railroad depot building, utilizing wide lap redwood siding. The building was used as a residence by Manuel Figereti, who worked as an oysterman for the Jensens, c. 1930-1950, and probably others. It was moved to the current site c. 1955-1958, when the dairy was removed and the parking lot expanded by Henry F. Jensen. It has been used since

⁴Interviews with Clarence Pensotti and Eugene Poncia.

then as a storage shed. The outhouse attached to the front is one of Henry J. Jensen's ca. 1929 models.

- Structure 8: Wharf. A short wharf was built here by Henry J. Jensen before 1952, and rebuilt, lengthened and widened by Henry F. Jensen around 1960.⁵ Posts are driven, with concrete piers, and appear to be in fairly good shape. Decking is 2x8 on 2x12 joists. The wharf was used for small boats and access to the oyster bed directly west.
- Structure 9: Restaurant. The original three-stool bar comprises the southeast corner of the restaurant, with the south wall (horizontal narrow lap siding), floor and roofline intact. The original bar was built ca. 1921 by Henry J. Jensen, originally used as a washroom and guest house. After prohibition it was a bar serving beer and wine. When Jensen began the oyster business in the 1930's a section was added to the northwest corner of the original bar which joined the Jensen residence (structure 10). Here were built concrete oyster processing sinks and tables, which remain. The restaurant was added by Henry F. Jensen between 1955-1960, using lumber salvaged from the Hamlet barns, in part of the new structure. The siding on the south side of the restaurant still shows the red paint from the horse barn which the lumber was taken from. The new restaurant featured large picture windows, a bar with seating capacity of 15, with table and booth seating for 28, men's and women's restrooms, a kitchen and cold storage area, and made use of the older concrete oyster facilities put in by Henry J. Jensen. A false front was added and a sign reading JENSEN'S OYSTER BEDS spread the length of the building. The old railroad station sign, HAMLET, was mounted on the front wall. The restaurant is attached to the Jensen home directly north. The building was equipped with a water heater, three toilets and a urinal, aluminum kitchen sinks, walls and exhaust hood, wooden cooler cabinets behind the bar, and a 10 foot refrigerated display case for oyster sales.
- Structure 10: House. This house, built c. 1918, was occupied by Henry J. Jensen after his marriage c. 1921 to Gertrude Guldager of Tomales. It consists of three bedrooms, one bathroom, living room, kitchen and dining room, and two storage/utility rooms. It was built, like the other cabins, on eucalyptus posts on concrete piers. The exterior, with the exception of the front, is vertical board and batten, and is original. The house was occupied by Henry and Gertrude Jensen until 1955 (Gertrude died in 1949); their son Henry F. Jensen was raised in the house. Henry F. Jensen and his wife Virginia moved into the house in 1955 when they purchased the property. They

⁵Interview with John Vilicich, owner of Marshall Boat Works, who assisted in the repairs.

raised five children in the house (Henry F. Jensen died in 1971) and were occupying the house at the time of purchase by the National Park Service. The Jensens moved to Tomales in January, 1988. The house was equipped with a hot water heater, toilet and shower/bath and trash compactor. Although the house is attached to the restaurant, there is no interior access between the two buildings.

- Structure 11: Cabin. This was one of three cabins built by Jack Junta; this one was moved to the site between 1913-1921 with some others, to serve as housing for workers in the cannery and/or original oyster operation. A number of those interviewed have said the cabins were moved from Preston Point, north of Hamlet across Keys Estuary, or from Camp Pistolesi; they do not appear to be the same as other cabins at Camp Pistolesi, but more likely were moved from Sugar's Bend between Preston Point and Tom's Point. This cabin is slightly different from the next two, being smaller by about a foot in exterior dimensions. The siding is vertical 8" lap (the other two have horizontal siding), with the south side covered with plywood, painted red. This was once occupied by Clarence Pensotti, a fisherman and employee of Henry J. Jensen. The last tenant was a daughter of Virginia and Henry Jensen. The cabin was equipped with cold water only.
- Structure 12: Outhouse. Built by Henry J. Jensen about 1929, to stop tenants from dumping raw sewage into his new oyster beds. This outhouse was designated as the women's. It is constructed out of vertical 3" lap interior siding, with no internal framing and a corrugated sheet metal roof. Apparently out of use since about 1975.
- Structure 13: Cabin. Structures 13 and 15 are virtually identical, although the interiors have been altered independently. They were built by Jack Junta to replace ones that were washed away in a storm, about 1918 (see description, structure 11). This cabin, and structure 15, have horizontal lap siding on the exterior, and rough planks placed vertically for interior walls. Two windows have been added facing the bay, and two partitions divide the room. The cabin was occupied by George Hulbe, a fisherman from a pioneer family across the bay at White Gulch (George was born on Hog Island), during the 1940s. This and structure 15 were rented by John and Shirley Long of Oakland from about 1957 to 1988. The cabin is equipped with cold water only.
- Structure 14: Outhouse. Built by Henry J. Jensen about 1929, and matches the one next to it to the south (see description of structure 12). This outhouse was designated as the men's.

- Structure 15: Cabin. This cabin is identical, except for remodeling details and window placement, with structure 13. It was occupied in the 1940s by Jack and Mae Cortade; he was a truck driver, on the road much of the time, leaving his wife to live in the cabin full time. The last tenants here were John and Shirley Long. See description of structure 13.
- Structure 16: Outhouse/shower room. This was built by a tenant about 1971. According to Virginia Jensen, the builder salvaged wood from the beach and other sources, working for much of the time without power tools. The design is whimsical, with shaped wood pieces and a pseudo-oriental roof line. The structure was equipped with a hot water heater and shower.
- Structure 17: House. This is the most thoroughly documented of all the Hamlet buildings. Albert Spiegel of Larkspur had vacationed at and eventually leased this house from 1921 to 1948, and was especially generous with his knowledge about the house and Hamlet in general. The house was built in 1913⁶ by Spiegel's "uncle", Julius Spiegel of San Francisco, and Harold Ladd, also of San Francisco. Hans Jensen provided the eucalyptus pilings (see historical narrative) and Spiegel, Ladd and friends built the house. Albert Spiegel described the construction, as told to him by his uncle:

He went down to Sausalito and ordered all the lumber and had it put on to a flatcar up to Point Reyes Station, and then he had to transfer it all over to the narrow gauge, and they spotted that car right in front of his house on that track. Then he just got a whole bunch of guys up there and in two weeks they had the whole thing up . . . they worked right off the flatcar, right in front of the house.

The house was used by Spiegel and Ladd until Ladd sold out to Spiegel. The Spiegel families would come to the house on weekends and holidays, by train in the winters until 1930, then by automobile. Popular pasttimes were hunting and fishing; the family kept a number of rowboats and duck boats under the house. Spiegel recalled:

You didn't have any electricity in that house for years and years and years, and what we did, we just tied onto the

⁶Albert Spiegel places the date of construction at 1913, based on knowledge from his close contact with Julius Spiegel during the 1920s; the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way map of 1912, drawn in great detail, shows two houses on the sites of Spiegel's and the next cabin north, bringing up the possibility that the houses were erected by early 1912.

house next door and he tied onto the next one and if everybody put their toasters on at one time why we'd blow the fuses. I believe it came out of the cannery but there was no, never was any power pole brought in anywhere (laughs).

My uncle had a flush toilet in his (cabin): it was just a pipe that run straight out the back of the house and into the bay. He had the only flush toilet outside of Henry's place who had a septic tank so then when Henry got the oyster deal going, the first thing we had to do was seal up all the, we left the toilet but we sealed it up so that it couldn't be used, and then he built the community privy across from all of us, which none of us were really happy about . . .

Albert Spiegel took over the lease and moved in full time after he arrived back from Europe at the end of World War II. He commercial fished with his neighbor Frank Gee, and replaced all of the worn pilings under the house:

I put every one of those on there, had to or the house would have gone down. Some, I had to replace the pilings, but in most cases I could just take and chisel a shoulder then I built the forms around them, I put every one of those in myself . . . Henry cut (the eucalyptus pilings) ahead of time and had them all laying in front of the house, and then he put them up.

When I was living here, that was when I did all the foundations over. They were going . . . they were eucalyptus about that big (8-10") around . . . they weren't rotting out, the sand action, this one of the few houses that has sand under it, for some reason or other, the rest is all mud, but this house and the next one had sand, and the waves going back and forth, sand would whittle them down to pencil points . . . all you had to do was take a hatchet about this far above the water line and chop out a square piece until you hit solid and then, leave the spindle, put a twelve inch form around it, go this far (a few inches) above the shoulder and pour concrete and a couple pieces of wire for good luck, so it wouldn't crack . . . there were about four of them that were too far gone, and Henry senior says next week I'll have some eucalyptus sitting in front of your house, he was good that way, and I'd come up the next week and there'd be beautiful sticks waiting for me, he'd pick choice ones nice and round, and we'd just put them in green, and they worked.

That's how my uncle did it originally, when he was going to build, he told me this, that he had the old man Jensen, the old senior, Hans, and he had all those pilings waiting for him when he got here . . . all they did was they dug down to what they called hard pan, and then they had some four-by-four redwood blocks, they were about twelve inches square and four inches thick and they sunk them in and just put the square pilings right on top of them. When I went to put the replacements in I came across those four-by-fours and they were perfect. I used the same foundation, I didn't touch them. I just put the new ones right on top of them . . . I dug down and there was no rot, nothing on them, they were perfect . . .

Spiegel built a home at Bleu Baie, south of Hamlet and moved there in 1948. The Spiegel family held the lease, made in ten year agreements, until 1953, forty years after Julius Spiegel built the house. The last tenant was a daughter of Virginia and Henry Jensen's.

The house has been little altered since it was built. Albert Spiegel felt that the floor was much more solid than in the days he lived there, speculating that new plywood flooring had been put in, confirmed by Virginia Jensen. The original wainscot exists in the interior, the burlap walls have been covered by paneling and shingles, but the burlap is apparently intact underneath. The kitchen ceiling and upper walls were paneled with pressed tin, and has been painted heavily. Spiegel told of the tin ceiling:

That's tin that came out of the old nickleodeons, what they called nickleodeons in San Francisco, and they used them in there because they were supposedly fireproof. He was a great guy for scrounging, he was a real salesman, that guy. He could sell you anything and finagle you out of everything too, and that's how he got this stuff, I guess.

The original copper sink is in the kitchen, although another one that was in the porch in back is missing. The back porch was added not long after the house was built. Originally the back door led directly to a stairway to the water; boats would be tied up within reach of the bottom step. In the alcove holding the hot water heater was the family's cooler:

This didn't have a water heater in it at that time. . . it's this is the cupboard, all right, it's the same place,

those are all the shelves . . . that was a screen, it went right through to the bay, and this was screened on the top, so the air went through both sides . . . with a door, a glass door, and this was our cooler . . . you'd stop on the way up and get a twenty five pound block of ice and put it in that bottom thing there and and you could leave it under there for a week, and it would stay. That kept everything cool, we never had milk go sour or anything . . . a perfect cooler.

Notable in the design of this house are the decorative details on the front of the house: turned wood circular decorations at the upper corners of the front door and two windows, and carved Victorian eave decorations. The exterior walls are wide lap siding. This structure was equipped with a hot water heater, toilet, and shower/bath, and had a propane connection.

- Structure 18: House. This house was originally a one room cabin, which now makes up the eastern portion, or the kitchen, of the house. Virginia Jensen heard a story, unsubstantiated, that the cabin was built by the railroad to house crew members; while the structure appears on a 1912 railroad map, it is doubtful that the railroad company would have a need to house a crew at this location, as the company had a section house at Point Reyes Station. The cabin was occupied by a Mr. Meyers, and/or Pryor, then for many years by O.H. "Slim" Price, a city councilman and Mayor of Healdsburg from 1946-1954. It was apparently Price, who leased the house during the 1930s and 1940s, who built the two additions: a larger room and a porch enclosed with large windows. The additions are distinctive for their diagonal flooring, designed to increase structural strength. The house was rented from 1970 to 1987 by writer/musician Sam Schaffer, who published a small magazine, the "Hamlet Halfshell," out of this home. The exterior walls are mixed sidings, horizontal and vertical. The house was equipped with cold water only. The interior is half remodeled with sheet rock; part of the original interior walls remain. It is perhaps the most dilapidated of all the cabins and houses.
- Structure 19: Outhouse. 2x4s and plywood with "moon" cut in side, corrugated sheet metal roof. Built ca. 1968 by Gene Wagner, a tenant.
- Structure 20: Oyster Barge. This oyster barge has been with the Jensens as long as Virginia Jensen can remember, and she speculates that it was the original oyster barge at the site. It is possible that it was from the Morgan Oyster Company days (ca. 1915-1920). The barge, measuring 9 x 25 feet, was used by the Jensens for planting and

harvesting oysters in their beds, and has not been used for about eight to ten years. It was originally well-built and designed with a craftsman's eye, but is now dilapidated and altered by the addition of flotation panels.

Structure 21: Reservoir. Built before 1948, this has been called a spring house or water tank; it is a concrete storage tank for the Hamlet water supply, which originated on the hill across the highway, and was fed by gravity. Virginia Jensen stated that the water supply was always of good quality, and plentiful. Water tests in the aquisition file show the water acceptable for drinking, although during 1981 the water supply was found to contain bacteria and corrections were ordered. Either the reservoir is located on a spring site or the tank is leaking, as the ground appears to be wet at all times. The structure is concrete tank with a wood frame roof, screened to prevent entry by animals.

Other historic features include: an anchor, located in the mud off of structure 2; the broken concrete foundation of the silo from the old dairy, now on the beach between structures 10 and 11; fence posts made of abandoned railroad ties; rails, from the Northwestern Pacific Railroad which traversed the property, on the beach between structures 2 and 3; an unaltered cut and mostly eroded fill, made by Chinese hand labor, at the south end of the property; numerous cypress and eucalyptus trees, planted as windbreaks by Abram Huff; and the remains of the original 1873 county road, abandoned in 1906 after the earthquake caused a section to slide. Both the road and the slide section are intact, in the southeastern portion of the property. A report has been filed with the National Park Service by an archaeologist, noting archaeological features.

C. Photographs



Figure 1 - View of Hamlet from Tomales Bay, view to west. 35mm color photograph by Terry Nordbye.



Figure 2 - View of structures 1, 2, 3, and 5, with portion of 8 (wharf) showing. View to northwest, Preston and Tom's Points behind.



Figure 3 - Structure 1, outhouse/toolshop, south and west sides.



Figure 4 - Structure 2, old shoe shop, south and east sides.



Figure 5 - Structure 3, Lacey cabin, east side.

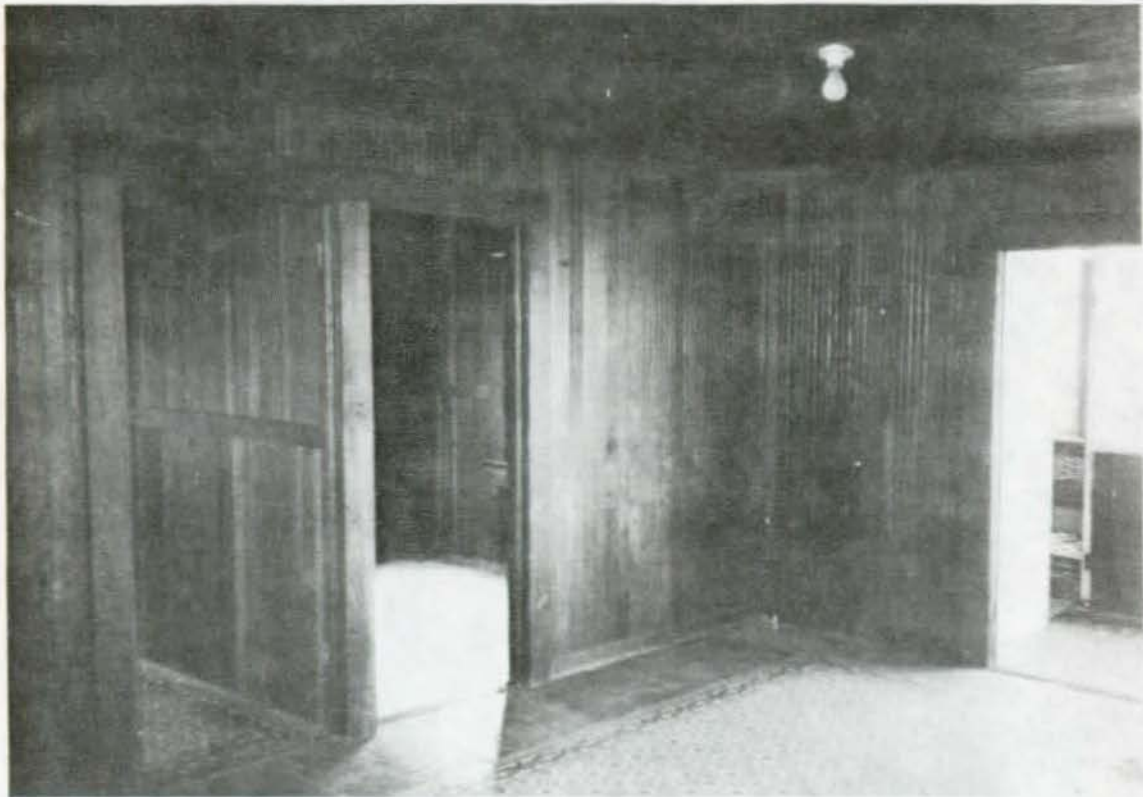


Figure 6 - Structure 3, Lacey cabin, interior view.

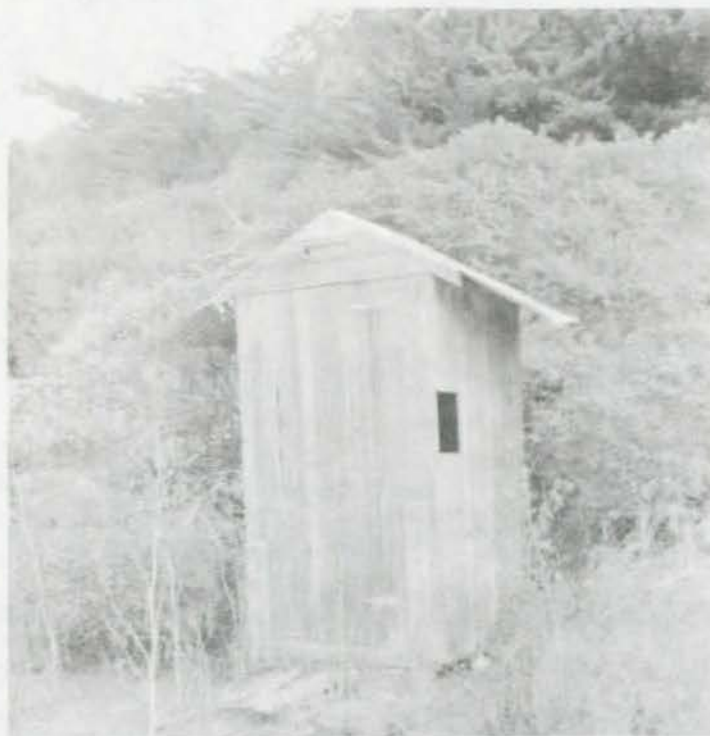


Figure 7 - Structure 4, outhouse, west and south sides.



Figure 8 - Structure 5, Bean cabin, north side.



Figure 9 - Structures 5, 3, 2 from wharf, view to southeast.



Figure 10 - Structure 6, boat ways, view to northwest, wharf behind.



Figure 11 - Structure 7, shed, west side.



Figure 12 - Structures 9 and 10, restaurant and Jensen house, view to west from hill. Preston Point in distance.



Figure 13 - Structures 9 and 10, restaurant and Jensen house, south and west sides. View from wharf.

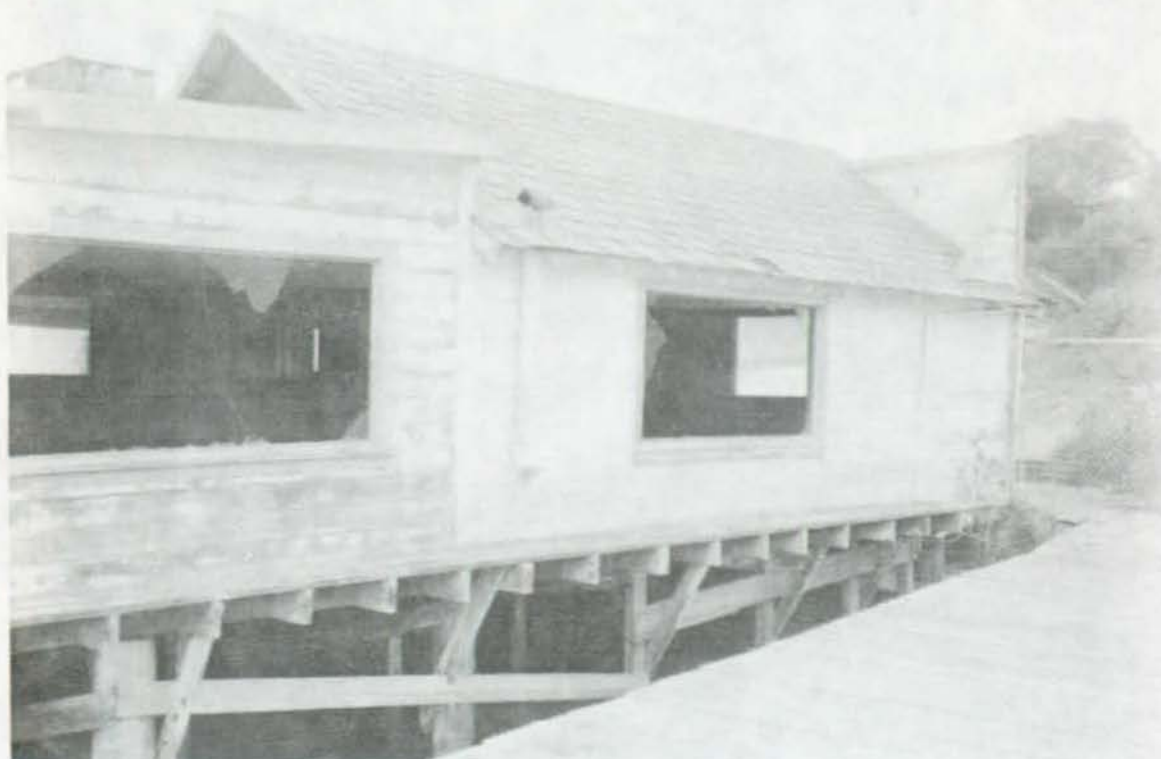


Figure 14 - Structure 9, restaurant, south side. Showing original roofline and siding of cabin.



Figure 15 - Structure 9, restaurant, interior. View to west.



Figure 16 - Structure 9, restaurant interior, oyster processing area.



Figure 17 - Main complex, view to south. Structures 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 (left to right). Oyster shells stacked at left.



Figure 18 - Structure 10, Jensen house, north side.



Figure 19 - Culvert directly north of Structure 10. View to east.



Figure 20 - North complex (structures 11-20) from wharf, view to northeast. Structures 9 and 10 to right.



Figure 21 - North complex from railroad grade, view to north. Left to right: structures 11, 13, 15, 17, 18.



Figure 22 - Structures 11, 13, 15, east sides.

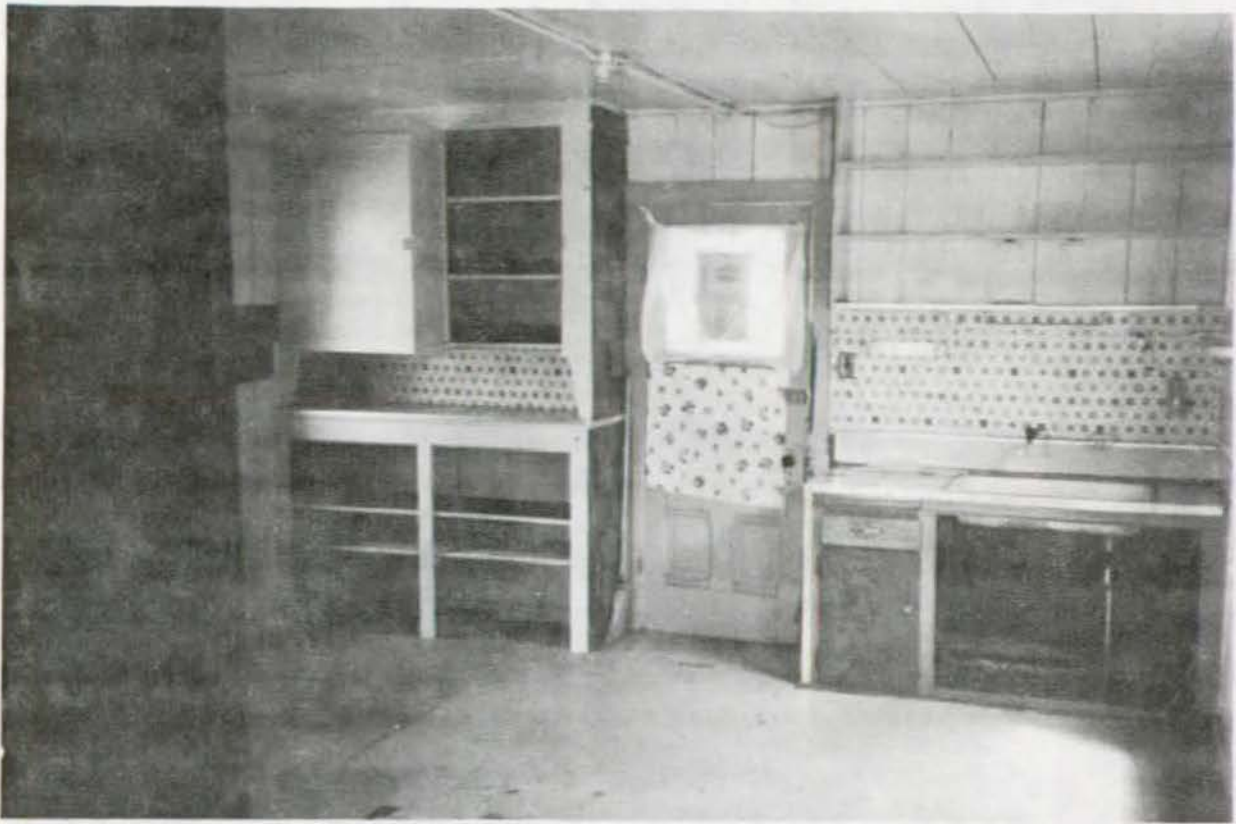


Figure 23 - Structure 13, interior east wall.



Figure 24 - Structures 14 and 12, outhouses, west and south sides.



Figure 25 - Structure 16, outhouse, west and south sides.

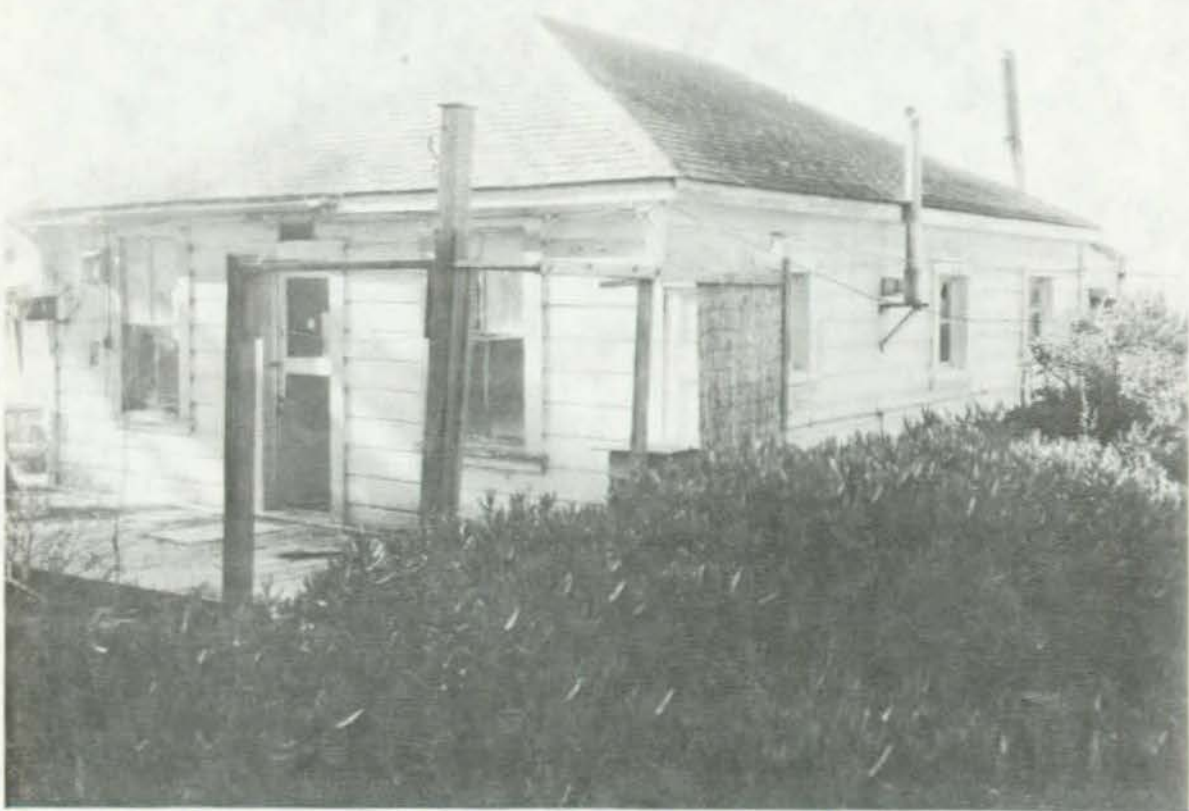


Figure 26 - Structure 17, Spiegel cabin, east and north sides.

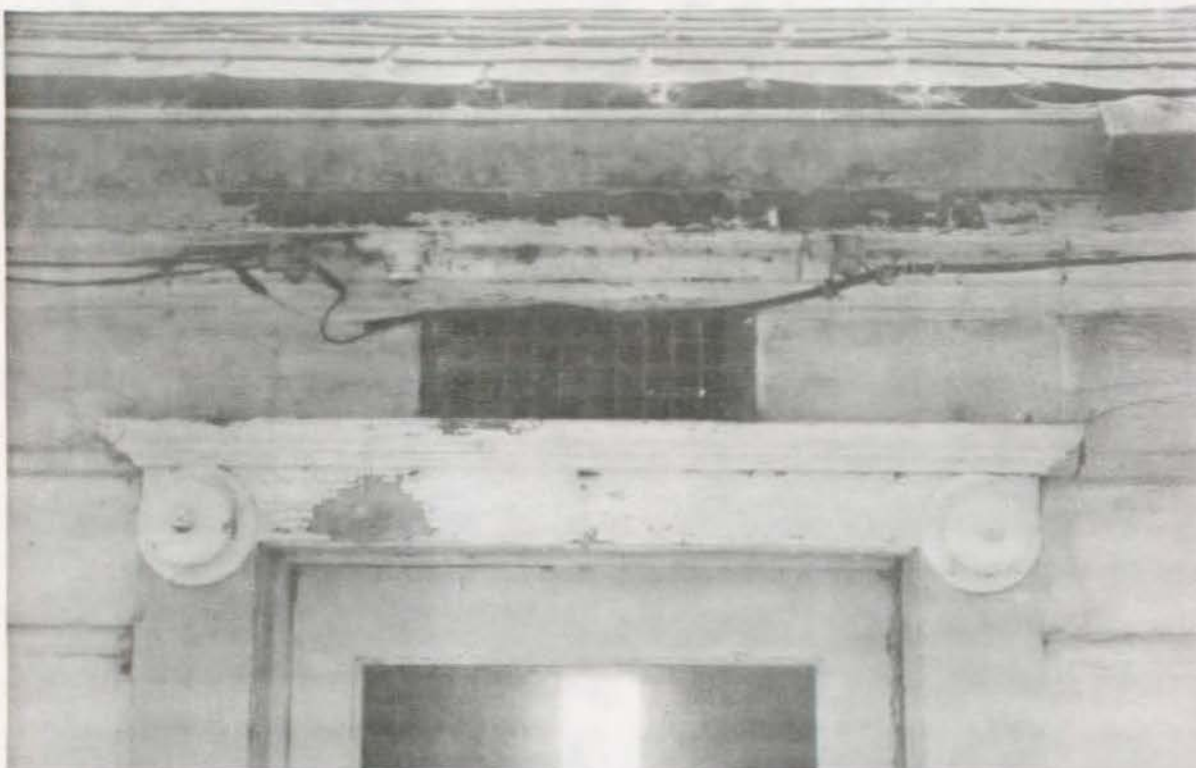


Figure 27 - Structure 17, Spiegel cabin, decoration over front (east) door.



Figure 28 - Structure 17, Spiegel cabin, detail of pressed tin on kitchen walls and ceiling.



Figure 29 - Structure 17, Spiegel cabin, pilings and subfloor. Typical of all structures at Hamlet.



Figure 30 - Structure 18, Price cabin, north side.



Figure 31 - View to north from railroad grade. Structure 19 right center, 20 on beach under tree, left.



Figure 32 - Structure 20, oyster barge (detail), view to west.



Figure 33 - Structure 21, water tank, north and east sides, view to southwest.



Figure 34 - View to south at south end of property, of railroad grade (CA-MRN-560). Remains of fill in foreground, large cut in center. Nick's Cove in distance.



Figure 35 - Abandoned county wagon road, 1872-1906. View to northeast; State Highway One at upper right.



Figure 36 - South portion of property, view to south. Railroad grade along shore, right; abandoned county road on hillside below current State Highway One; slide area in front of eucalyptus grove.

D. Significance

Hamlet has been shown to have local historical significance in archaeology, oystering, fishing, transportation and recreation.

The Archaeological Overview discusses significant prehistoric resources within the boundary of the Hamlet property. The archaeologist, Faith L. Duncan, found and listed three high-density prehistoric sites (CA-MRN-556H) which overlap, covering a number of acres of the property. The historic resources were recorded as a part of CA-MRN-556H as well. None of the sites have been excavated, and erosion and public access are threatening the sites; human remains have been found on the surface in some areas. The sites have potential for excavation, although the archaeologist has recommended measures for protection of the sites in the meantime. The subject of Coast Miwok presence at Tomales Bay has had little investigation, and the sites at Hamlet could be important sites for future study.¹

Hamlet has local historic significance in oystering and fishing because of the importance of Hamlet's pioneering role in the development of the oyster industry on Tomales Bay, one of the few major oyster growing areas on the West Coast. Existing on the site are numerous buildings and structures from 50 to 75 years old which represent the heyday of the fishing and oyster industries on Tomales Bay. Many of the cabins were used to house workers in these industries. Much of the original oyster processing facility, ca. 1930, remains in the restaurant. A commercial fishing industry has been active at Hamlet for over a century. Fresh fish was one of the products shipped out of Hamlet in the early days of the railroad, 1875-1900. A regionally significant fish canning business, the F.E. Booth Company of San Francisco and Monterey, chose Hamlet in 1917 as the site of a large herring packing plant to fill demands during World War I. Some of the existing cabins were built as housing for laborers in this industry at that time. The railroad shipped tons of herring out of Hamlet daily during this time. Local fishermen have traditionally occupied many of the cabins at Hamlet until recently.

Hamlet has local historic significance in transportation and commerce because of its importance as a rail stop for freight and passengers, second only to Marshall in volume of business. In addition, Hamlet had a U.S. Post Office for 24 years, as well as a mercantile store, although no remains of these activities are evident. The close commercial connection between Hamlet and the Pierce Ranch on Point Reyes, a historically significant ranch complex across Tomales Bay, has been documented. A number of significant resources still exist at Hamlet. The remains of the railroad grade stretch the length of the property, and include evidence of hand tool use during the original construction by Chinese labor and various remains of trestlework, culverts and cuts and fills (recorded as CA-MRN-560H). The early development of Marin County's road system is represented by a 1/2 mile section

¹Duncan, Faith L., An Archaeological Overview of the Jensen Tract, Point Reyes National Seashore (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Departments of Anthropology and Geosciences, 1988).

of hand-built wagon road (1872) which traverses the southern section of the property. An excellent and rare example of damage to local transportation systems caused by the 1906 earthquake exists, where the 1872 road, built by one of the prominent owners of Hamlet, was destroyed by a landslide and subsequently rerouted. The site is intact and quite dramatic.

Hamlet has local historic significance in recreation as the site of a commercial recreation industry since 1878 when Abram Huff developed visitor-oriented facilities. Many of the cabins were built 1912-1930 as weekend and summer homes for families living in the larger cities of the San Francisco Bay area.

Although most of the structures with the highest degree of historical significance are no longer existing, many of the remaining buildings and features are significant in local history. The majority of the structures are dilapidated, in many cases greatly altered, and rehabilitation will require substantial funding.

E. Recommendations

Hamlet, comprising a 40 acre parcel of land and tidelands fronting on Tomales Bay in Marin County, California, contains a complex of 21 structures, including 9 cabins, a vacated restaurant and various outbuildings. It is one of the oldest sites in continuous human occupation on Tomales Bay. Hamlet was vacated in January 1988 after the National Park Service purchased the property from the Jensen family for inclusion in Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The structures are lying abandoned and are suffering abuses of weather and vandalism. The future of the complex needs to be decided as soon as possible. At issue is whether to rehabilitate the structures or to raze them and restore the site. Most of the buildings are over 50 years old and all have been documented in this Historic Resource Study.

As a cultural resource, Hamlet is impaired by the fact that most of the structures pertinent to the early history of the site (1875-1920) were removed some thirty years ago. These include the railroad depot, F.E. Booth fish packing plant and the Huff/Jensen dairy. The remaining structures, mostly built between 1906 and 1925, reflect only the topics of oystering, fishing, transportation and recreation, although practically all of the present structures were connected to the last decade of railroading at Hamlet and should be considered with that factor in mind. The fact that Hamlet has been occupied continuously since at least 1859 and by Coast Miwok Indians for centuries before that, needs to be addressed.

The physical condition of the buildings can be generalized: all are dilapidated, vandalized, lacking in approved utilities, and sitting on very poor wood pilings. However, the cabins are not beyond repair and should be considered renovatable, but repair may involve extensive replacement of materials resulting in loss of historic fabric. Expenses would undoubtedly be high; for instance, sewer and water improvements have been estimated at \$200,000 by rehabilitation specialists, with

an overall rehabilitation estimate at approximately \$500,000.

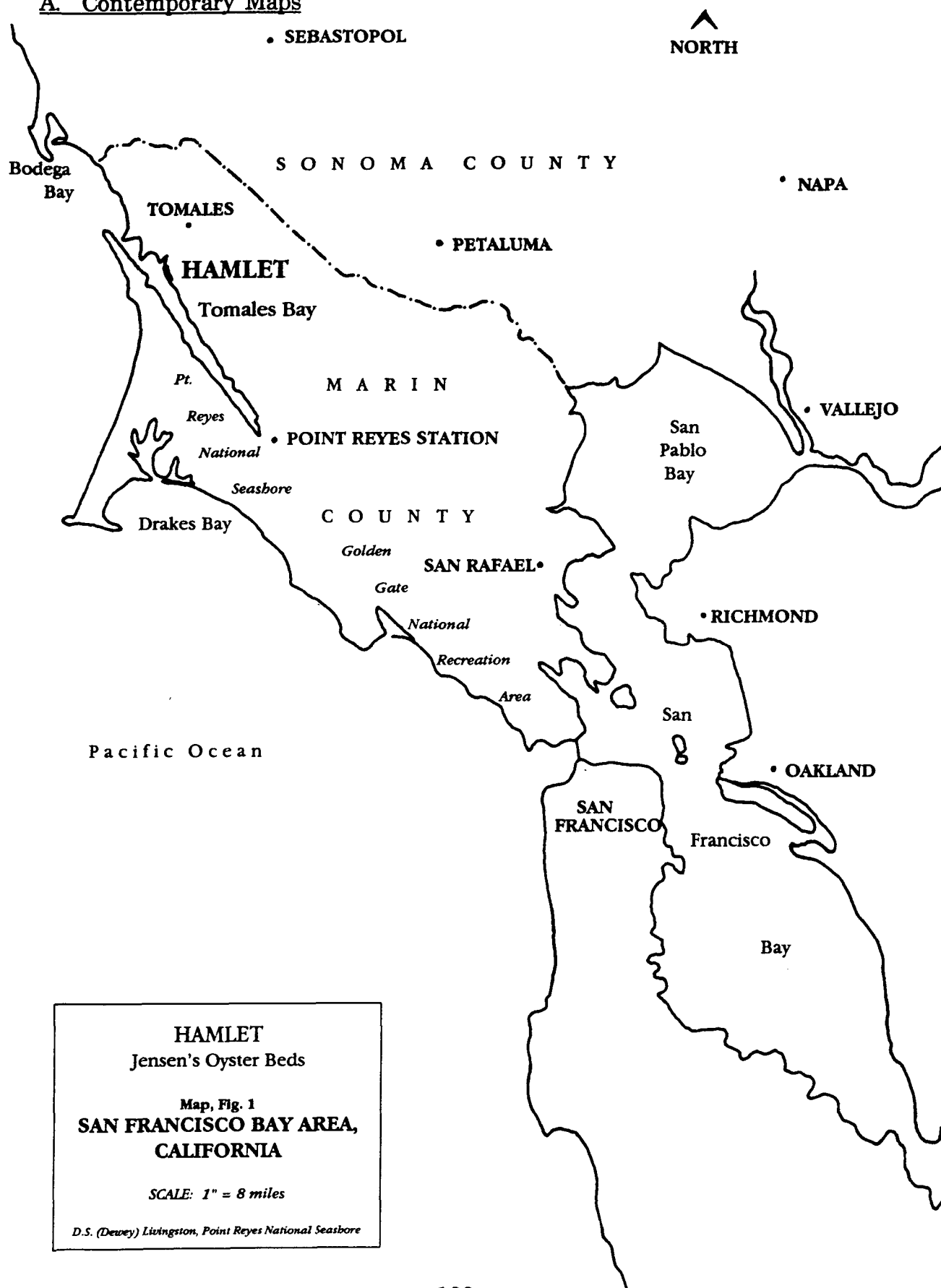
Hamlet has been found to have significance in the local history of archaeology, oystering and fishing, transportation and recreation. Recommendations are as follows:

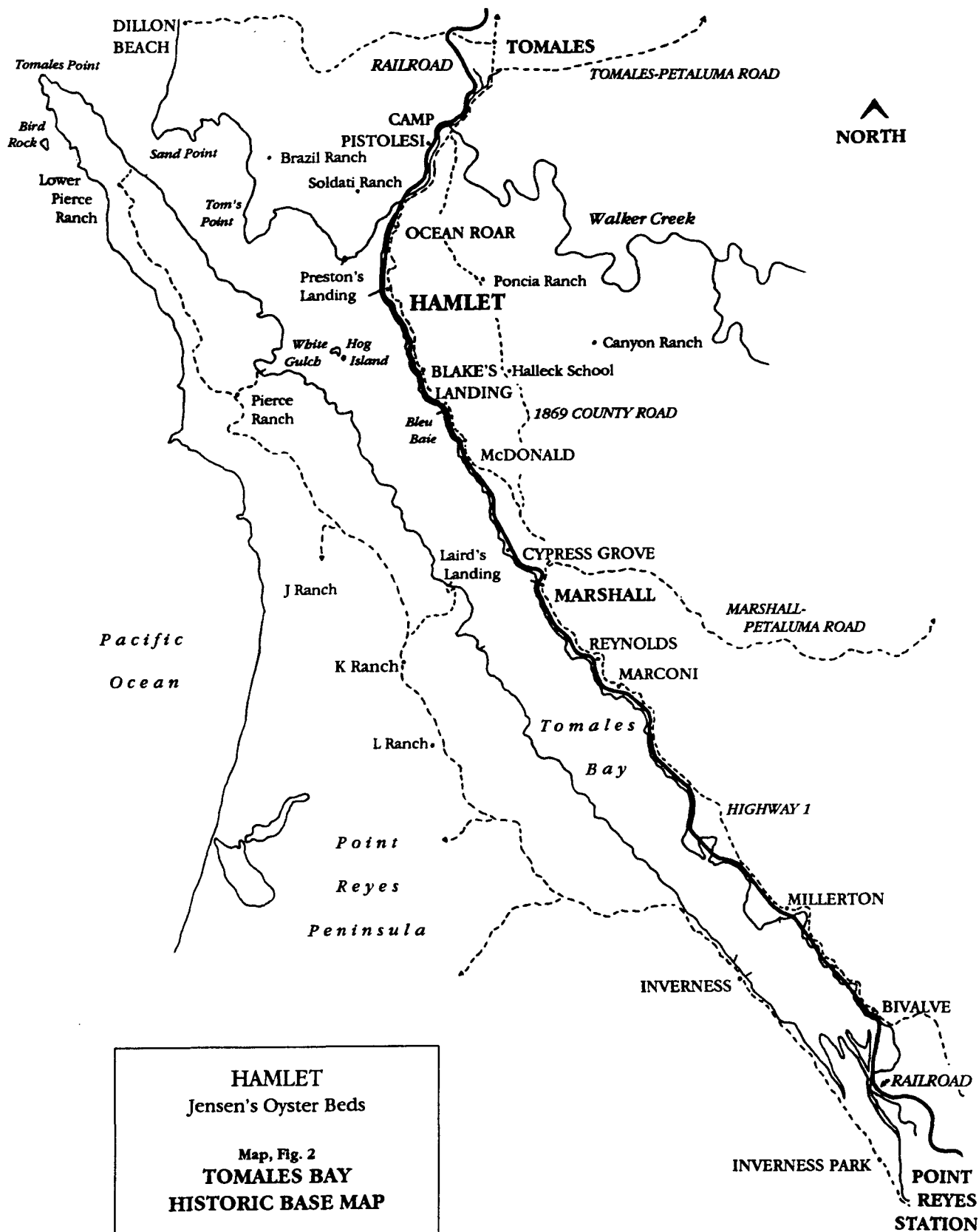
1. A formal determination of the eligibility of the property for the National Register of Historic Places be made.
2. All of the data obtained by the research efforts for the Historic Resource Study be preserved in the Point Reyes National Seashore archives.
3. The archaeological sites should be entered in the State Inventory of Archaeological Sites; protection measures for the threatened sites should be implemented as soon as possible.
4. If found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, any action taken on the Hamlet property should conform to the guidelines of the General Management Plan of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which states: "To reuse existing buildings for visitor and management needs in order to help preserve historic structures and reduce building costs. To retain the current character of cultural resources pending completion of detailed resource management plans. To recognize the importance of the cultural resources within the recreation area through a positive program of their identification, evaluation, preservation, management and interpretation."
5. If found to be eligible for the National Register, alternatives for the property should be developed and analysis for feasibility, suitability, historic preservation be accomplished under the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 CFR 800) by the National Park Service.
6. The Point Reyes/GGNRA Citizens Advisory Commission should be consulted in arriving at a proposed alternative. The Commission could assist in seeking the comments of Native Americans and interested persons including groups, local preservation organizations and other organizations.
7. The National Park Service should consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer on the proposed alternative/undertaking pursuant to the above if the property is determined eligible under the National Register criteria.

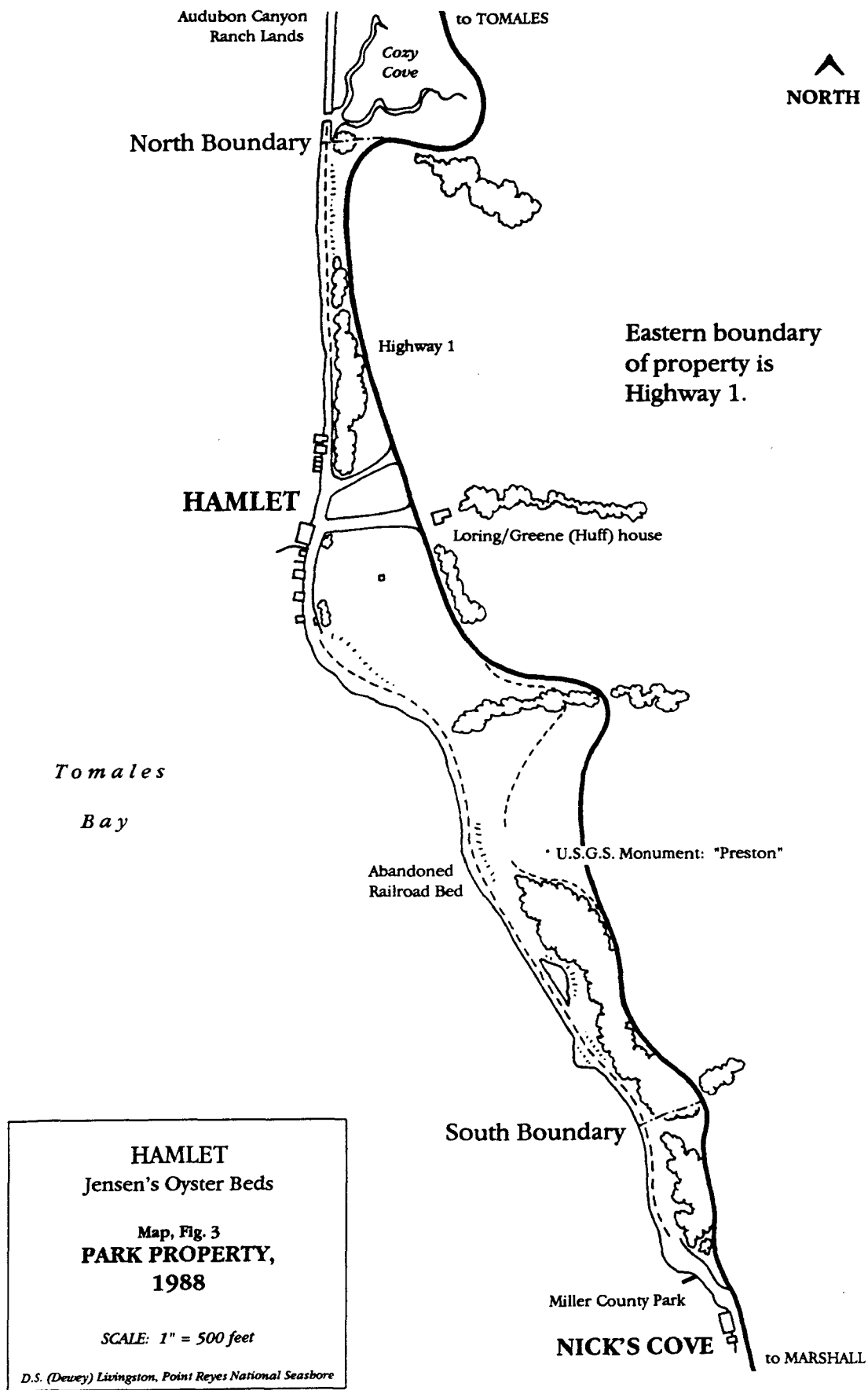
MAPS

V. MAPS

A. Contemporary Maps

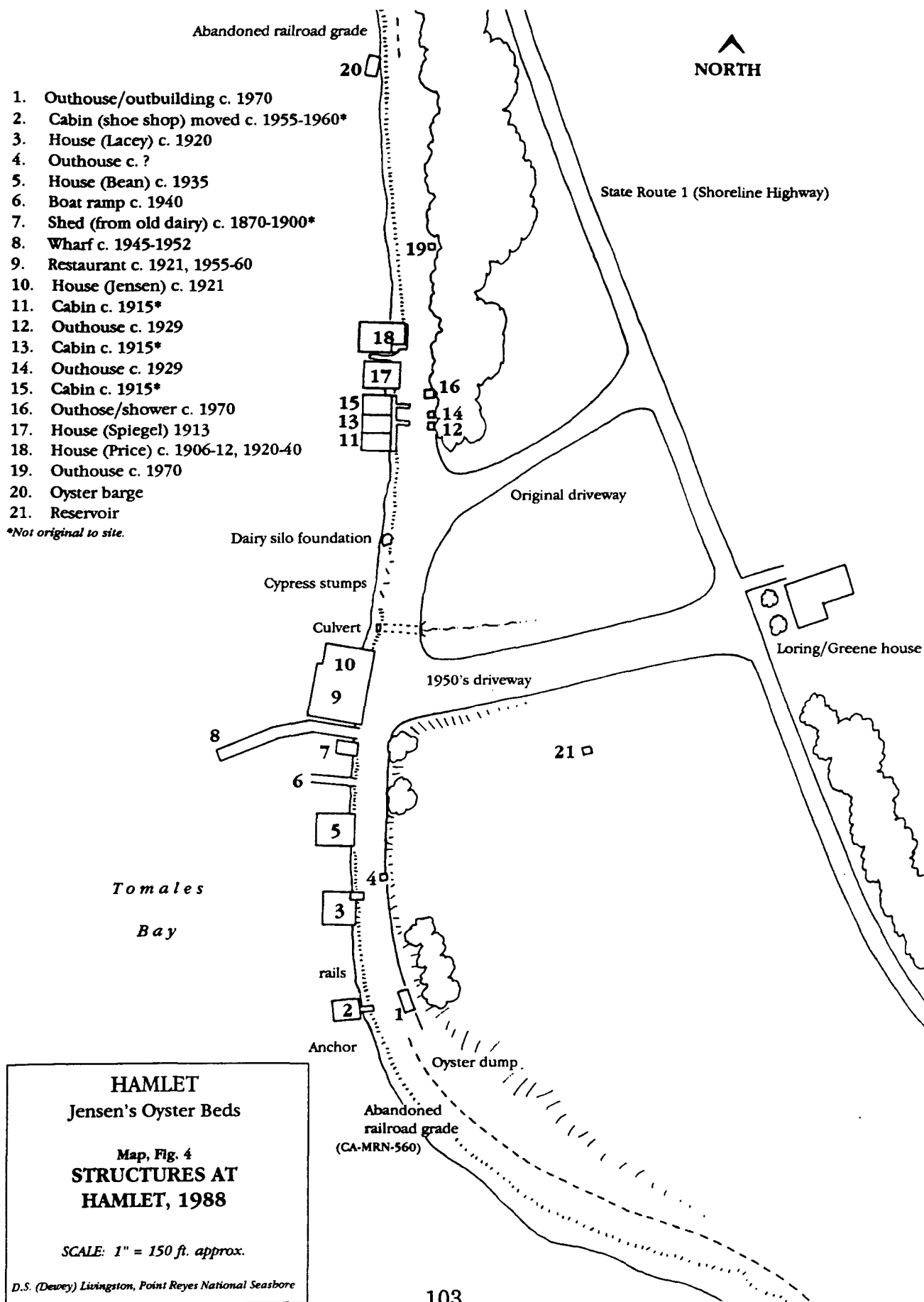


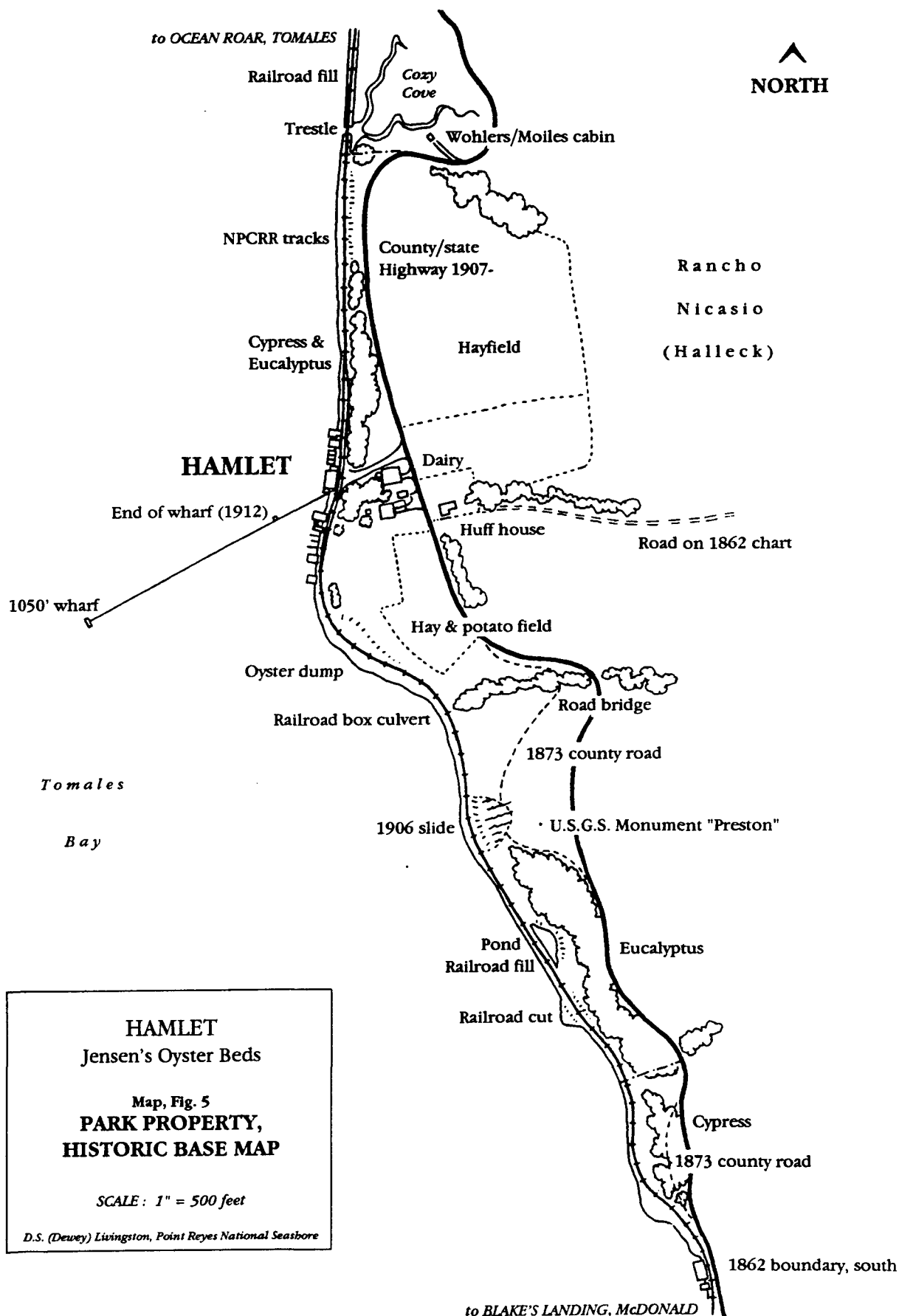


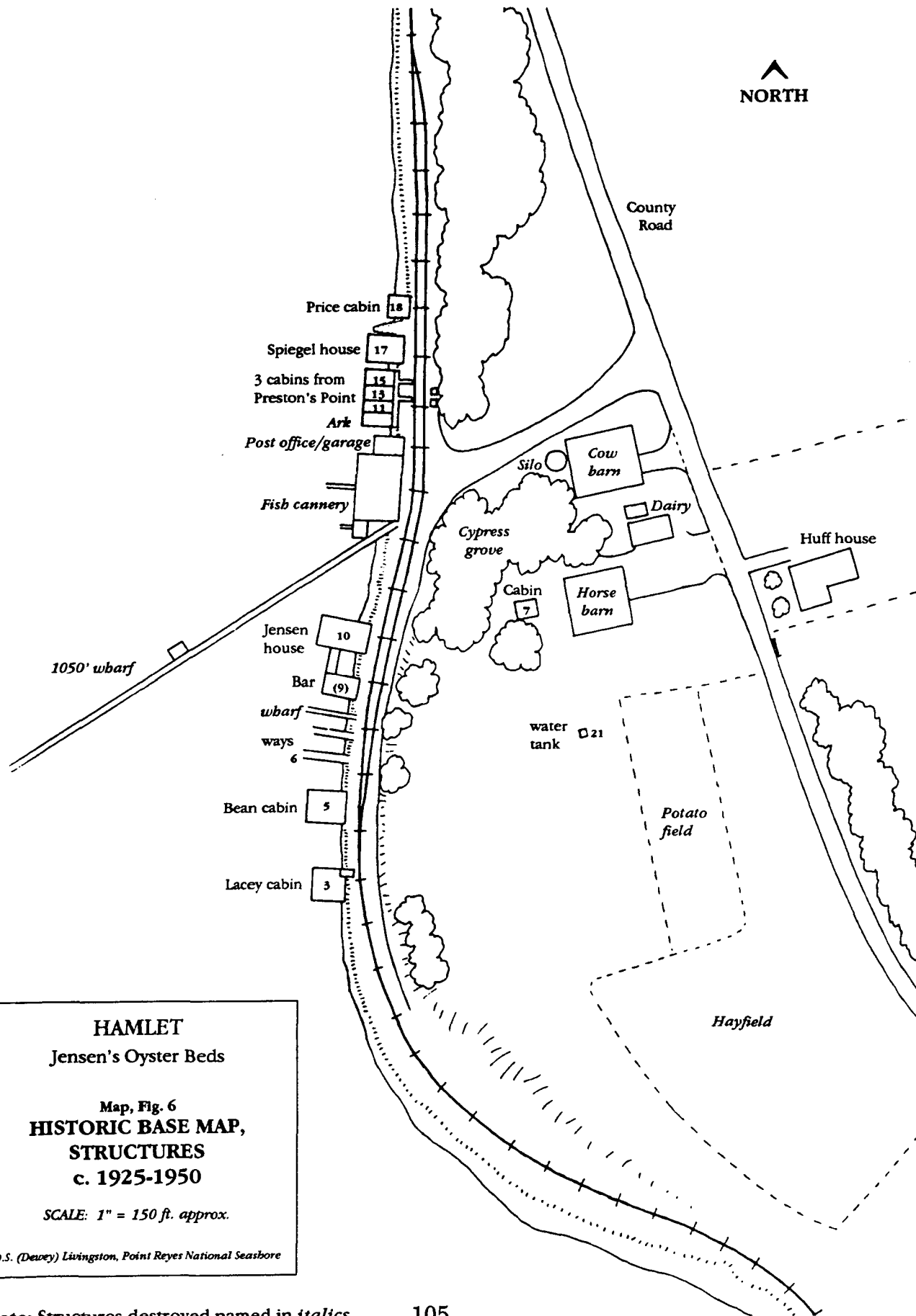


1. Outhouse/outbuilding c. 1970
2. Cabin (shoe shop) moved c. 1955-1960*
3. House (Lacey) c. 1920
4. Outhouse c. ?
5. House (Bean) c. 1935
6. Boat ramp c. 1940
7. Shed (from old dairy) c. 1870-1900*
8. Wharf c. 1945-1952
9. Restaurant c. 1921, 1955-60
10. House (Jensen) c. 1921
11. Cabin c. 1915*
12. Outhouse c. 1929
13. Cabin c. 1915*
14. Outhouse c. 1929
15. Cabin c. 1915*
16. Outhouse/shower c. 1970
17. House (Spiegel) 1913
18. House (Price) c. 1906-12, 1920-40
19. Outhouse c. 1970
20. Oyster barge
21. Reservoir

*Not original to site.

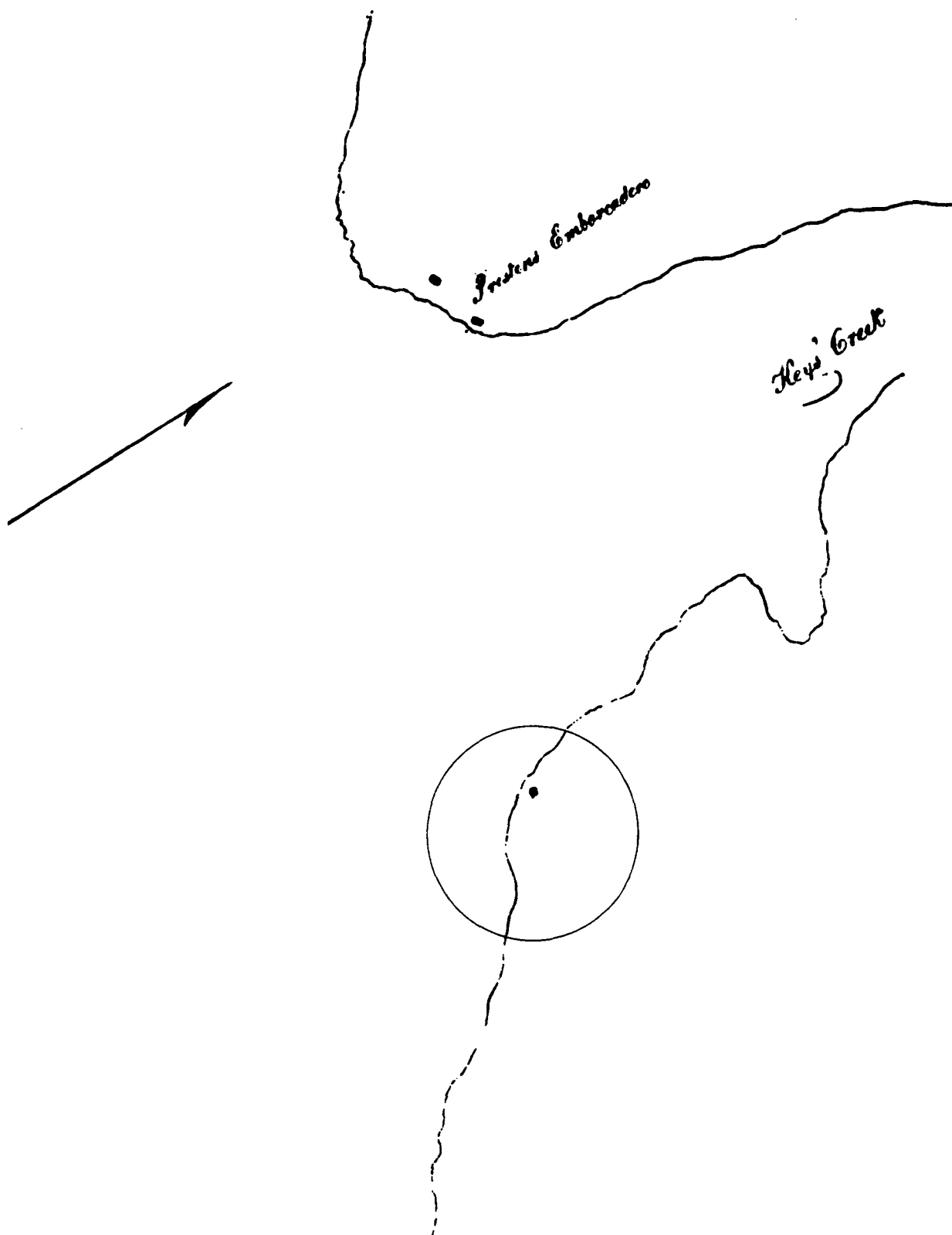




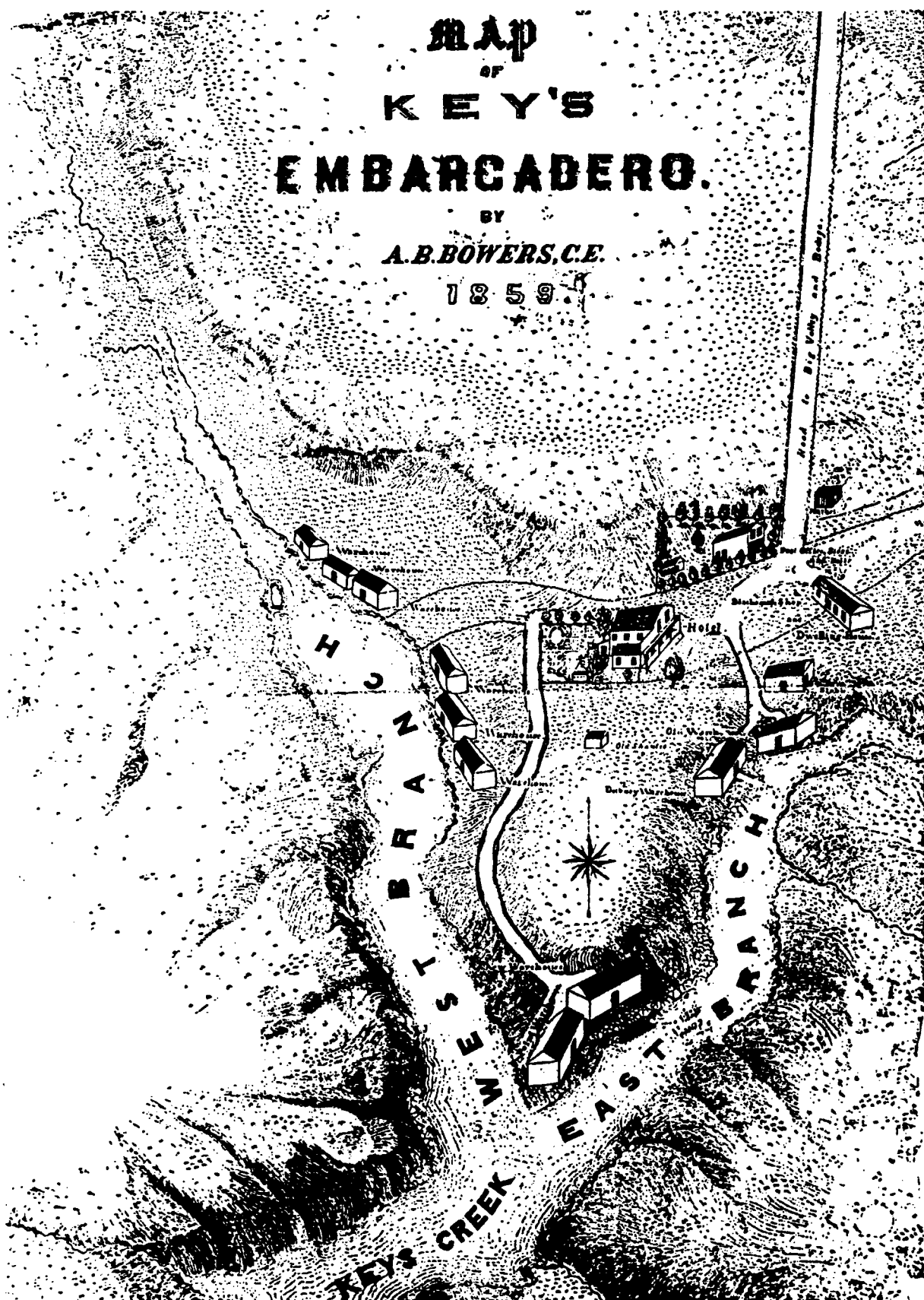


Note: Structures destroyed named in *italics*.

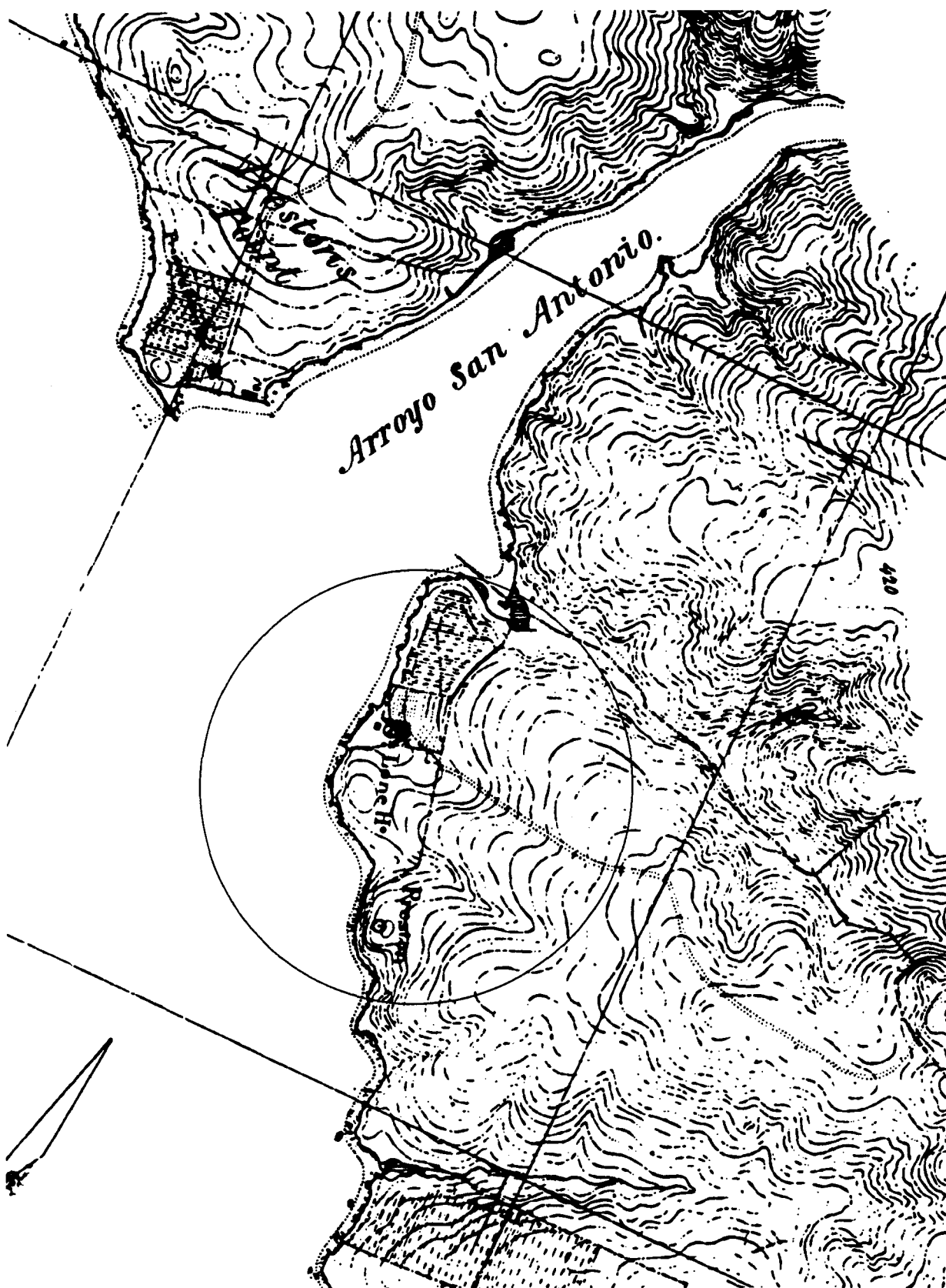
B. Historic Maps



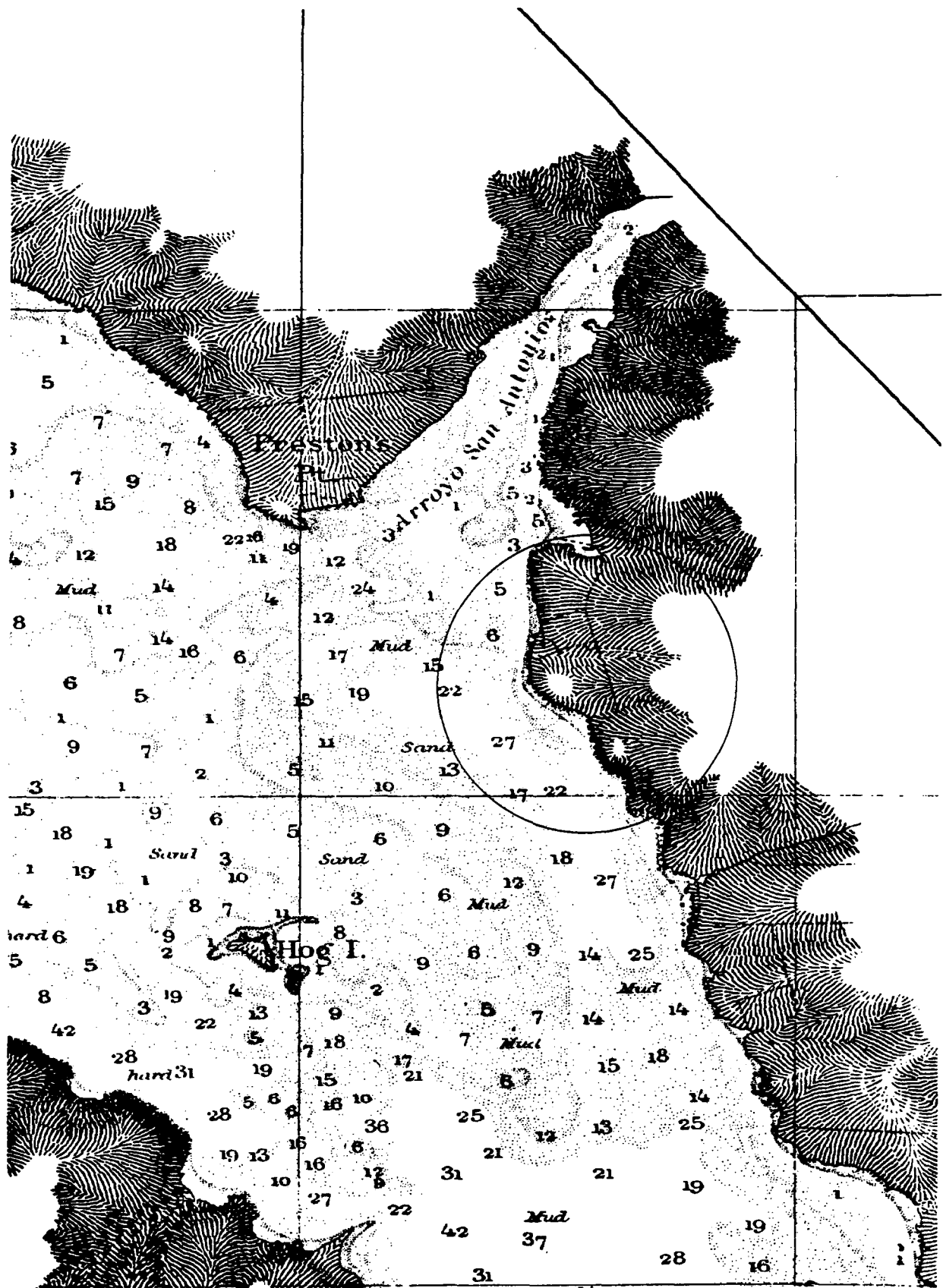
1856: Coast Survey, sketch of Tomales Bay Station (detail)



1859: Map of Key's Embarcadero (Marin County Historical Society)



1862: U.S.G.S. Tomales Bay Chart, Preliminary (detail)



1863 - U.S.C.G.S. Chart, Tomales Bay (detail)

COUNTY SURVEYOR'S OFFICE,

Marin

County, Cal.

TIDE
~~Swamp and Overflowed~~ Lands.

Survey No. *226*

Township *4 North*

Range *10 West*

Sections *Fractional*

East one-half of
Section No. 11. and
Fractional N.E. 1/4 of
N.E. 1/4 of Section No. 14.

BASE AND MERIDIAN OF MOUNT DIABLO

Containing *21 ⁸⁰/₁₀₀* Acres.

Surveyed *April 12th*, 1901,

For *Abraham Huff.*

Sec. No. 2

Sec. No. 1



Sec. No. 12

Scale 400 ft. = 1 inch

FIELD NOTES.

Beginning at a point in the exterior boundary line of the Rancho Nicasio from which point the corner to sections 12, 11 and 12, T. 4 N. R. 10 W., Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, line $N 60^{\circ} 40' E. 27^{\frac{80}{100}}$ Chaine distant, Thence West $2^{\frac{80}{100}}$ Chaine crossing tide lands to the line of low water in Tomales Bay; Thence along said line of low water $S 5^{\circ} W 19^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs., $S 10^{\circ} 45' E 4^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs., $S 42^{\circ} 30' E 12^{\frac{10}{100}}$ Chs., $S 20^{\circ} E 4^{\frac{80}{100}}$ Chs., $S 35^{\circ} E 9^{\frac{80}{100}}$ Chs., South $2^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs., East 2 Chs., $S 40^{\circ} E 2^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs., South $7^{\frac{60}{100}}$ Chs. $S 22^{\circ} E 11^{\frac{10}{100}}$ Chs.; Thence East $1^{\frac{15}{100}}$ Chs. crossing tide lands to the line of high tide; Thence along said line $N 11^{\circ} 45' E 2^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs. to said exterior boundary line of the Rancho Nicasio; Thence along said boundary line $N 13^{\circ} W 18^{\frac{70}{100}}$ Chs., $N 35^{\circ} 45' W 29$ Chs. and $N 1^{\circ} 15' W 24$ Chs. to the point of beginning.

Run by the true Meridian. Magnetic Variation

17°

East.

Surveyed in accordance with the Act of the Legislature concerning State Lands, approved *March 28th*, 1868, and the instructions of the Surveyor-General.

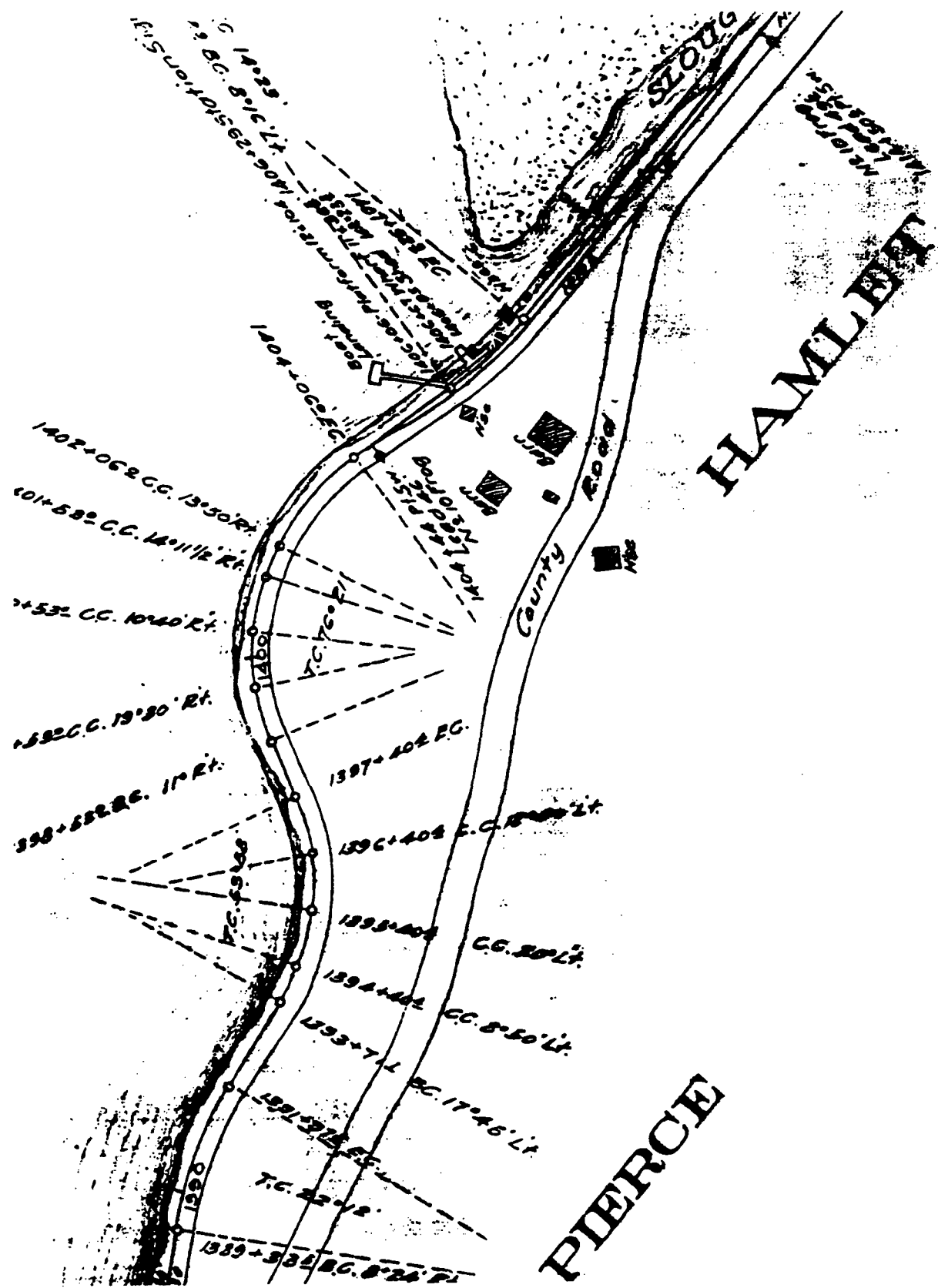
Geo. L. Richardson

County Surveyor

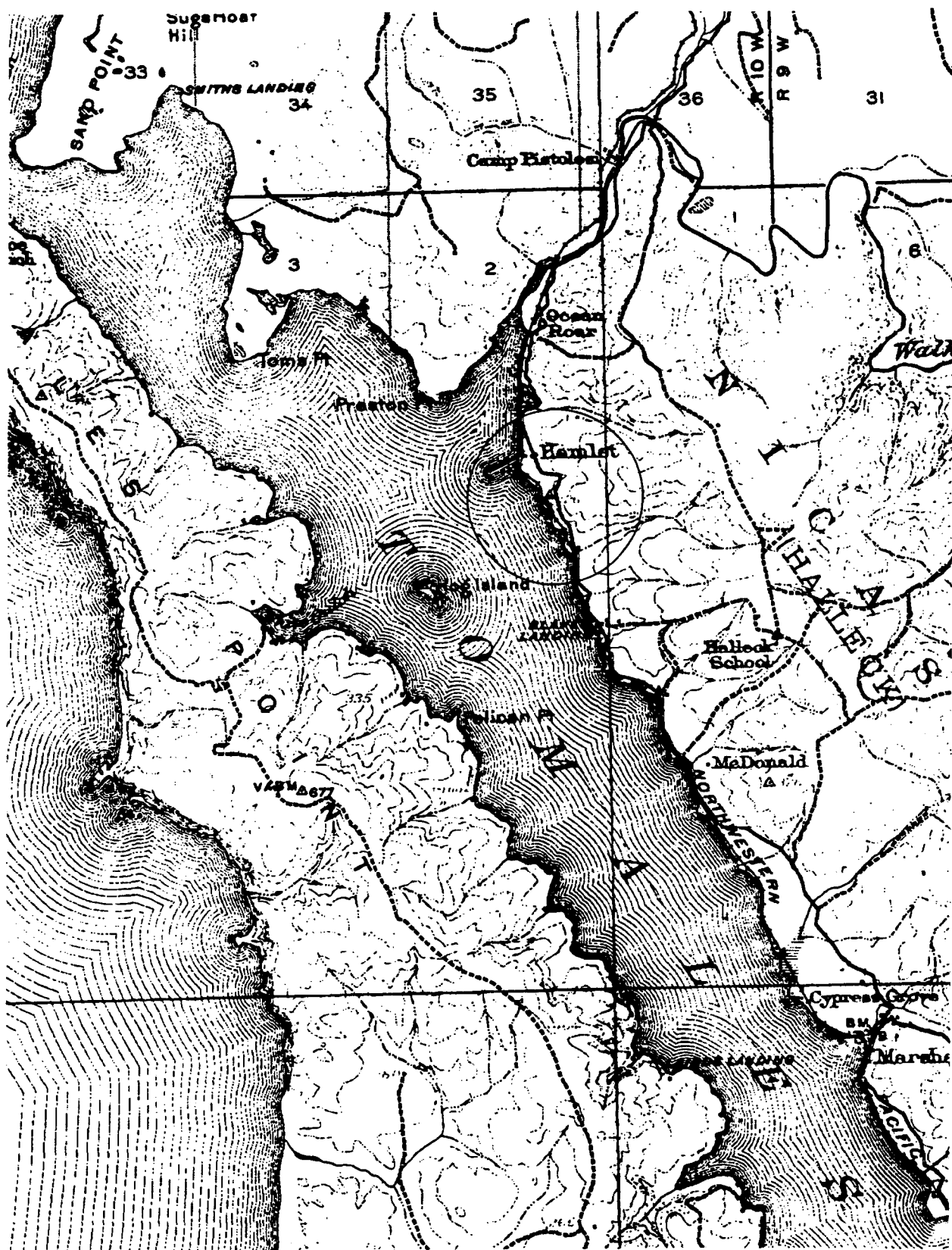
Marin

County.

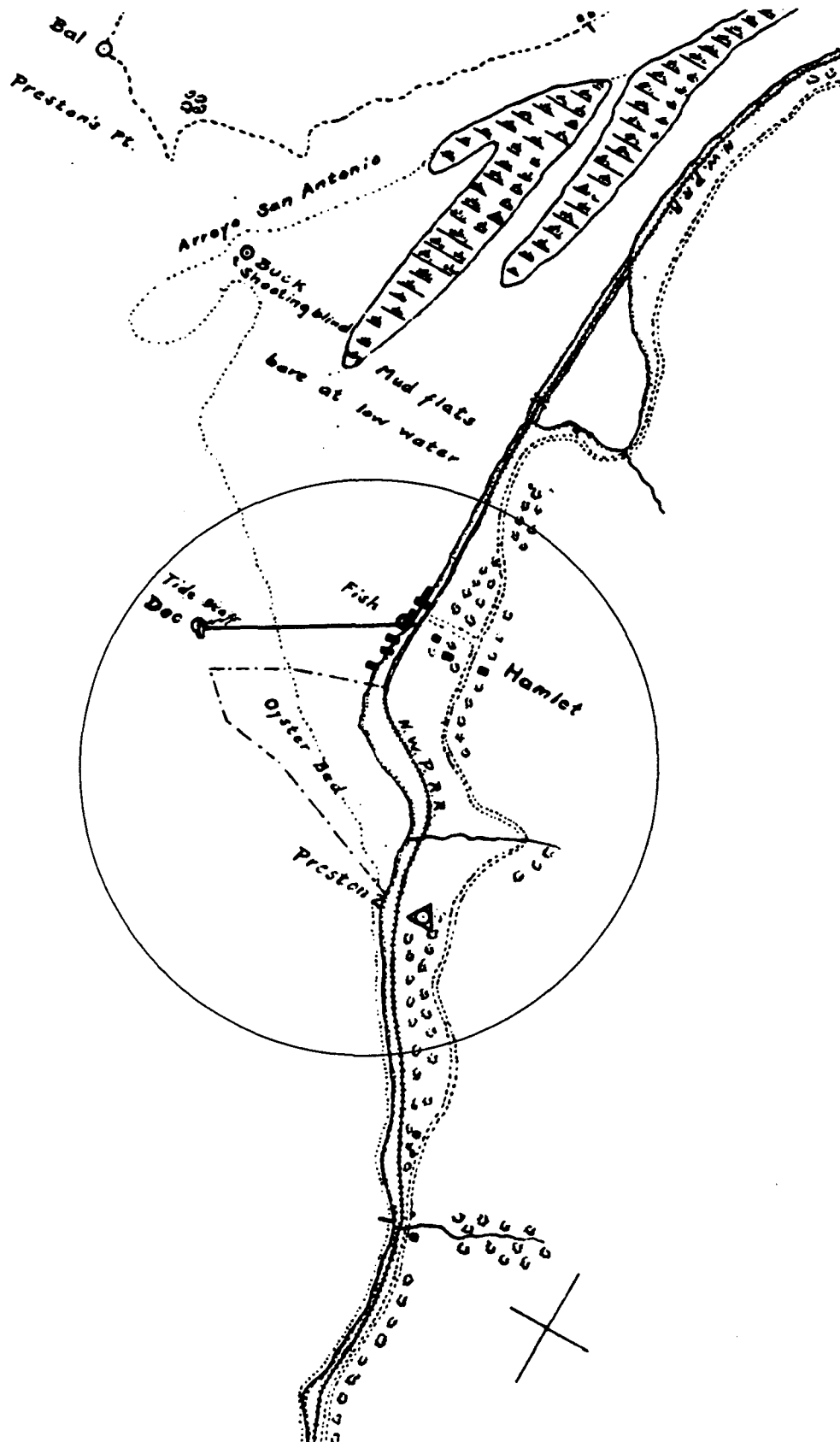
1901 - Tidelands Survey



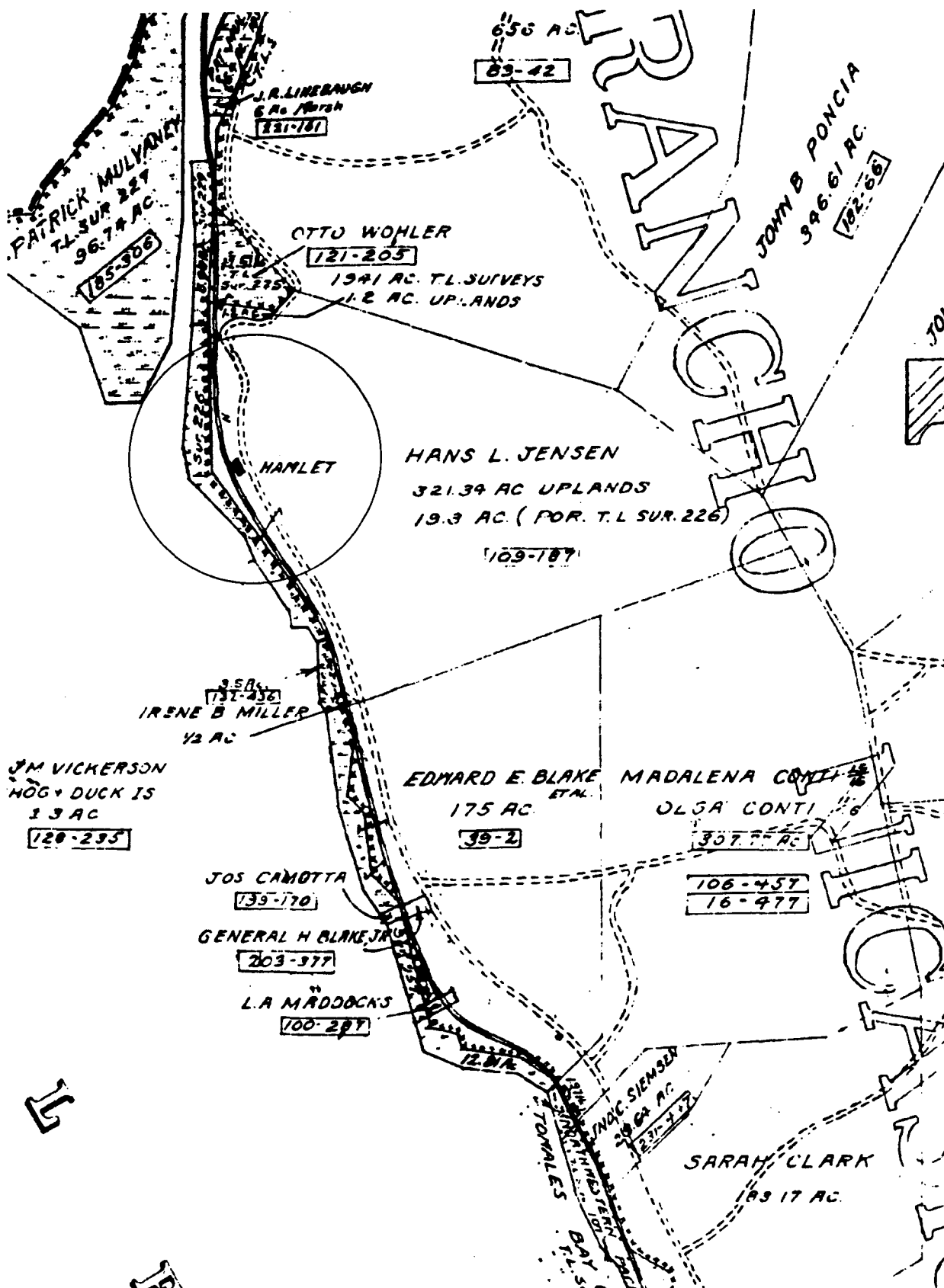
1912 - Northwestern Pacific Railroad Right-of-Way Map (detail)



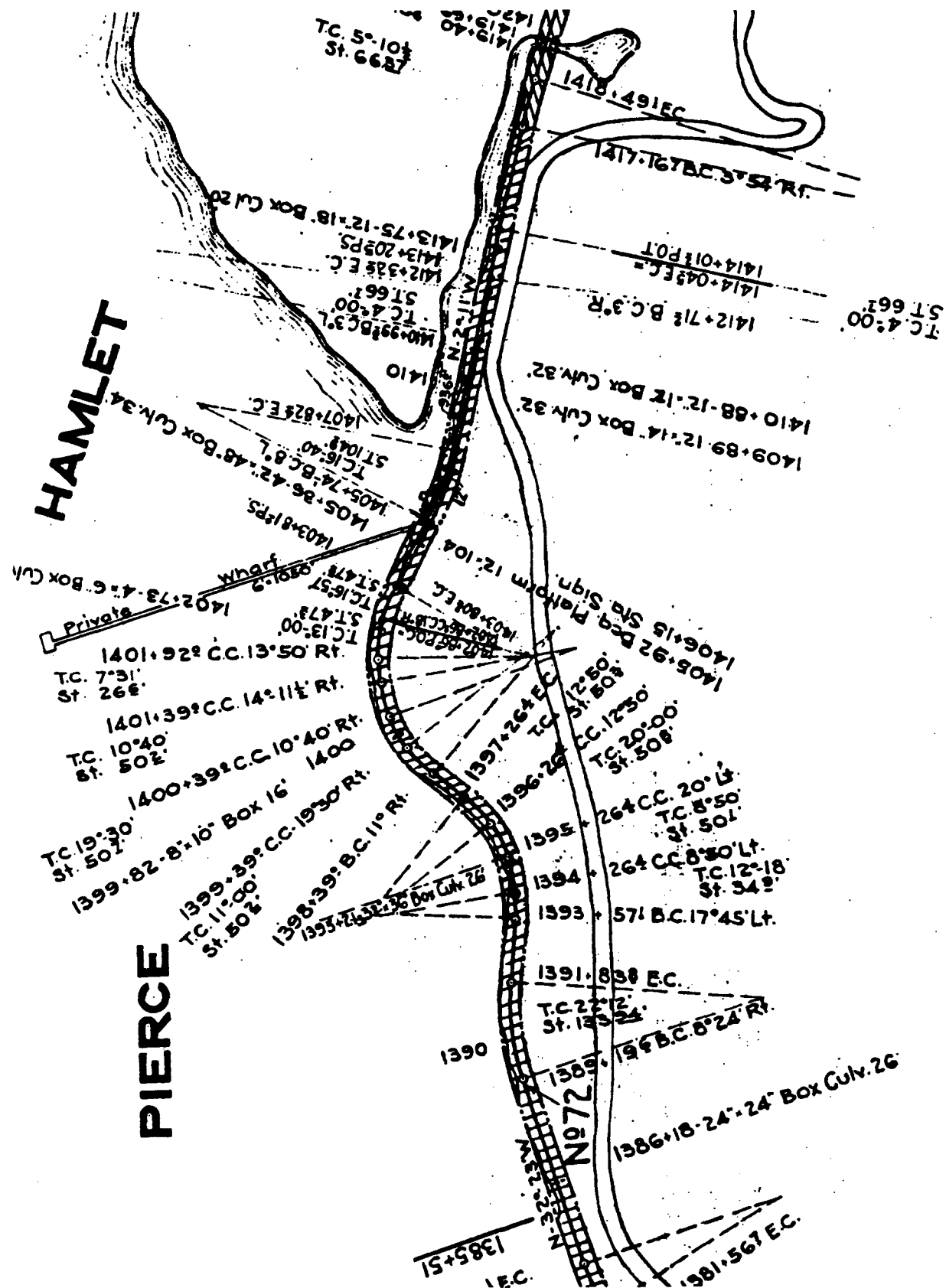
1916: U.S.G.S. Point Reyes Quadrangle 1:62500 (detail)



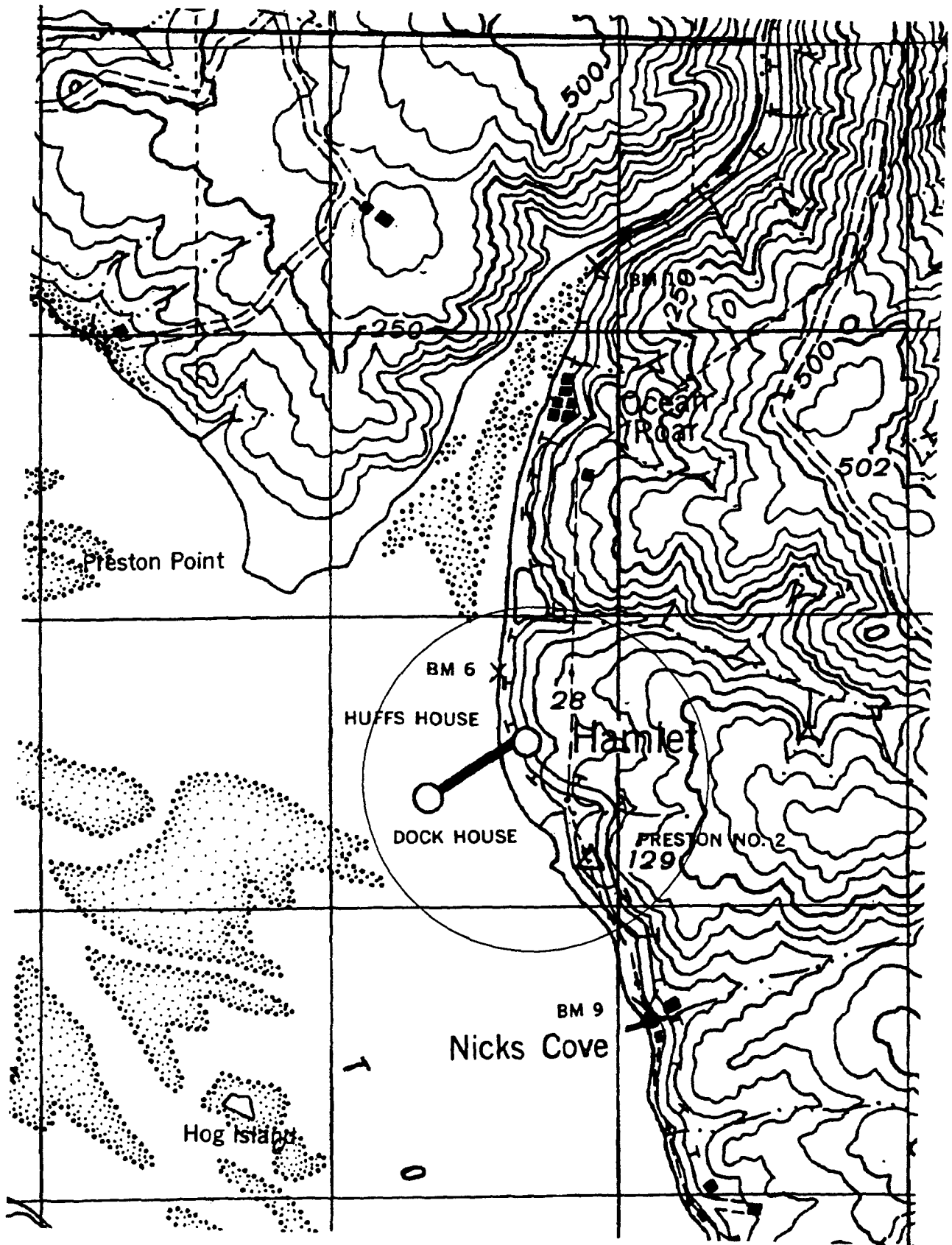
1921: U.S.C.G.S. Tomales Bay Preliminary Survey (detail)



1925 - Official Marin County Survey (detail)



Circa 1930 - Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way Map



1942 - U.S. Department of the Army map (detail)

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Interviews

Eugene Arenander, Petaluma - longtime Tomales resident
Franklin Burns, Petaluma - family resided at Ocean Roar c. 1900
Clifford Conly, Marshall - Cypress Grove owner
Virginia Jensen, Tomales - former owner of Hamlet
Hazel Martinelli, Point Reyes Station - sister-in-law of Henry J. Jensen
Joseph (Harry) McDonald, Novato - born at McDonald
Arthur Mendonca, Santa Cruz - former president, F.E. Booth Co.
Arthur Patrick, Oakland - former manager, F.E. Booth Co.
Clarence Pensotti, Santa Rosa - fisherman born on bay, worked for Jensen
Bea Phillips, Tomales - longtime Tomales resident
Eugene Poncia, Tomales - rancher above Hamlet since 1915
Andrew Simpson, Berkeley - nephew of F.E. Booth
Emil Smith, Sacramento - Department of Fish and Game
Albert Spiegel, Larkspur - stayed at Hamlet 1921-1948
Bill and Ellen Straus, Blake's Landing - longtime area residents
John Vilicich, Marshall - born on Tomales Bay, operates Marshall Boats Works
Ted Wurm, Oakland - railroad historian

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Point Reyes National Seashore Library, Bear Valley
San Francisco Public Library: San Francisco Archives
Tomaes Elementary Local History Center, Tomaes
United States Geological Survey, NCIC, Menlo Park
University of California Library Map Room, Berkeley

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California State Lands Commission
Marin County Assessors Office
Marin County Board of Supervisors
Marin County Department of Public Works
Marin County Office of Education
Marin County Records Office
San Luis Obispo County Records Office
Sonoma County Records Office