

HAROLD FRENCH

FOUNDING THE CONTRA COSTA HILLS CLUB

Presentation by CCHC member Noël Siver on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Contra Costa Hills Club

Harold French did not wake up on the morning of February 22, 1920, and say to himself, “I feel like starting a new hiking club today.” The creation of the Contra Costa Hills Club was a lengthy process that took many years. Harold was almost forty-two years old when he founded CCHC. In other words, he was halfway through the eighty-four years that he was to spend on this planet. So what had he done before February 22, 1920? What had influenced his decision to start a new hiking club?

One could say that the first seeds were sown in the summer of 1882, that is, thirty-seven years prior to the founding of our club. The French family spent that summer at the Blithedale Hotel in Mill Valley. San Francisco physician John Cushing had purchased 320+ acres in Marin County in 1873 and created a health retreat. Following his passing in 1879, his widow and son turned the place into a tourist resort. Wives and children could spend their days at the resort while husbands took the train and ferry into San Francisco to their offices. The woods and hills made such an impression on four-year-old Harold that he began going on walks by himself much to the consternation of his family. He long remembered those woods, hills, and, of course, Mount Tamalpais.



Grounds of the Blithedale Hotel at the foot of Mount Tamalpais

Source: Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library, San Rafael, California

À LA
CALIFORNIA.

SKETCHES OF LIFE
IN THE
GOLDEN STATE.

By COL. ALBERT S. EVANS,
Author of "Our Sister Republic,"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY COL. W. H. L. BARNES, AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY ERNEST NARJOT.

SAN FRANCISCO:
A. L. BANCROFT & COMPANY,
Publishers, Booksellers and Stationers.

1873.

Fast forward ten years. In 1892, Harold read *A La California: Sketches of Life in the Golden State*, a travelogue by Colonel Albert S. Evans.

Chapter 7 is a description of an ascent of Mount Tamalpais. This inspired Harold to suggest to his older brother Frank that they climb the mountain. They did so on May Day (May 1) 1892. Harold was 14 years old. This was the first of dozens of times that he climbed Mount Tamalpais.

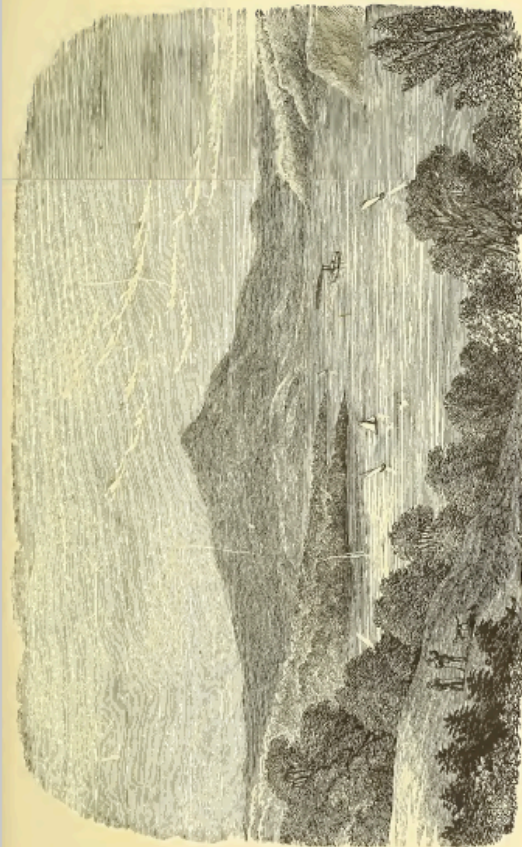
CHAPTER VII.

TAMALPAIS.

Where it is Situated.—Some Speculation as to the Signification of the Name and its Possible Origin.—Our Start for the Mountain.—The Trip to San Rafael and Adventures by the Way.—Ascending the Mountain.—First Blood.—The View of the Bay and City of San Francisco.—Mount Diablo puts in an Appearance.—At the Summit.—A Bear-faced Fraud.—Fine Study of a Fog Bank.—A Faithless Guide.—Wandering in the Mist.—Out of the Woods.—An Afternoon's Sport.—A Painful Subject.—*Adios Tamalpais!*

THERE is not a finer mountain for its height,—two thousand six hundred feet,—on all the continent of America, than Tamalpais, the bold abutment of the Coast Range on the northern side of the Golden Gate, a low spur of which runs down into the Pacific Ocean and forms Point Bonita (Beautiful Point), on which stands the lighthouse which guides the mariner into the entrance of the Bay and Harbor of San Francisco. The origin and signification of the name are matters of doubt. *Malpais* is a common designation for rocky barren ground, in all Spanish-American countries, and *Ta-mal-pais* may be a corruption of that term, the unnecessary primary syllable having perhaps been engrafted upon it by the Indians or Russians after the Spanish settlement of the country. Another suggestion—a very hazardous one—as to its origin is as follows. There is a dish, toothsome,

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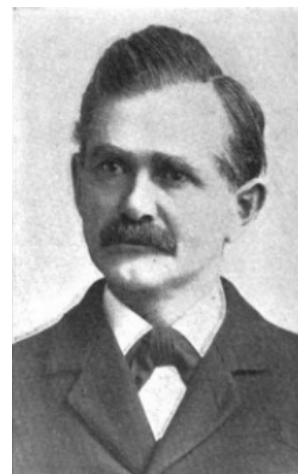


MT. TAMALPAIS, FROM THE EASTERN SLOPE OF ANGEL ISLAND.

Harold French's second ascent of Mount Tamalpais was on January 14, 1893, with his eighth-grade professor and classmates. Professor Ebenezer Knowlton and Harold French became firm friends and hiking companions.

Climbed to the Peaks.
Twenty-six eighth-grade pupils of the Lincoln Grammar School followed Professor Knowlton yesterday in an ascent of Mount Tamalpais. They went by the Mill Valley trail and reached the southeastern peak in two hours and eleven minutes. After lunch the happy party climbed to the western peak in another hour. On the homeward journey the happy boys captured donkeys and rode to the cascades. They all had a most enjoyable time, and every boy in the school will want to accompany the professor on his next ascent. Professor Knowlton has ascended Mount Tamalpais thirty-nine times.

San Francisco Call, 15 January 1893, p. 6.



Ebenezer Knowlton,
1835-1911
"The Hiking Professor"

Harold was encouraged to write by two of his high school teachers. He chose to write about the subjects he most enjoyed—hiking and going on excursions in the San Francisco Bay Area. On February 15, 1894, he began writing about hikes and excursions he had been on in 1892 and 1893.

Right: Volume 1 of Harold French's two-volume hiking journal. He called it his "Pasear Book." Harold French Papers, OHR MSS FRENCH, Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room, Oakland, California.



Descriptions of Hikes and Excursions

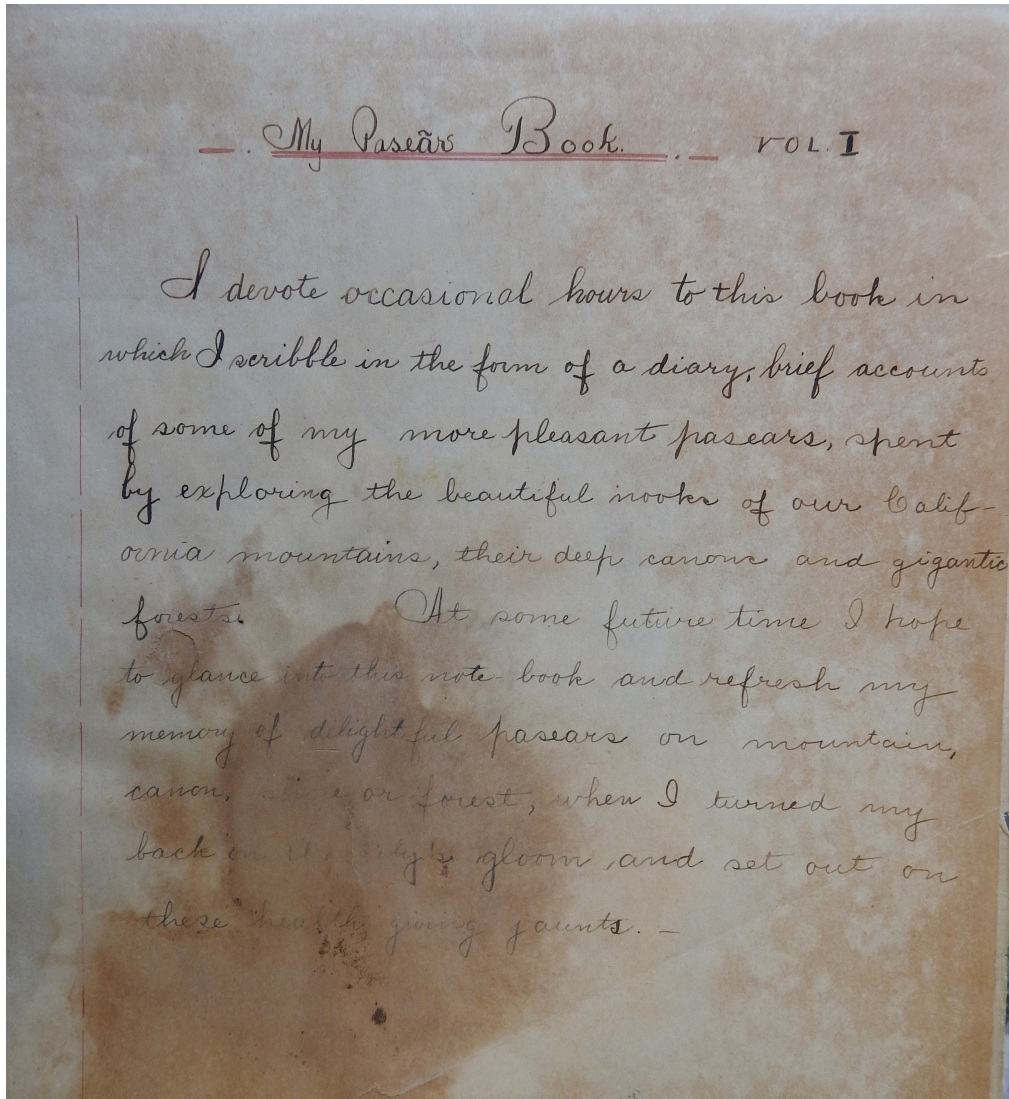
Harold French wrote a journal of the hikes and excursions that he went on between May 1, 1892, and July 9, 1895. In the two volumes of his "Pasear Book," or hiking journal, Harold French wrote a total of eighteen descriptions of hikes and excursions in a very descriptive and effusive style.

According to <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pasear> the Spanish verb "pasear," meaning "to walk"; "to take a walk" was used in English in the southwestern United States from the mid-nineteenth century as a noun meaning "an excursion; a walk." In an article published in 1915, Harold French provided a more comprehensive definition of the word "pasear."

In the pleasure lands of California, the euphonious Spanish word "*pasear*" still passes in circulation among "old inhabitants" to whom it signifies "a care-free jaunt or ramble for re-creation," with the hyphen emphasized. Like the more familiar "*siesta*," it suggests many pleasant ideas in one word. A Californian "pasear" is more than an ordinary outing trip; it is a tonic that revivifies its taker, stimulating physically and psychologically—a form of exercise that exalts.*

*From Harold French, "A Federation of Walking Clubs and Climbing Clans," *Recreation* (New York City) 52, no. 1 (January 1915): 13.

Introduction to volume 1 of Harold French's Pasear Book:



- My Pasear Book - vol. I

I devote occasional hours to this book in which I scribble in the form of a diary, brief accounts of some of my more pleasant pasears, spent by exploring the beautiful nooks of our California mountains, their deep canons* and gigantic forests. At some future time I hope to glance into this note book and refresh my memory of delightful pasears on mountain, canon, shore or forest, when I turned my back on the city's gloom, and set out on these health giving jaunts.

*This was the way Harold French spelled the word "canyon" in his hiking journal and in his diaries. His spelling was possibly based on the Spanish spelling "cañon."

My First Ascent of Mt. Tamalpais.

May 1st 1892, records the first time that I had ~~ever~~ aimed to learn the beauties of Tamalpais during a long, unlightened residence of 14 years within the same number of miles of its base.

Though this was a very ordinary day, yet, it was a great event, eventful to me. Had I not taken my first lesson in mountaineering that day, I can not tell how long I would have deferred it. It is a cause of surprise to think that so comparatively few citizens of the great metropolis of San Francisco have ^{ascended} surmounted this grand mountain in such near proximity. ^{to it} Even, that many San Franciscans yearly cross the continent and the "bond" to Naples and Vesuvius for the scenery.

Like "pearls before the swine" is spread a bay of ^{picturesque} beauty that rivals the far famed bay of Naples. On the borders of the Golden Gate stands Tamalpais, the Vesuvius of the bay of San Francisco.

Yet a great marvel now is to me that up to that time I had never set a foot on the stern slopes of Tamalpais. As it was, I was ^{led} augmented to this purpose by reading "An Ascent of Mount Tamalpais", as described by Col. Albert S. Evans in his interesting

My First Pasear with Knowlton.

From January to June 1893, I was fortunate enough to receive instruction from the ~~same~~ well-known school teacher Prof. Ebenezer Knowlton whom ^{I will try to describe.} Besides being a very brilliant man, he shows excellent wisdom in employing his leisure time in the pursuit of health and recreation. Having a pass on the North Pac. Coast railroad, he goes off nearly every week on jaunts to the many beautiful sylvan retreats to be found ^{near} ~~at~~ the line of that picturesque little railroad.

On the second Saturday of January, he took ²⁶ ~~20~~ members of our class up one of his favorite places, Mt. Tamalpais. This was Knowlton's fortieth ascent of Mt. Tamalpais, and my second.

He ~~is~~ an active, medium sized man of 57 at that time, but his long black hair, and beard, and his brisk and light step, showed him to be in the prime of life. He claims that his continual brain-work, and recreations are of the greatest good to him. He was born in the State of Maine in the year 1836, and has followed his present occupation all his life.

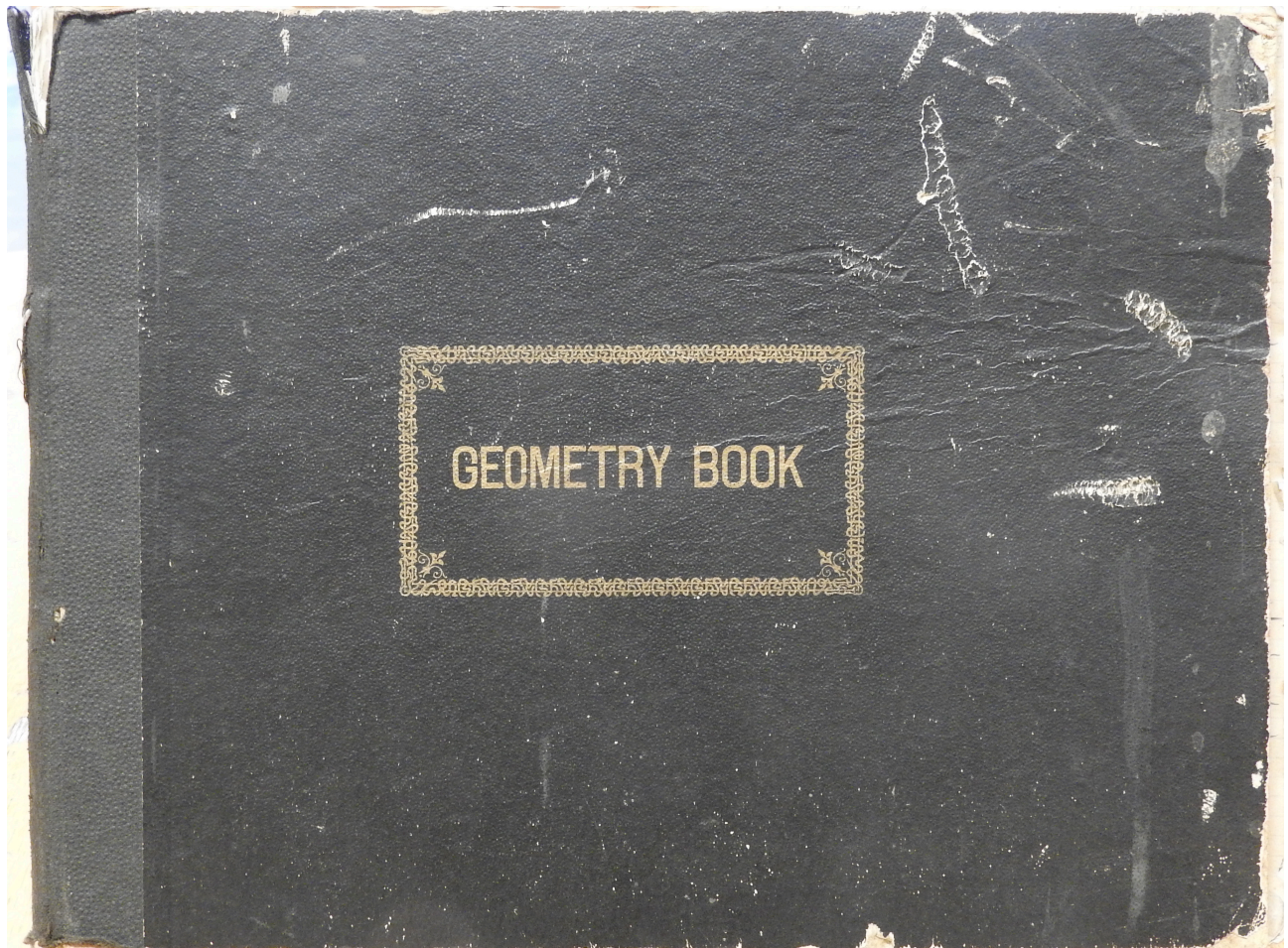
He has friends everywhere, & I have often met with the best of treatment on my pasears, by mentioning

Fast forward another decade. By mid-1904, Harold had spent one year (1896–1897) as a student at the College of Mines at UC Berkeley and dropped out. He had made three trips to the Klondike and Alaska in 1898, 1899, and 1900. Back in the San Francisco Bay Area, he had continued hiking with his former teacher, Professor Knowlton.

Harold had passed a civil service exam and begun working at the US Mint in San Francisco in August 1901. He had married Isabel Borthwick in October 1901. In a letter to his fiancée Isabel Borthwick, dated September 9, 1901, less than a month before she would travel from Ontario in San Bernardino County to San Francisco for their wedding, Harold describes the hike he has just been on: “How am I to begin to tell you of the glorious pasear which has just come to an end. A glorious, health-giving jaunt it has been; the joy of living, of youth and health and strength has been very intense; we have drunk in the matchless kaleidoscopic views of mountain, forest and seas, we have reveled in a thousand fragrances, ...”

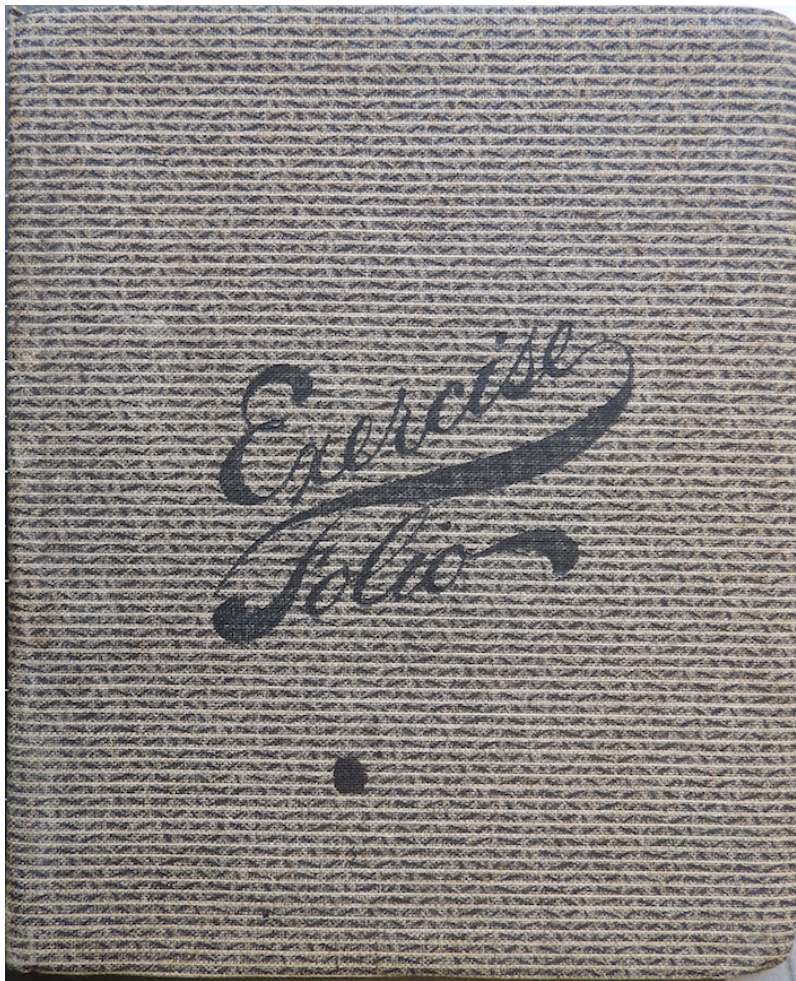
The couple had moved from San Francisco to Berkeley in 1902 and they had had two children, daughter Muriel and son John Muir French.

Starting on January 1, 1904, Harold began keeping a diary in this notebook. The diary includes descriptions of hikes that he went on with Professor Knowlton and with Isabel.



Harold French Papers, OHR MSS FRENCH, Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room, Oakland, California

The second of Harold French's diaries that has survived has entries from October 1, 1905, through June 1, 1906. It also includes descriptions of hikes he had gone on.



Harold French Papers, OHR MSS FRENCH, Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room, Oakland, California

In mid-1904 Harold French began writing articles that were published in San Francisco newspapers and magazines. Harold knew he had a gift for writing. He thought of writing as a possible career option but in the short term it was a means of supplementing his income.

Many of Harold French's early articles are about hiking destinations and local history. From the articles that he wrote about hiking destinations, it is apparent that Harold was a keen observer of nature and had a gift for describing the natural environment.

It was thanks to his early articles in local newspapers and magazines that Harold became acquainted with members of the Sierra Club. On February 7, 1906, he received a letter notifying him of his election to the Sierra Club.

From 1906 to 1916 Harold French was a member of the club's Committee on Local Walks and served as a hike leader. He became a member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club when it was founded in May 1912.

Harold urged the Sierra Club to form a Coast Range chapter. When this idea was rejected, he decided he should form his own club in the East Bay.

The first attempt by Harold French to found a nature conservation club based in the East Bay took place in mid-November 1913. He sent a three-page letter (see page one below) to individuals and organizations who he felt should be interested. He proposed to call the club the Contra Costa Conservation Club. It appears that he was modeling it on the Tamalpais Conservation Club. He suggested he be paid \$150 a month as secretary of the club. He was unemployed, having left his job at the mint on January 31, 1912.

6091 Claremont Avenue,
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, Nov. 14, 1913. -

To Whom it may Most Concern,

I submit to your consideration ~~this~~
preamble to the prospectus of the CONTRA COSTA CONSERVATION CLUB
to acquaint you more directly with its more important purposes
not specified therein.

The CONTRA COSTA CONSERVATION CLUB is to be organized,
primarily, to promote and enhance the value of the outlying tracts
of unimproved land situated to the eastward of the cities of Ber-
keley and Oakland and their suburbs. It will also help to increase
the value of contiguous tracts of improved properties now on the
market, or about to be listed for sale.

How this end and object may be accomplished,--

By popular agitation for the purchase of desirable tracts
of near-wilderness nature nearby those cities, and the leasing,
wherever practicable, of other properties for public park purposes.
The CONTRA COSTA CONSERVATION CLUB will act as ^a collectively dis-
interested medium for the awakening of a widespread appreciation
of the wildwoods and wild gardens among the Contra Costa Hills and
the crystallizing of public opinion in favor of their conservation
of their rare natural beauties as far as possible. It will urge
the organization of a MUNICIPAL PARK DISTRICT, whereby Oakland,
Berkeley, Alameda, Piedmont, San Leandro, Albany and Emeryville may
unite for the purposes of purchasing jointly certain tracts for
public playgrounds from time to time. Also, this PARK DISTRICT may
lease more extensive tracts among the Contra Costa Hills under
conditions favorable to their owners; the cities to protect and,
as far as feasible, improve the same under the terms of the leases.

All this agitation can not fail to greatly appreciate the
value of these properties and pave the way for future profitable
sales to these municipalities, as well as to individuals who will
be attracted to such portions as may be placed upon the market.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1913, Harold French led a Sierra Club hike to Grizzly Peak in Berkeley. The following two articles, no doubt written and submitted to the newspapers by Harold French, talk about the organization of the Contra Costa Conservation Club and his very ambitious plans for “parking” the hills of Berkeley and Oakland. (Parking means to enclose land in a park.)



San Francisco Call, 27 November 1913, p. 9



Oakland Tribune, 28 November 1913, p. 16.

The next time Harold French tried to organize a new club to “preserve the wild beauties of the Contra Costa hills” was on March 15, 1914. It was during a Sierra Club hike to Redwood Peak in the Oakland hills. Invited to address the group was A. A. Denison, secretary of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce. Denison spoke about steps being taken to

interest the public in the beauties of the hills in the vicinity of Oakland. Harold French was now calling the proposed club the Contra Costa Hills Club. Nothing came of this proposal to create the club. The creation of the East Bay Regional Park District did not happen until 1934.

**SIERRA CLUB WILL
HIKE TO REDWOOD**

The Sierra Club is planning a walk to Wildwood Park and Redwood Peak for Sunday, March 15. The routing is as follows: Party will leave Fourteenth street and Broadway via Mandana cars to Sather Park tract, and from there "hike" through the natural parks to Redwood Peak. A midday lunch will be spread in the natural amphitheatre at

During this noon period, it is the intention of the members to form a new club to be known as the Contra-Costa Hills Club, and elect its officers. Mayor Mott and Walter G. Manuel, president of the Park Commission, and other city officials have been invited to be present and address the meeting.

The new club is fathered by Harold French, a member of the Sierra Club. The objects are for the purpose of inducing the owners of unimproved tracts back in the hills to lease their holdings until such time as they decide to subdivide these tracts, thus making a metropolitan park area. The cities lying adjacent to these natural parks would be at no great expense, simply being asked for a few policemen and foresters.

Oakland Tribune, 3 March 1914, p. 20.

**URGES FORMATION OF
GREAT PARK DISTRICT**

The formation of a metropolitan park district and the stimulating of public interest in the beauty of the Contra Costa hills were urged by A. A. Denison, secretary of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, and members of the Sierra Club, who hiked through Wildwood Park to Redwood Peak yesterday, returning by way of the Skyline boulevard. The party was led by Henry French, and Denison, who accepted the invitation of the club, enjoyed the hike as much as any of them, even though the day was hot.

A meeting was held near the top of Redwood Peak in the vicinity of the Joaquin Miller home, addresses being made by Denison and members of the club. The club will endeavor to have an organization started on this side of the bay which will preserve the wild beauties of the Contra Costa hills. The organization will be known as the Contra Costa Hills Club.

Denison gave an account of the steps being taken to arouse more public interest in the beauties of the hills in the vicinity of Oakland and mentioned that Joaquin Miller had found the beautiful surroundings on the way to Redwood Peak an ideal situation for his home. The people of the bay cities, he thought, ought to take every opportunity to enjoy the beauties of their own hills.

Oakland Tribune, 16 March 1914, p. 5.

During World War I (July 28, 1914 - November 11, 1918) there was no further movement on creating the Contra Costa Hills Club. The next time we find Harold talking about the club is in 1919 when he found himself in a dilemma. He had returned to the mint in April 1918 but, to supplement his income, he had been writing ads and doing publicity for a large real estate developer. When he learned from various realtors that there were plans to put the redwood groves in the Oakland hills on the market and sell no longer needed watersheds, he knew he could not be part of that. In November 1919 he renewed his efforts to create an organization to preserve, protect, and promote the Contra Costa

EAST BAY HILLS TO BE GUARDED

Civic Bodies to Join in Preserving Beauties of East Bay Out-of-Doors.

Assistance is to be asked of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club and Merchants' Exchange in perfecting an organization of nature lovers to preserve the beauties of the Alameda and Contra Costa County hills, reduce fire hazards and stimulate interest in the east bay out-of-doors.

This will be done following the organization of a conservation club today at a meeting to be held in the Joaquin Miller Amphitheater, at "The Heights." Mrs. Miller has volunteered her services, while Harold French, the organizer, has been promised assistance from the Sierra and Tamalpais Conservation Clubs.

Call for volunteers for the new outdoor organization has been sent out by French. Proposed members are to meet this morning at 9 o'clock at the end of Piedmont av. car line. A three-mile cross-country hike to the Miller estate for the meeting will follow. Others will go by automobile over the Moraga road. French suggests the taking of light lunch.

Co-operation of civic organizations, property owners and city and county governing bodies is to be sought. Construction of fire trails and roads to prevent brush fires from endangering groves surrounding Oakland and the forests of the bay county coast range are proposed with volunteer fire patrols and lookout stations.

Stimulation of east bay hiking is also planned. The beauties of this region are equal to any in Central California, the club proponents claim.

hills. He also wanted the organization to act as a volunteer firefighting corps to protect the hills.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1919, Harold scheduled a meeting to be held at "The Heights," poet Joaquin Miller's former home. When Harold and his 15-year-old son, John Muir French, were the only ones who turned up, Harold was sorely disappointed. He had felt certain that his "friends from the trails" would turn out to support his new endeavor.

It was clear that assistance would be needed to get the new organization off the ground. Not only did he enlist the aid of the Sierra Club and the Tamalpais Conservation Club, but also of civic organizations such as the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, the Oakland Rotary Club, and the Oakland Merchants' Exchange. He also wrote press releases that appeared in local newspapers.

San Francisco Examiner, 27 November 1919, p. 4.

It was in the *San Francisco Examiner's* issue for December 8, 1919, in the editorial column "Comment," that Harold French was given the title "A Press Agent For the Hills." The *Examiner* published excerpts from a letter they had received from Harold in which he extolled the beauty of the Contra Costa hills and urged readers of the newspaper to make the acquaintance of the hills.

"Did you see the sun rise over Oakland's skyline last Saturday morning after the storm? Did you look astern from your steamer crossing the bay and watch the wonderful plays of colors?

"Or did you herd with the crown inside, choking your lungs with stale tobacco smoke?

"Perhaps you are doing this very thing as you read. Then get up, walk aft, look back, and greet the sun as it smiles its first beams on your own home burg. View the graceful contour of the Contra Costa hills. See their fringe of evergreen woods, silhouetted against the dawn light. Then make up your mind to know these panoramic ridges more intimately.

"Go forth next Sunday and get better acquainted with their wild beauties. You will learn to love them more and more as you explore their inviting canyons and uplifting spurs. Motor if you must, but climb them if you can. Then you will understand why a clan of lovers of Oakland's open lands keenly desires to conserve their wild beauties in their natural state before it is too late."

A GENTLEMAN writes to "The Examiner" to tell his fellows of beauty he has found. On his letterhead are the words, "Treasury Department, Mint of the United States"—but, though his business is money there seems to be very little of it in his heart. He asks a few questions:

**A Press Agent
For the
Hills.**

"Did you see the sun rise over Oakland's skyline last Saturday morning after the storm? Did you look astern from your steamer crossing the bay and watch the wonderful plays of colors?

"Or did you herd with the crowd inside, choking your lungs with stale tobacco smoke?

"Perhaps you are doing this very thing as you read. Then get up, walk aft, look back, and greet the sun as it smiles its first beams on your own home burg. View the graceful contour of the Contra Costa hills. See their fringe of evergreen woods silhouetted against the dawn light. Then make up your mind to know these panoramic ridges more intimately.

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Mr. Harold French, who writes from the Mint, is wise. He knows that the beauty of the hills surpasses the beauty of the city canyons. He knows that there is romance in business, but he does not want business to be the only romance. And he tells the readers of "The Examiner" that if they will wander but once into the hills they will ever afterwards remember "the charm of this enchanting mountain range—Oakland's skyline range." One trip into the hills is not too great a price to pay for the discovery of unknown beauties. "The Examiner" vouches for Mr. French's system of happiness.

In order to get the club off the ground, it was decided that a second organizational meeting was necessary. The date was set for January 1, 1920, at "The Hights," the Joaquin Miller estate, at 11 a.m. This time there was a better turnout.

Contra Costa Hills Club Is Organized

Disregarding the threatening weather and forgetting other New Year's activities, many enthusiastic lovers of the hills back of Oakland walked and motored yesterday to the "Heights" of Joaquin Miller.

The following will formally organize the Contra Costa Hills Club on Sunday, February 1: James H. L'Hommedieu, Juanita Miller, Harold French, C. H. Baker, J. W. Beck, Frederick Niskit and Russel Archer.

The purposes of the club are to awaken a wider appreciation of the scenic beauties of the Contra Costa hills and to endeavor to bring about the conservation of this wilderness parkland in its natural state. The club will ask for the protection of this region from fire and vandalism by the extension of the jurisdiction of the Oakland Park Board to include the territory from Grizzly Peak to Redwood Peak.

The plans of the club include the improvement of trails, the placing of signs of guidance and arranging for open air gatherings in the hills.

Above: *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 January 1920, p. 3.

Right: *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 January 1920, p. 2.

The next organizational meeting of CCHC took place February 1, 1920, at "The Hights." By then Harold French had further refined his "objects of organization."

"The objects of the club as set forth in detail below:

To awaken appreciation of the rare scenic beauties of the Contra Costa hills and to conserve, protect and make more easily accessible these wild park lands lying between their western foothills and the sunrise slopes of this panoramic range.

To cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with the outdoor delights to be freely enjoyed by those who ramble afoot, ride or motor through this loveable little wilderness.

To urge the people of Oakland, Berkeley and Piedmont to take whatever steps may be found practicable to protect these unsettled open lands from fire and vandalism.

To investigate projects looking toward the parking of

CLUB FORMED TO MAKE HILLS' BEAUTY KNOWN

Wooded Slopes, Canyons and Dells Back of Oakland to Be Popularized

OAKLAND, January 10.—Actuated by a desire to preserve the hills back of Oakland as a wilderness parkland, the conservation club which was formed at "The Heights," the Joaquin Miller place, on New Year's morning, and which is to be known as the Contra Costa Hills Club, has adopted a programme of endeavor which has won the approval of a number of prominent members of other organizations. Among these are the Chamber of Commerce, the Oakland Rotary Club, the Oakland Real Estate Association, the Sierra Club, the Tamalpais Conservation Club, the Boy Scouts, the California Botanical Society and officials of the east bay cities, particularly those of the Oakland Park Board.

The support of these and other civic bodies is anticipated by the charter members of this new conservation club. The initiator of the movement is Harold French, who, during the last fifteen years, has written many articles for *The Chronicle* descriptive of the scenic charms of the Contra Costa hills. In outlining the purpose of the new club French says:

The purpose of this conservation club should appeal to all concerned in promoting the growth and betterment of all the east bay communities. We are to follow the good example set by the Tamalpais Conservation Club, which has accomplished such worthy work for the good of Marin county in popularizing its scenic attractions. By banding together in a similar highland club devoted to this equally lovable little wilderness at Oakland's back door we shall campaign energetically for the ultimate setting apart as a public playground, desirable areas of this skyline parkland.

William E. Colby of the Sierra Club has sent word to the organization that he regards the movement as well worthy of the co-operation of members of the Sierra Club. For fifteen years this mountaineering club has conducted excursions each week-end to the many wild retreats about the bay. A large proportion of these tramps are taken among the Contra Costa hills. On February 1 Professor J. N. Le Conte, past president of the Sierra Club, will lead an excursion along the skyline from Claremont to Redwood Peak and on this occasion a large number of those interested in the formation of the east bay conservation club will flock together to effect its formal organization.

the Contra Costa hills and to advocate the carrying out of whatever plans the members may deem desirable for the future preservation of these canyons and ridges, woodlands and wild flower gardens.

To prevent the recurrence of fires in this region by helping to bring about the opening of fire roads and the elimination of litter and other fire hazards.

To help improve trails, place signs of direction, plant wild flowers and shrubs and otherwise beautify these hills.

To enlist the support of the several municipal park boards of these communities in helping to carry out the purposes of the Contra Costa Hills Club as outlined above."

<h2>SIERRA CLUB MEMBERS WILL VISIT HEIGHTS</h2> <p>Organization's President to Lead Party From Claremont on Today's Walk</p> <p>CIVIC BODIES INVITED</p> <p>Contra Costa Hills Club to Be Organized This Afternoon</p> <p>OAKLAND, January 31.—A Sierra Club party led by Past President J. N. Le Conte will walk from Claremont to Redwood Peak on one of the hikes of the organization tomorrow, and the leader and the members have been invited to attend the formal organization of the Contra Costa Hills Club at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon at "The Heights," the former home of Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierra.</p> <p>Among the organizations that have been requested to send delegations to the meeting are the Park and Playground boards of the various east bay municipalities, the chambers of commerce, the Rotary clubs, the Boy Scouts, the American Legion, the California Botanical Society, the Audubon Society and the Oakland and Berkeley Real Estate Boards.</p> <p>ROADS TO MEETING PLACE</p> <p>As pointed out by the organization committee, there will be three ways of reaching the rendezvous: With the Sierra Club, which will leave the Claremont Key Route terminus at 8 A. M.; with a second pedestrian party leaving the end of the Park Boulevard car line at 9:30 A. M., led by J. W. Beck, assistant scout master of the Boy Scouts, which will take a shorter route to Redwood Peak via Shepard canyon, and with others who will assemble at The Heights at their own convenience.</p>	<p>The purpose of the new club, as set forth by its organizers, is "to follow the good example set by the Sierra Club and the Tamalpais Conservation Club by helping to make the 'Sierra Contra Costa' mountains of the opposite shore the great public playground of the east bay cities." The organization committee includes Harold French, chairman; James L'Hommedieu, J. W. Beck, C. H. Baker, Juanita Miller, Fred E. Nisbet and Russell Archerd.</p> <p>OBJECTS OF ORGANIZATION</p> <p>The objects of the club as set forth in detail follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To awaken appreciation of the rare scenic beauties of the Contra Costa hills and to conserve, protect and make more easily accessible these wild park lands lying between their western foothills and the sunrise slopes of this panoramic range.To cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with the outdoor delights to be freely enjoyed by those who ramble afoot, ride or motor through this loveable little wilderness.To urge the people of Oakland, Berkeley and Piedmont to take whatever steps may be found practicable to protect these unsettled open lands from fire and vandalism.To investigate projects looking toward the parking of the Contra Costa hills and to advocate the carrying out of whatever plans the members may deem desirable for the future preservation of these canyons and ridges, woodlands and wild flower gardens.To prevent the recurrence of fires in this region by helping to bring about the opening of fire roads and the elimination of litter and other fire hazards.To help improve trails, place signs of direction, plant wild flowers and shrubs and otherwise beautify these hills.To enlist the support of the several municipal park boards of these communities in helping to carry out the purposes of the Contra Costa Hills Club as outlined above.
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San Francisco Chronicle, 1 February 1920, p. 5.

Formal Organization of the Contra Costa Hills Club

On Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1920, the Contra Costa Hills Club was formally organized at an open-air meeting and program that was held at Pine Hill Reservoir near the Boy Scouts camp in Upper Dimond Canyon in the Oakland hills. At that meeting officers and a board of directors were elected. Harold French was elected president of the club. The new club's charter and bylaws were read and adopted. They had been prepared in advance by a committee headed by Harold French.

Six years and three months had elapsed since Harold French first wrote about the Contra Costa Conservation Club.

Postscript

Harold French believed in sharing his favorite hills, forests, and trails with others. In 1904, when he was twenty-six, articles written by him on some of his favorite places—and how to find them—began appearing in San Francisco newspapers and magazines.

By this time Harold French had developed a social conscience. This led him to encourage people with fewer economic resources to visit some of his favorite places. Articles on places that could be visited on a weekend or a day off included "A Vacation on the Installment Plan: Wild Places on Mount Tamalpais," published in *Overland Monthly* in October 1904; "Here Are Some Good 'Two-Bit' Vacation Trips," *San Francisco Examiner*, 31 May 1911, suggestions for twenty economical short trips in San Francisco County, San Mateo County, the Contra Costa Hills, and Marin County; and "A Vacation in Oakland on the Installment Plan," *Oakland*



Cataract Gulch, Lagunitas Creek A wild spot in steep ravine. Photo. French

A VACATION ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN

Wild Places on Mount Tamalpais

BY HAROLD FRENCH

RECENTLY, Russell Sage rendered an indignant protest against the taking of vacations and deplored as a pernicious habit the waste of valuable time, energy and the most precious of all earthly things, money. His views were promptly challenged by Senator Dewey, who said that a reasonable annual vacation was the most profitable means of insuring a better performance of the year's duties, and also that an employer's interests were better served by the giving of a short period of rest and recreation to faithful employees.

Still, "in the city hived and shut," the majority of the toilers are not permitted to leave their "carking cares." For these, there is apparently no surcease from the weary routine, while the long summer drags out its dreary monotony in cobbled streets, swirling with dust clouds, mingled with the cheerless, smoke-drabbed fog; alternating at times with stifling heat, two extremes of discomfort.

Many longing eyes have read the descriptions of the summer outings of the Sierra Club in the Yosemite and of the climbing pilgrimages of the Mazamas Club further north. Not for their gaze are the wonders of Shasta, Tahoe, King's River, and countless other places whose beau-

Tribune, 16 July 1916, a list of ten hikes in and near the Oakland hills with directions on how to reach the trailheads, the length of each hike, and the elevation gain. In late 1909 and early 1910 Harold French had thirteen articles published in the "Junior Call" section of the *San Francisco Call* newspaper. His intention was to encourage young people to hike and explore the San Francisco Bay Area.

A VACATION in OAKLAND on the INSTALLMENT PLAN

By HAROLD FRENCH

North for you is the road? Did you see? All July and August before you are on eating out? What about your week-end and the Boston Fourth? You have ten full days off coming to you. Why not make a vacation "on the installment plan" in Oakland and Berkeley? You can make the name of these long mountain days and at the same time enjoy "all the contents of home." Why not learn to walk and learn your city Oakland better? Here is a vacation for you at the cost of but \$1. There are dozens of delightful walking spots throughout Oakland. You can begin with easy ascents and with ascending mountain climb to the heights that look at the ocean skyline. Take ten such outings as scheduled below and you will appreciate the beautiful scenery of your very back door as you never could otherwise. Even if you are a motorist, you can not know better the beauty of these mountains which you visit just on your way to more distant country and cities. These ten trips outlined below are the plan of systematic "little journeys" by trail and road. Each will cost you 10 cents per day. Ten for a dollar, with 50 per cent, or even 100 per cent discount if you walk to your starting point or from your point of return.

TEN TRAMPING TRIPS IN AND ABOUT OAKLAND.

Trips No.	Objective Place	Date	Distance	In Cents	Total Points
1	Wagoner and Berkeley Hills	Berkeley, July 8	5 miles	500 feet	500
2	Strawberry Canyon	Berkeley, July 9	1 1/2 miles	150 feet	650
3	Tremont Lake and Tremont Canyon	Berkeley, July 9	2 miles	200 feet	850
4	Leona Heights	Berkeley, July 10	4 miles	400 feet	1250
5	Claremont Canyon	Berkeley, July 10	1 1/2 miles	150 feet	1400
6	Placid Hill	Berkeley, July 10	1 mile	100 feet	1500
7	Strawberry Canyon and Berkeley Hills	Berkeley, August 8	5 miles	500 feet	2000
8	Wagoner Hills	Berkeley, August 10	4 miles	400 feet	2400
9	Redwood Peak	Berkeley, August 20	1 1/2 miles	150 feet	2550
10	Quarry Hill	Berkeley, August 27	1 1/2 miles	150 feet	2700
				Total	2700

TRIP NO. 1—WAGONER AND BERKELEY HILLS:
All Oakland can show you in general Berkeley. Tremont at Berkeley and Berkeley areas in Berkeley can, leaving the one that leads to the City of Berkeley. This road the University and up the cutting trail to the end of the road. Take the road that divides both of the hills in the distance rock point of Oakland. The distance is but 100 feet, and the height of the hill is 100 feet, but the view from the peak is almost as inspiring. One can see the Golden Gate and a beautiful panoramic view of the bay and the city of Berkeley. The view of the bay and the city of Berkeley is almost as inspiring. One can see the Golden Gate and a beautiful panoramic view of the bay and the city of Berkeley. The view of the bay and the city of Berkeley is almost as inspiring. One can see the Golden Gate and a beautiful panoramic view of the bay and the city of Berkeley.

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KEY TRIPS FIRST:
Many will bring off both have either never learned how to walk or have forgotten how. Some begin their vacation too soon. They try to move too much ground in too little time, with consequent exhaustion of limbs and loss of interest in walking as a pleasure. The best plan for the beginner is to take very little ground. According to this schedule of ten tramping weeks, the first two are down hill trips for the most part in which the amount of climbing does not exceed 100 feet. Each one covers a different territory than the preceding one and the distances are gradually lengthened.

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(Continued on Page Three, Preceding)

In order to recruit new members for the club and to encourage local citizens to join conservation campaigns, Harold French went out of his way to encourage people to join hikes or to spend a night under the redwood trees in the Oakland hills. In this way he provided people with superb experiences and converted them to his causes.

HUNDREDS SLEEP UNDER REDWOOD TREES AT NIGHT

Oakland Citizens Make Pilgrimage in Campaign to Save Sequoias.

In connection with the campaign to save the Sequoias, between five and six hundred citizens of Oakland spent last night in the open under the redwood trees in Havens' amphitheater on Redwood peak. Today they will view the park in its entirety.

The park bond issue comes up at the election of August 29 and is for \$538,000 for the acquisition of 1547 additional acres of land for the park system. The land is entirely planted in trees, of which redwoods form a great portion.

The Oakland City Council will consider the proposition tomorrow.

The last week, it is said, has seen many social and civic organizations and improvement clubs of the city getting behind the movement and taking up an active campaign for the success of the bond issue proposal. The Bay View Improvement Club approved the save the Sequoias campaign at its meeting Tuesday night and pledged its active support.

B. W. Hoover, chairman of the "S. O. S." button committee, talked before the Bay View club in the redwoods. Talks were also made by W. J. Moorehead, president of the Oakland Carmen's Union, and John Gelder, chairman of the speakers' bureau.

"This is to be your park, yours and your children's and your children's children to keep forever," Moorehead said. "It is the finest thing ever offered to the citizens of Oakland. It is a God-made play-

Shall Our Redwoods Stand or Fall?

Here are two of the many out-of-doors enthusiasts who camped under the Redwoods last night in connection with the tree conservation drive and the fire prevention campaign being carried on in the Eastbay section. The young women shown in the picture are (left) MURIEL MOOREHEAD and ELLEN MARCOVICH.



Oakland Tribune, 30 July 1922, p. 36.

Harold French evolved from enjoying natural scenic beauty as a teenage hiker and then sharing it with others as a hike leader for the Sierra Club when he was in his thirties to becoming a citizen activist. In 1920, shortly before his forty-second birthday, Harold French founded the Contra Costa Hills Club. With the aid of the club, he actively campaigned for the preservation of redwood groves in the hills of East Oakland, for fire prevention measures for the hills, for the expansion of Mount Diablo State Park, and for the conversion of no longer needed watershed lands in the East Bay hills to public parks. These hard-fought campaigns took years but ultimately were successful.