

## Coastside North and South: Montara and Torquay

--Ellen Chiri

Montara rests like a jewel between its beach and towering mountain. It's the first town you come to as you drive south from Pacifica; the last you pass through after leaving Moss Beach. Torquay would have been the most southerly Coastside town, between Franklin Point and Año Nuevo—but it never was a town at all.

### Montara: Resort-to-be

For thousands of years the Coastside was home to the Ohlone, the first people here. Spanish explorers arrived, then Mexican land grantees. After the California gold discovery, immigrants from the United States and around the world flooded in.



Ocean Shore Railroad construction began in 1905, intended to run between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. The railroad transported Coastside products to San Francisco, and it promoted real estate.

The motto “Reaches the Beaches” tempted prospective property buyers for the resort living that was to come—including in the towns of Montara and adjoining Farallone City.

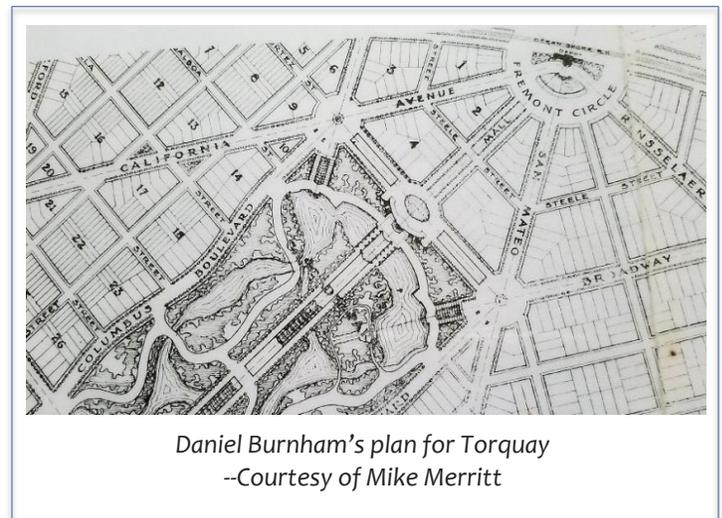
In 1908, Ocean Shore trains began puffing along the precipitous Coastside cliffs on their way from San Francisco, through what is now Pacifica, to points south. The first stop after the perilous path around Montara Mountain and San Pedro Mountain was Montara Station.

Early Montara was envisioned as an artist's colony. The dream of a formal artist's colony dissolved with the railroad's failure, but Montara has long been a favored locale for artists, writers, poets, and musicians.

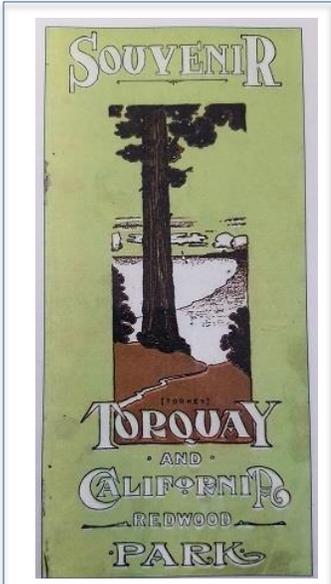
### Torquay: Town that Never Was

In 1907, celebrated architect Daniel H. Burnham envisioned a seaside resort mid-way between Pigeon Point and Año Nuevo. He called it Torquay, after the renowned seaside resort on England's south coast.

Burnham created the elegant but bewildering design for Granada, and his plan for Torquay was equally elegant. It included broad boulevards and promenades, a large park with meandering lagoons, and several small plazas.



Daniel Burnham's plan for Torquay  
--Courtesy of Mike Merritt



1909 Torquay Ad

--Courtesy of Mike Merritt

Torquay was one of the many Coastside resorts-to-be that were anticipated with the arrival of the new Ocean Shore Railroad. The railroad’s promotional material enticed prospective investors with tales of delights to come.

A 1909 advertisement explained that “With the completion of the railroad under course of construction you will be able to... spend Saturday to Monday at your country seaside home...”

Another early advertisement rhapsodized: “Only 90 minutes from San Francisco... one quick, direct link via Ocean Shore Railway... Torquay is a place Nature made for man, where may be enjoyed all the pleasures of the wild forest and bathing in the placid waters of the Pacific...”

And “Directly bordering the town is the finest beach between San Francisco and Santa Cruz with two miles of ocean bathing. On the other side of the city are the hills with their thousands of big trees including the California State Redwood Park.”

The failure of the Ocean Shore Railroad spelled the end of romantic dreams for Torquay, and today only two cypress trees identify the site.



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