

SP #39

SWANTON NATURAL BRIDGES BEACH STATE PARK

(500 word summary by Don Morton)

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The Swanton Natural Bridges Beach State Park is situated in Santa Cruz County, 76 miles south of San Francisco and the Bay cities. It is located on the northern edge of the city of Santa Cruz, out West Cliff Drive, and State Highway No. I.

The park consists of twenty-one acres. It has a beach frontage of <sup>3806</sup>~~3808~~ feet. The land was acquired in 1933, including the historic arched rock. The latter is an ocean landmark, used by early buccaneers. The natural bridge consisted of three arched rocks in the 1870's. The present site of Swanton Natural Bridges Beach State Park was a popular beach and picnic ground during the pioneer days of Santa Cruz. It received its first news publicity in 1853. At that time it was known as "the rocks above the Lighthouse and at Moore's beach." In 1866 there appeared another article which described the present park as the "natural bridge." Stories of the "great curiosity" continued into the late 1880's.

In the early 1870's a Mr. Hall had acquired 288 acres of land from the Refugio Rancho. Hall's property included the present 3806 feet of ocean frontage and arched bridge. By 1887, the once popular beach and picnicking,

resort place became known as "The Natural Bridge Dairy." The dairy was one of the first and largest dairies in Santa Cruz County. The early background of the Refugio Rancho begins with 1839. At this time it is said to have been granted to María de los Angeles Castro and her sisters, that it was "definitely granted" to José Antonio Bolcoff, by Governor Alvarado, April 7, 1841. One of the sisters was the wife of Bolcoff. Bolcoff was one of the earliest foreign settlers in the county. He was a native of Russia.

The northwestern boundary of the Refugio Rancho was Laguna de Pala, now called Laguna Creek. The smaller creeks, Coja, Baldwin, Meder, and Moore, flow from the foot of Scott Valley hills through this tract into the bay. Coja Creek was first named "Arroyo de San Lucas," by Fray Juan Crespi, October 18, 1769. It is now called Major's Creek. Moore Creek empties near the beach of the park. The old Coast Road, traversed first by the Portolá expedition (1769), afterward by vaqueros on their horses, then by lumber wagons from the big tree redwoods, then by stage coaches to Pescadero, has ever extended the full length of Rancho Refugio, as does the State Highway No. I over the same route today.

Among other distinguished pioneer Spanish explorers who first traveled by the present site of the park, were Pedro Fages (1770), and one of Anza's expeditions (1774). Like Crespi, Palóu's diary of the latter expedition, does

not record seeing the "natural arches." Both expeditions marched within close view of the natural bridge, according to the terraces of the park which were recorded. Palou also mentioned the deserted houses of the native Indians. They were of the original Costanoan nation.

The remaining, lone arched rock of the Swanton Natural Bridges Beach State Park can still, today, be easily identified with its relation to what at one time consisted of three "natural bridges." They seemingly stood as a monument to the Spanish pioneer days of northern Alta California, 1769-1835. The third arch stood as late as 1873. The second resisted the pounding of the swishing waves until several years ago. The first navigator to sail by this historic ocean landmark was Cabrillo in 1542, almost a century before the landing of the settlers on Plymouth Rock on the Atlantic coast. Thus in the creation of Swanton Natural Bridges Beach State Park there has been preserved the lone landmark off the Santa Cruz coast for future generations to see and admire. And although the changing surf may, in time, likewise wear down the natural arch, the remaining "foundations" will always remain deep within one's memory. They help to immortalize the earliest days of California.

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(Summary by Don Morton)

Situated Santa Cruz County, northern edge city.

West Cliff Drive, Coast Highway. Consists twenty-one acres, including historic arched rock.

Is ocean landmark observed by Cabrillo, 1542.

Portola expedition 1769, Fages 1770, Anza 1774, observed terraces. Formerly three arches, 1870.

Park site was popular picnicking, resort place (1853), known as Moore's Beach.