

INITIAL CULTURAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

FOR A PARCEL AT 15TH STREET AND EAST AVENUE,

(APN 037-015-090) IN MONTARA,

SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

by

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Report Prepared For

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December 2017

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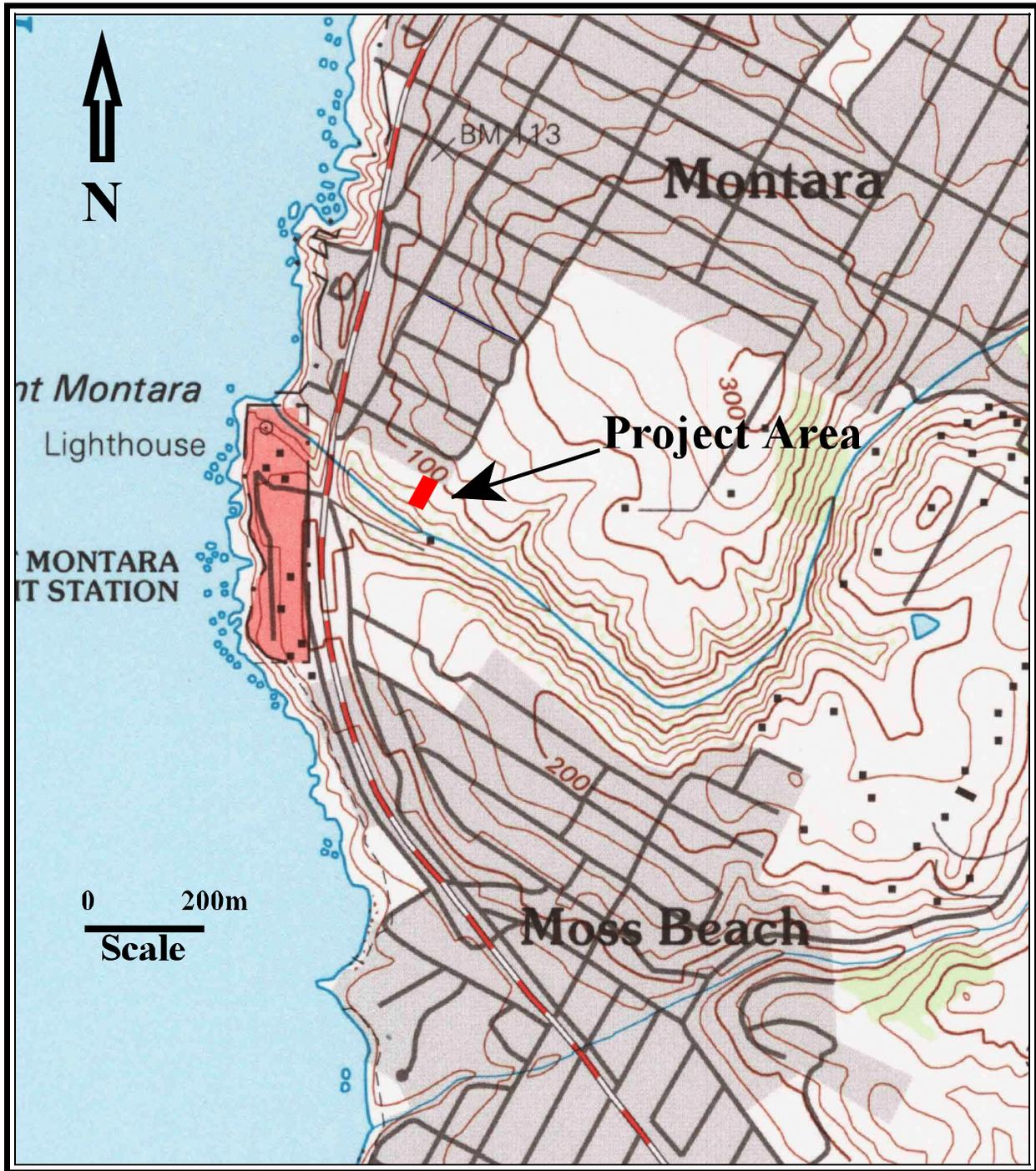
INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT SUMMARY

In November 2017, Holman & Associates (H&A) conducted a historical resources records search and field survey of a parcel located at the southwest corner intersection of 15th Street and East Avenue in the Midcoast town of Montara (“Project Area”), on the ocean coast of San Mateo County. This work was authorized by and completed for Mr. Paul McGregor, a builder located in Princeton, another Midcoast town. McGregor is planning construction of a single-family residence on the Project Area. Because the proposed project involves earth-moving and construction impacts that could adversely affect archaeological resources should any exist in the impact zones, this archaeological reconnaissance and other work was required under the requirements of CEQA and the County.

The 15th Street Project Area is two lots but a single parcel of 6000 square feet or just over one-seventh of an acre. H&A first conducted an archaeological records search for the Project Area at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS). The records search found two surface reconnaissances within the records search area, one of which was adjacent to the east of this Project Area, which did not record prehistoric archaeological or historical resources. The other surface was of an existing single-family residence parcel on 14th Street northwest of the Project Area, and that structure was recorded as a potential historical resource as it originally dated to circa 1910. No other historical resources are recorded within the search perimeter, though slightly farther to the west the 1874 Point Montara Light Station is a recorded resource and elsewhere on that property a prehistoric archaeological site has been informally reported. There are no recorded archaeological or historical resources within or adjacent to the Project Area, however the parcel is adjacent to Montara Creek (the local appellation; the stream is not named on the topographic maps), as is the aforementioned prehistoric site, so the vicinity has perhaps medium archaeological sensitivity but is also rather steeply sloped and therefore would have been unsuitable for prehistoric habitation.

A pedestrian general surface reconnaissance of the Project Area was completed by the author on 08 November 2017, finding no archaeological or historical resources within any impact zones. Surface reconnaissance conditions were poor as the Project Area is covered by trees and duff, with significant understory growth and downed trees and broken branches also present. No evidence of prehistoric or historical archaeological resources was found during the surface survey.

The 15th Street Project Area was surface surveyed; poor field conditions often hampered the survey over most of the property. Conditions were not quite adequate for an initial general surface survey, and intensive survey was not possible. Based on the field survey and results of the nearest previous surveys, wherein no prehistoric cultural materials were found, no additional cultural resources research is recommended for the residential Project, which should be able to proceed without encountering significant historic resources. The general caveat about surprise discoveries given at the end of this report (Recommendation 2) should be incorporated into permitting conditions for development.



MAP 1: McGregor 15th Street Montara Project Area Location.
(USGS "Montara Mountain" 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle, 1997)

THE PROJECT AREA

Location and Legal Description

The 15th Street in Montara Project Area is located at the northwest intersection of two currently “paper” streets, 15th Street, which forms the southern boundary, and East Avenue, which forms the eastern boundary. 15th Street is quite unlikely to ever be built, as the south boundary of the subject development property is quite close to the north bank of Montara Creek, leaving almost no room for a street to be constructed that would intrude into the protected riparian zone. Though currently ungraded and unpaved, access to the property is very likely to be from East Avenue, which will need to be extended southwestward, or a narrower access road/driveway constructed, to reach the property as available plans show the driveway and garage fronting eastward onto East Avenue. The study area is 100 feet north/south by 60 east/west to total 6000 square feet. The Project Area is located on the USGS “Montara Mountain” 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle, a portion of which is reproduced here as “Map 1.” All of Montara and the Project Area are within the Mexican-era “Corral de Tierra (Palomares)” land grant and so are not surveyed into the township-and-range survey system. The San Mateo County Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) for the property is 037-015-090. The property is not fenced at the west and north, the east is partially fenced, and the south side has a largely falling down post and wire fence. Survey stakes were found indicating the property corners so the Project Area could be accurately located in the field.

Biophysical Description

Cultural resources and/or historic properties likely to exist in the Project Area are products of the interaction of human behaviors with the physical environment—i.e, adaptations to utilize resources allowing human use and occupation of the location. To find, understand the genesis and uses, and interpret the meanings of cultural resources in the Project Area, knowing the past and present environmental and cultural context is essential. Following is a basic description of the natural setting, current conditions, and cultural past of the Project Area vicinity.

The Project Area is on the rising north bank of Montara Creek (shown as perennial but not named on the topographic map). The property elevation increases from about 94 feet at the southwest corner to about 114 feet at the northeast according to the topographic map and aerials (from about 72 to 93 feet on the plans furnished), and is more markedly steep on the west side. A couple small swales occur on the property but it basically drains to the south into the creek. Soil is a dark brown to very dark grey sandy silty loam with small granitic gravel. Several 4-5 inch auger holes were observed on the property showing the soil darker and grittier with depth to about one foot.

The 15th Street/East Avenue property is dominated by large, tangled Monterey Cypress and Monterey Pine trees, with the understory smaller Cypress and Pine (native to California but not this location); many trees have branches right on the surface, or have blown over or lost significant limbs then overgrown by vines; the surface is covered nearly entirely by duff accumulated from the trees (Figure 1). Also noted on the property were natives such as ferns, iris, Thimbleberry, Toyon, dock, and marsh grass, with non-native cotoneaster bushes, succulents, English Ivy, German Ivy, blackberry vines, Jubata Grass, annual grasses of Eurasian origins, and escaped decorative bushes and flowers.

Aboriginally, this area would have been an open brushy/grassy slope near the creek bank, dominated by ocean winds and fog, likely supporting no trees except perhaps in the riparian corridor, with the same

contours as now. It would have been a location used by local populations but not as attractive as other zones, being steep and lacking resources, but with nearby fresh water and access to the rocky coast and beaches.



Figure 1: 15th Street Project Area, looking east at typical vegetative cover and trees (08 Nov 2017).



Figure 2: Looking west along north boundary of property at remnants of story poles setup; fence at upper right is ~3 m off property (08 Nov 2017).

Though mostly thickly covered by trees, duff, bushes, vines, and ground covering vegetation, the property does have scant evidence of recent use and disturbance, the aforementioned recent auger holes for example. Along the northern property line approximately, the remnants of a setup of story poles were scattered (Figure 2). Also noted were minor amounts of imported construction gravels/drain rock, rounded cobbles probably from the adjacent yard up the hill to the north, discarded lumber, chunks of asphalt pavement, rutting and scant recent trash. No significant road cuts or grading was evident.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND SETTING

Historical Resources Records Search and Archival Research

Archaeological research was conducted for the Project Area with the initial basic goal of determining whether any physical remnants of prehistoric or historic cultural use of the property were present. This began with a search of relevant records, maps, and archives maintained by the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) at Sonoma State University. The records search was conducted on 09 November 2017 by Charles Mikulik of Cultural Resources Practitioners, LLC, also a former NWIC employee, for the Project Area and environs within 200 m. The records search also included a check of National Register of Historic Places data, the California Register, California Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historical Interest, the California Inventory of Historic Resources, the San Mateo County Historic sites Master List and other local historic resource registries, and other historic maps and archives in the possession of the NWIC. The results of the records search are briefly reviewed here.

The records search found two archaeological/historical resources reconnaissance reports within the 200 m search perimeter, one of which was adjacent to the east side of the Project Area as mapped at the NWIC (Clark 2001) but actually was on the other side of the East Avenue right-of-way. That survey of 11.4 acres of open hillside land not as close to the creek as this property as well as unsurveyable (due to thick tree groves) property even closer to the creek reported no evidence of archaeological resources. The other was a survey of a similar-size property at 361 14th Street that recorded the circa 1910 house on that property as a historical resource but did not report any archaeological resources (Losee 2003). Two other reports within 200 m were on file at the NWIC; one was an early general survey of the San Mateo County Coastside (Dietz and Jackson 1970) and the other a Caltrans survey along Highway 1 to the west (Rose 2010) but neither covered this Project Area. Another 17 reports or studies classified as “Other” reports by the NWIC were found; these are general surveys of extant data, theses, broad general surveys and/or assessments of various locations throughout one or more counties, theoretical studies, etc., not directly pertinent to this Project Area; these are not included in the references below.

No archaeological resources are recorded with the 400 m wide records search area (200 m on all sides from the Project Area), but a prehistoric site is informally recorded approximately 275 m west of the Project Area, on the same north bank of Montara Creek just above the mouth of the creek. This might be SMA-55, which was recorded in 1905/06 by Nelson but was simply located on a large scale map without enough additional information to allow the modern CHRIS system to specifically spot the site on maps, so at the NWIC SMA-55 is mapped as a wide roughly circular area on both sides of the creek mouth some 250-275 m wide. That area covers the area where the prehistoric site was located on the north creek bank (Clark 2000). This evidence from more than a century old and to some degree confirmed in 2000 indicates the banks of Montara Creek should be considered archaeologically sensitive.

The NWIC File Number for the records search is 17-1368; a copy of this report will be submitted to the NWIC for inclusion in the permanent CHRIS archives.

Historic maps were also examined for the records and archival search. The 1896 and 1899 USGS San Mateo 15 minute quadrangles show no development or structures in or near the Project Area, no early County Road along the coastline, but does show the “Fog Whistle” (later and still the Point Montara Lighthouse location). Two structures are shown near the north bank of the creek west of the Project Area, near or on the alignment of the early County coastal road (and current State Route 1 highway). The 1915 San Mateo 15 minute map shows then-operational Ocean Shore Railroad line running between the two structures and the Fog Whistle, but no more development near the Project Area. Twenty-four years later, the 1939 15 minute map shows the existing street grid of Montara partially in place, but the actual street nearest the Project Area, 14th Street, is not yet in place; by 1939 the Ocean Shore Railroad route has been converted to the County Road that is now SR 1, but the nearby structures shown in the 1896 to 1915 maps are not present. However, all structures may not have been mapped, as the existing house on 14th Street built “circa 1910” is not spotted in 1915 but does appear on the 1939 map, while there is no development around or in the Project Area. The 1949 USGS 7.5 minute Montara Mountain topographic map also shows that house as the only structure on 14th Street, East Avenue does not extend southward to within five blocks of the Project Area, and there is no development in the vicinity. The 1956 7.5 minute quad shows several more structures along 14th Street but 15th Street does not extend eastward SR 1 and East Avenue does not extend past 12th Street to the north of the Project Area. After that, the newer maps do not show individual buildings. A search of aerial photos of the area did not find any indication of structures or features at the Project Area going back to 1993.

The vicinity of Montara was occupied by Native Americans, now known most commonly as the Ohlones, for thousands of years prior to the Spanish invasion of California, creating numerous archaeological sites generally located along the creeks and other perennial and seasonal streams, and along the ocean where access was easier than this Project Area. When the Spanish arrived, the best evidence indicates the area from Point Montara south past Half Moon Bay was held by the *Chiguan* tribelet, who had at least two villages in the area (Milliken 1995:228, 239). Later expeditions to the San Francisco Bay Area established missions in the area in the 1770s, including Mission San Francisco in 1776, where numerous *Chiguan* people were baptized and the San Francisco Mission outstation was constructed in southern Pacifica in the mid-1780s. The Native Americans were quickly swept aside and brought under the control of the Spanish. By the 1830s Europeans were settled in Yerba Buena (San Francisco) on the Bayside, along the eastern side of the Peninsula, and at a few spots on the ocean coast, but no settlement of the Montara area is documented.

Field Surface Reconnaissance

Pedestrian field survey was conducted by the author on 08 November 2017. An “intensive surface reconnaissance” was planned and attempted, but conditions reduced the survey coverage to “general” (King, Moratto, and Leonard 1973) as attempting to find locations not covered by trees, fallen limbs, thick duff, and other vegetation was not very successful. Surface visibility ranged from poor (Figures 1 and 2) to nonexistent (Figure 1) due to vegetation and duff. Only at the auger holes could native earth be seen, but numerous small spots were scraped clear by trowel to observe the humusy topsoil surface.

No evidence of prehistoric or historic-era archaeological resources was noted during surface reconnaissance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No evidence of prehistoric archaeological resources was found on the 15th Street Project Area by archival search or field survey. Though most portions of the Project Area were obscured by surface conditions, significant resources on this sloped property are relatively unlikely. A larger but similar area adjacent to the Project Area had been surveyed previously with no resources found, and other nearby surveys have found or recorded no resources either historic or prehistoric except on the other side of SR 1. This area would have been somewhat suitable for prehistoric cultural use but probably primarily limited to perhaps a trail along the creek bank, so the likelihood of prehistoric sites is low.

Historic topographic maps show early twentieth century development on 14th Street, where a "circa 1910" house is recorded, but not within the Project Area, which appears to never have been graded and contains numerous century-old (at least) trees, so there is a low possibility historic archaeological deposits or unmapped features could exist in or around it.

The proposed residential development in the 15th Street Project Area can proceed without affecting known prehistoric or historic archaeological resources as defined under CEQA. However, due to the inability to adequately inspect much of the property, the normal conditions requiring appropriate investigations if potential archaeological resources are encountered should be in place for this development.

Recommendations

- 1) No additional prehistoric archaeological or historic preservation research for archaeological resources is recommended for the 15th Street Project Area in Montara at this time.
- 2) Although no archaeological resources were found on the Project Area, it is possible that subsurface deposits may yet exist or that evidence of such resources has been obscured by more recent natural or cultural factors such as downslope aggradation and alluviation and the presence of non-native trees and vegetation. Archaeological and historic resources and human remains are protected from unauthorized disturbance by State law, and supervisory and construction personnel therefore must notify the County and proper authorities if any possible archaeological or historic resources or human remains are encountered during construction activities and halt construction to allow qualified archaeologists to identify, record, and evaluate such resources and recommend an appropriate course of action.

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