



CITY OF MARTINEZ

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
October 3, 2012**

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Tim Tucker, City Engineer
SUBJECT: Application to the State for including the Rankin Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest
DATE: September 26, 2012

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution approving the submittal of application to the California State Department of Park and Recreation to include the Rankin Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest.

BACKGROUND:

Recent work at Rankin Park has spurred new interest in the preservation and restoration of the Olive Grove. In addition, there have been discussions at the PRMCC initiated by a resident to have the Grove designated as a California Point of Historical Interest. On July 17, 2012, the Parks, Recreation, Marina and Cultural Commission (PRMCC) approved a motion recommending that the City Council support the application for inclusion of the Rankin Park area Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest. Attached is information from the State's website on the process and requirements for having a site included in the State's list of Points of Historical Interest.

A large portion of the Rankin estate acreage that did not include the Olive Grove was sold to the City of Martinez in 1937 for \$12,000 and subsequently made into a City Park. In 1978 the remaining portion of the once original Rankin estate grounds, that includes the Olive Grove and a large area of property to the west of the Grove, was gifted to the City of Martinez for Open Space purposes. James Rankin's Olive Grove planted 125 years ago is today a unique character-defining geographic feature of Martinez.

Staff believes the Rankin Olive Grove is eligible to be listed as a California Point of Interest because the grove is an existing physical expression of James Beveridge Rankin (1848-1901). Rankin was significant to the development of Downtown Martinez and the County of Contra Costa socially, economically and geographically. The resident, who initiated the current interest, has completed the required forms for the application (attached) by compiling an extensive history of the Rankin Family and estate. Staff has reviewed the draft application. It provides very interesting facts of Martinez, Contra Costa County and the Rankin family. Due to the use restrictions on the property (Open Space) there do not appear to be any potential negative consequences for having the Grove designated a California Point of Historical Interest. The application requires the property owner (City) to approve the application. The attached resolution if approved will serve as City concurrence with the application submittal.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the general fund.

ACTION:

Adopt a resolution approving the submittal of application to the California State Department of Park and Recreation to include the Rankin Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest.

Attachments:

Resolution

Points of Historical Interest background

Vicinity map

Application Submittal Information

APPROVED BY:



City Manager

RESOLUTION NO. -12

APPROVING THE SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATION TO THE CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND RECREATION TO INCLUDE THE RANKIN OLIVE GROVE AS A CALIFORNIA POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

WHEREAS, James B. Rankin (1848-1901) was the owner of many parcels in Contra Costa and other Counties in California including property in the City of Martinez; and

WHEREAS, the said Mr. Rankin was a prominent and important person in business, government and the development of Contra Costa County; and

WHEREAS, under the direction of Mr. Rankin approximately 400 olive trees were planted on his Martinez Property; and

WHEREAS, the Olive Grove is one of the last remaining physical expressions of Mr. Rankin; and

WHEREAS, the City of Martinez is the current owner of the property commonly referred to as the "Rankin Olive Grove"; and

WHEREAS, the City of Martinez as the current property owner of the Rankin Olive Grove supports the application to the State of California for inclusion of the Rankin Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the City Council of the City of Martinez approves the submittal of application to the California State Department of Park and Recreation to include the Rankin Olive Grove as a California Point of Historical Interest.

* * * * *

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the City Council of the City of Martinez at a Regular Meeting of said Council held on the 3rd day of October, 2012 by, the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RICHARD G. HERNANDEZ, CITY CLERK
CITY OF MARTINEZ

California Points of Historical Interest

California Points of Historical Interest are sites, buildings, features, or events that are of local (city or county) significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific or technical, religious, experimental, or other value.

Points of Historical Interest designated after December 1997 and recommended by the State Historical Resources Commission are also listed in the California Register.

Criteria for Designation

To be eligible for designation as a Point of Historical Interest, a resource must meet at least one of the following criteria:

The first, last, only, or most significant of its type within the local geographic region (City or County).

Associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of the local area.

A prototype of, or an outstanding example of, a period, style, architectural movement or construction or is one of the more notable works or the best surviving work in the local region of a pioneer architect, designer or master builder.

Effects of Designation

Limited protection: Environmental review may be required under CEQA if property is threatened by a project. Contact your local planning agency for more information.

Local assessor may enter into contract with property owner for property tax reduction (Mills Act).

Local building inspector must grant code alternative provided under State Historic Building Code.

Registration is recorded on property deed.

A small enamel directional sign (no text) available through local Caltrans district office. Owner may place his or her own marker at the site.

Procedures for Designation

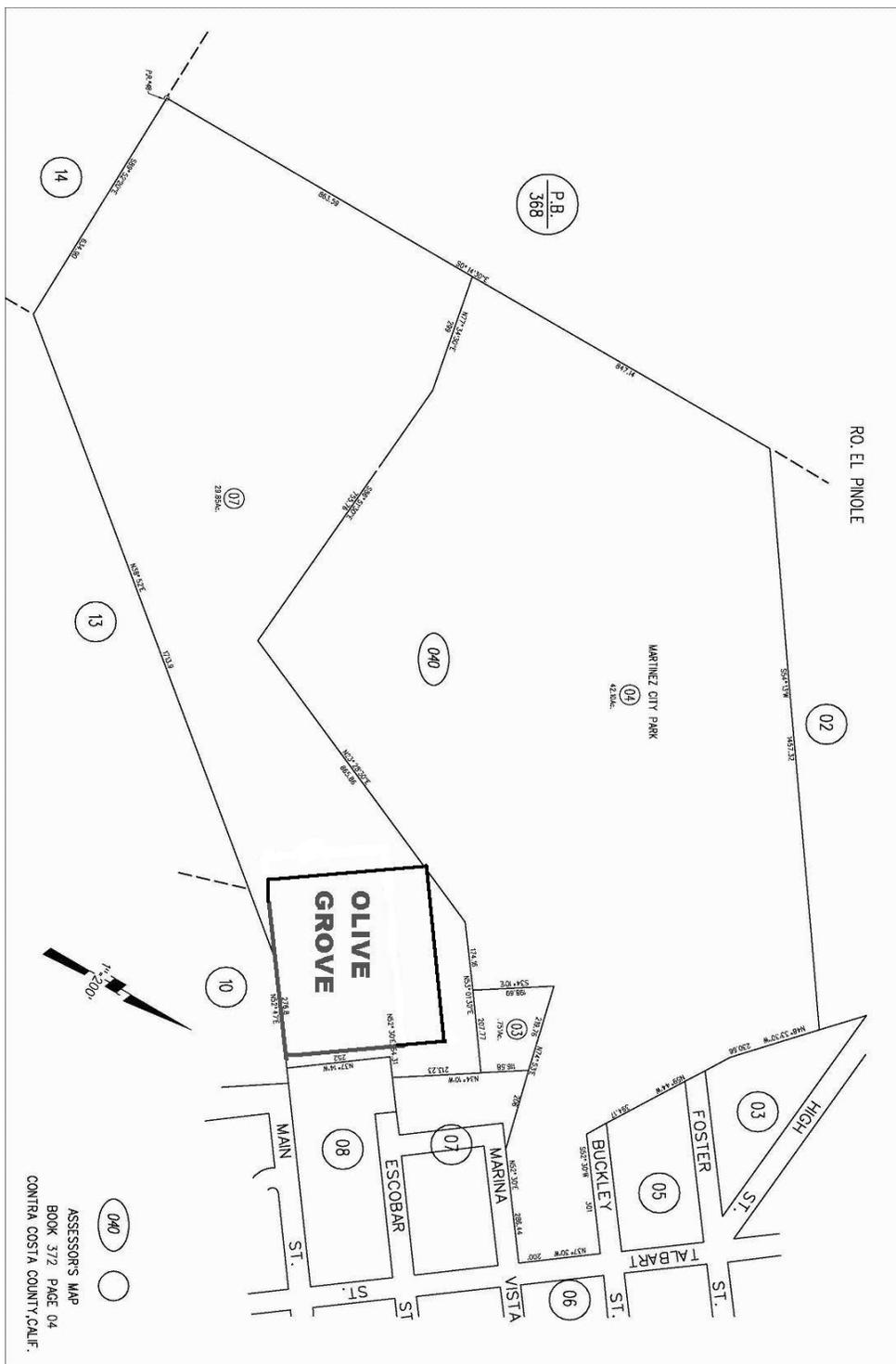
1. Download a Nomination Packet, including TAS Bulletin 13. Only use the DPR 523 Forms applicable to the nominated resource. If you need assistance contact Registration Unit staff.
2. Obtain written consent from the property owner(s) for the nomination. Written consent from the property owner(s) is required for designation. If a plaque is requested, written permission of property owner(s) to place the plaque on his or her property must be stated in the letter.
3. Complete application according to instructions.
4. Submit cover letter, written consent from property owner(s), nomination, photographs, and maps to OHP for review.
5. Nominations will be reviewed by OHP staff. Those that do not have written consent from the property owner(s), are inadequate or are not prepared according to the instructions will be returned to the applicant for further work.
6. OHP notifies all applicants, property owners and appropriate governmental jurisdictions of the time and place of the SHRC meeting.
7. If approved by the SHRC, the nomination is forwarded to the Director of California State Parks for final approval.

Owner Consent

Written consent of property owner(s) is required for designation.

Local Government Notification

Local government will be given 60 days to comment on application before the nomination is considered by the State Historical Resources Commission.



NOTE: Include bar scale and north arrow.

Page 1 of 6 *Resource Name Rankin Olive Grove or # (Assigned by recorder)
*Recorded by: Kristin Henderson *Date 18 September 2012 ☒ Continuation

The Rankin Olive Grove is eligible to be listed as a California Point of Historical Interest because the Rankin Olive Grove is the extant physical expression of James Beveridge Rankin (1848-1901). Rankin was significant to the development of Downtown Martinez and the County of Contra Costa socially, economically, and geographically.

Rankin Initiated Social Organization in East Contra Costa County Mining Towns and Martinez

James Beveridge Rankin (1848-1901) emigrated from Scotland in 1865. In 1870, Rankin arrived in Somersville, California to work in the coal mines. Rankin quickly became involved in mine organization and management particularly with issues of safety. In the 1870s and 1880s, Rankin spearheaded fraternal organizations in the Mt. Diablo coal mines region. Rankin organized other social and cultural endeavors, including a monumental marker to assassinated president Garfield.¹ Rankin served as a Justice of the Peace and a juror.² Rankin and his mining partner, Hawxhurst, were thanked in the December 19, 1885 Contra Costa Gazette for "furnishing free a train to convey the attendant mourners"...to a Welsh miner's funeral.³

Rankin was elected Contra Costa County Sheriff in 1884 with the support of the mining communities. He served two terms. Being Sheriff required the Rankin family to move to Martinez, California.⁴ In 1888, Rankin lost his race for State Senate.⁵ Nevertheless, he remained a Republican "boss" in the County, organizing political conventions and greatly influencing candidacies.⁶

Rankin married Sarah Brown in 1879. Rankin's wife fell ill in the fall of 1892 and Rankin summoned a Chicago surgeon specialist to San Francisco by train. The Rankin family history states it was the first mastectomy performed on the West Coast. Sarah Rankin would live to be 82 years.⁷ Stanford-Lane Hospital (in 1892 called Cooper College, San Francisco) has no records as old as Sarah Rankin's.⁸ However, the Radical Mastectomy was introduced by "The father of American Surgery", Dr. William Stewart Halsted, in 1882. Halsted was based at John Hopkins in Baltimore, not out of Chicago from where Sarah Rankin's surgeon came. However, Halsted had many understudies.⁹

How many people in California were wealthy enough to afford this undertaking Rankin provided his wife? What was the breast cancer rate of that time? The Radical Mastectomy was invented because women of Sarah Rankin's day usually did not see a doctor until the breast cancer had diffused into the chest cavity. It is highly probable Sarah Brown Rankin was the first woman in Contra Costa County and any other California rural area--and perhaps in the Pacific States--to undergo a radical mastectomy. Radical mastectomies would continue into the 1970s. James B. Rankin's efforts towards his wife's health are probably a milestone in Western U.S. surgery and women's health. This milestone is further punctuated by the fact that Rankin--unlike John Muir, Samuel Clemens, Ansel Adams, and other men of

¹ Contra Costa Gazette (1881 October 22). *The Garfield Monument at the Coal Mines*. 3.

² Weekly Antioch Ledger. (1877 October 13). *Fatal Wound*.

³ Parent, T.A. (2011). *Rose Hill: A comprehensive history of a pioneer cemetery in the Mount Diablo coal field*. p. 712.

⁴ Wainwright, W. H. (2006). *Rankin Family Oral History and Research*. Compiled for Martinez Historical Society. Received by electronic communication June 25, 2012.

⁵ Contra Costa Gazette. (1900 July 28). *James Rankin for State Senator*.

⁶ Wainwright, P. B. (____). *Historic Martinez: The Sum of Its Parts: Including early businessman James Rankin*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/james_rankin_2.html

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bourn, D. (2012 September 5). *Extent of Stanford Lane Medical Libraries records*. Personal communication by phone and electronic email.

⁹ Wikipedia (2012). *William Stewart Halsted*. Retrieved September 18, 2012 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Stewart_Halsted

success--did not gain a substrate for his endeavors by marrying into money. Rankin accomplished himself what was necessary to provide Sarah Rankin with the Radical Mastectomy that became so crucial to women's health.

Rankin requested the Congregational and Episcopal ministers to teach high school. The resulting school, the first high school in the County,¹⁰ attracted students from several different towns but this school only survived two years. Rankin was seminal in advancing education in Martinez. His wife became the first president of the Martinez Education Association.¹¹

James Rankin felt ill the last five years of his life.¹² He travelled to Germany for restorative baths. Rankin returned to his native Scotland and the small parish church outside Ayr where he had lived as a boy with a minister's family. Rankin found the church burned down and financed its rebuilding. In 1901 Rankin died at Stanford-Lane Hospital, San Francisco, after a surgery. He was 53 years of age.

Economic: Rankin Advanced Mines and Their Local Economies, Raised Capital, Became a Real Estate Magnate, Bought Interests in Several Ventures Including Shipping and Press, and Assumed Management of Failing Martinez Bank.

San Francisco's industrial development in the late 1800s is tied closely to the mining of coal in Contra Costa County. Repeatedly in the 1850s, coal deposits were discovered in the Mt. Diablo range area. The resulting mines were fully active from 1860 to 1902.¹³

Rankin contributed significantly to the Mt. Diablo mining region economy through mining activities but also by co-buying, rehabilitating, and running the only hotel¹⁴ for the mining communities. He sold the hotel 15 months later and then with a partner opened or bought stores in three mining towns of which two are now ghost towns on parkland and the other no longer exists.¹⁵ The 1879 District Directory described Somersville as "a coal mining town distant one mile from Nortonville, is built up principally by miners", and that a Rankin, James owned a saloon there.¹⁶

Even while Sheriff and living in Martinez, Rankin actively fostered mines and their economies. October 10, 1885 *Contra Costa Gazette* relayed of Nortonville, "a town once so proud and prosperous, 'now' a town in the throes of dissolution" due to a downturn in coal consumption and an upturn in higher quality coal discoveries elsewhere. "Somersville, its twin neighbor is a trifle better situated. Here the Rankin mine is in full operation, and things still look prosperous." This prosperity arose from Rankin leasing the Manhattan mine, in December 1884, from the Black Diamond Coal Mining Company.¹⁷ Black Diamond Coal Mining Company closed their adjoining mines a month later because "with the exception of a small patch ...of the Pittsburg Company and another on in the old Manhattan ground, the coal has been extracted down to where water interferes seriously."¹⁸

May 8, 1886, the *Mining and Scientific Press* wrote:

Now it looks as if there would be a new lease on life for the coal mining region of Mount Diablo. James Rankin and George Hawxhurst leased the Pittsburg coal mine . . . On Friday of last week a vein of coal about three feet in width was cut, and they are now talking about . . . [mining] 100 tons of coal per day...Men are flocking that way, with the hope of steady employment, and instead of the...town abandoned as was the case in Nortonville, there is every prospect of Somerville increasing in population and assuming an air of prosperity.

Rankin and Hawxhurst's success caused "dignitaries from the City to come to the mining community for a dedication", including descending into the mine in a newly constructed elevator. In 1888, it was reported that "Mr.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Wainwright, P. B. (______). *Sara Elizabeth Brown Rankin: Martinez matriarch*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/sarah_rankin.html

¹² Weekly Antioch Ledger (1895 September 7). *Taken Suddenly III*. 3.

¹³ California Division of Mines (1958 January). *California Journal of Mines and Geology*. v. 54. 515-517.

¹⁴ Weekly Antioch Ledger (1875 January 2-23). *Union Hotel Somersville*.

¹⁵ *History of Contra Costa County, California* (1974). Oakland: Brooks-Sterling. 635.

¹⁶ McKenney's District Directory (1879). *Somersville*. 183-184.

¹⁷ Contra Costa County Clerk of the Recorder. *General Index: Grantees-Plaintiffs, Etc. 1858-1917*. 43-44.

¹⁸ California State Mining Bureau (1894 September 15). *Twelfth Report of the State Mineralogist*. Sacramento: Superintendent State Printing. 44-45.

Rankin, the manager of the company, states that in consequence of the recent high price of fuel, and the greatly increased demand of Pittsburg coal, two new tunnels are being driven upon the Black Diamond vein, and the old Independent shaft is to be reopened to the amount of five thousand tons per month...¹⁹

September 7, 1889 the *Weekly Antioch Ledger* reported "Somerville Items: A great many people have been coming to town lately. What's the matter? A boom must have struck the town as all the houses are again being occupied. Mr. Rankin has just completed the work of erecting an engine at the old Davis slope. They are going down the old slope for a new supply of coal." Hawxhurst would die in 1890, but by then Rankin had bought Hawxhurst out of the mining interest.²⁰ Rankin predicted there was more coal and there was. Moreover, Rankin invented ways of getting at the coal and dealing with the subterranean water.²¹

On October 6, 1894, the *Weekly Antioch Ledger* reported that pumps Rankin installed "in the Rankin Mine" were pumping out the water. This effort led to the discovery of a continuation of the Clark Vein which had produced the best coal in the Mt. Diablo range. The Antioch Ledger stated that "An air chute will be put in and it will take about three weeks to complete the work. The old furnaces are being cleaned out and repairs are going on around the place. It is a great find for the town, and Somerville will again boom."²² The opening of the Clark Vein was financed through arrangements that James Rankin had made with San Francisco investors, and a man named Charles R. Allen of Oakland after whom Rankin named his son.

On July 1, 1897, Rankin wrote in a special edition of the *Contra Costa News Special Edition* that

The Pittsburg Coal Mining Company commenced in 1895 a systematic, thorough plan for more important work than has hitherto been done. The owners, James Rankin of Martinez, and Charles R. Allen of Oakland, being almost alone in their confidence of greater possibilities, sunk a new shaft six hundred feet deep . . . their output since 1895 has been uninterrupted. This company is now having manufactured the best electric hoist, generator and dynamo for a further development of these mines, nine hundred feet below the present lowest level. . . This machinery will be in place by December of this year and is a matter of the greatest importance to the manufacturing interests of California. The company is now supplying... Stockton and Sacramento Steamers, the large flower mills, State's prison at San Quentin, Western Meat Company, and many others.

The coal was taken from the coal mining communities by smaller trains to be loaded on ships or into Southern Pacific coal cars.

Rankin wanted a place to overnight while in eastern Contra Costa County and so purchased a little house and a 640-acre ranch from the family McAvoy,²³ after whom the area is still named.²⁴ Rankin had a young Scotsman and his wife living on the property and had them raise grain which endeavor's success demanded two grain silos built.²⁵ Two years later, in 1899, James Rankin the coal miner, hotel and store owner, mine manager and owner, sheriff, rancher, and farmer, became a banker. The Bank of Martinez had made too many bad loans. Rankin's reputation for business acumen inspired bank officers to request Rankin to take over the Bank's management. He accepted the position and remained the Bank of Martinez president until he died.²⁶

James Rankin bought hundreds of acres, blocks, lots, and other properties in San Francisco, Martinez, and around the base of Mt. Diablo in what would become Pittsburg, Clayton, Antioch, and Walnut Creek.²⁷ Rankin's Martinez buildings were decorated with stone from the Rankin sandstone quarry, much of which dislodged from these buildings in the

¹⁹ California State Mining Bureau (1888 September 15). *Eighth Report of the State Mineralogist*. Sacramento: Superintendent State Printing. 160-161.

²⁰ Weekly Antioch Ledger (1890 September 6). *Death of George W. Hawxhurst*. 2.

²¹ California State Mining Bureau (1892 September 15). *Eleventh Report of the State Mineralogist*. Sacramento: Superintendent State Printing. 192.

²² Weekly Antioch Ledger (1894 October 06). *The Clark Vein Found*. 3.

²³ Wainwright, P. B. (______). *Sara Elizabeth Brown Rankin: Martinez matriarch*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/sarah_rankin.html

²⁴ Wikipedia (2012). McAvoy. Retrieved June 30, 2012 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McAvoy,_California.

²⁵ Wainwright, P. B. (______). *Historic Martinez: The Sum of Its Parts: Including early businessman James Rankin*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/james_rankin_2.html

²⁶ Wainwright, W. H. (2006). *Rankin Family Oral History and Research*. Compiled for Martinez Historical Society. Received by electronic communication June 25, 2012.

²⁷ Contra Costa County Clerk Recorder. *General Index: Grantees-Plaintiffs, Etc. 1858-1917*. 43-44.

1906 earthquake. This quarry had also provided other buildings in Martinez and the Napa State Asylum with building and decorative stone.²⁸ Rankin also owned an interest in the *Contra Costa Gazette* and shipping companies. Rankin had many financial interests, and in the last two decades of the 19th Century and the fourth decade of his life, was writing personal checks for \$5,000 and paying \$13,300 in gold coin for properties. Suffice it to say, Rankin was a tremendous actor upon the regional economy. The Contra Costa Clerk Recorder's *General Index 1885-1917 Grantees, Plaintiff, Etc.*, lists an index heading just for "Rankin".

When Rankin died, his obituary was placed on the first page of the October 19th, 1901 *Contra Costa Gazette*:

He was a man of uncommon ability as his success in his business and life well attest. We feel our loss deeply and wonder in our minds who can take his place. There will be a void that never can be filled...the standing Mr. Rankin obtained at the time of his death is the result of his own efforts. He was a man of great energy and perseverance. He was one of those few men that did not know what fail meant. His whole life was a success. His whole interests were in this county, and a great deal of his work was devoted to the upbuilding of Contra Costa. He was public spirited, and there was no one who was more willing to contribute to anything that would tend to make the town and county more prosperous. The county...growth and development were watched with interest by deceased. His strong hand has had a great deal to do with it, and many an enterprise has been brought to Contra Costa through his efforts.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* said "James Rankin, president of the Bank of Martinez and one of the best-known business men of Contra Costa County died...in a San Francisco hospital...engaged in coal mining and merchandising...Bank of Martinez, in which he owned a controlling interest..."²⁹

Rankin Moved to Martinez and Developed a Residential Ranch Estate, Including the Olive Grove, Stone Quarry for Martinez Buildings and More; Rankin Estate Augments City Sewer System

Rankin became Contra Costa County Sheriff while his family continued to grow. Eventually Rankin bought what is now City of Martinez's Rankin Park property from a farmer. The house was expanded and updated, and became to resemble a manor more than merely a large farmhouse. Gas and indoor plumbing including a new bathroom with a new toilet (vs. the outhouse) were emplaced in the house.³⁰ One of the first telephones in Martinez, only three years after telephones came to San Francisco, was installed at the Rankin Estate so that Rankin could keep in contact with his businesses and the mines.^{31 32}

Meeting minutes of the Martinez City Trustees of September 21, 1887 relay "Trustee Hale states Mr. James Rankin requests permission to lay a sewer...along Howard Street from his residence to connect with the sewer on Talbart Street providing that he put in the necessary T's and Y's for further connections and to keep said sewer on street flushed." Water would come from two tanks that collected gravity feed from a spring on the property.

With the help of two Scots miners hired from the Mt. Diablo mines, other ranch hands, a Chinese Cook, and eventually a nanny for the nine children, an 80 acre ranch was developed on what today is City of Martinez's Rankin Park. The ranch featured:³³

- 44 English walnut trees in bearing
- 400 olive trees in bearing
- 150 orange trees in full bearing
- 25 almond trees in bearing
- a small family vineyard

²⁸ California State Mining Bureau (1906 January). *Structural and Industrial Materials of California*. Bulletin 38. Sacramento: State Printing Superintendent. 126.

²⁹ San Francisco Chronicle (1901 Oct 16). *Death of James Rankin: Martinez banker succumbs after an operation for appendicitis*.

³⁰ Perry, C. (2008). *Martinez: Handbook of houses and history*. 29.

³¹ Wainwright, P. B. (____). *James Rankin: Ambitious immigrant, respected businessman, devoted family man*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/james_rankin_1.html

³² *Telephone History Closely Linked with Martinez*. (1970). Morning News Gazette (?). News Article in Martinez Historical Society Cat#01-68-4:4718 "Utilities" file.

³³ Wainwright, P. B. (____). *Sara Elizabeth Brown Rankin: Martinez matriarch*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/sarah_rankin.html

- A family orchard of cherries, peaches, pears, plums, French prunes, apples, apricots, and quinces covering about 4 acres
- A “modernized” 16-room house (that would become a 20 room house)
- 40 acres of pasture land
- A large barn for horses, cows, and a bull
- Outhouses including a stone house for milk, ice house with ice brought by train every winter, smoke house, and chicken houses in good repair
- Gravity fed spring and four 16,000 gallon water tank
- A rock quarry

The Rankins moved from the estate in 1906, renting the house out until it burned down in 1921.³⁴ The Rankins transferred their interest in the estate in 1916.³⁵ Nothing remains of this estate, except the geography of the estate’s acreage as parklands, the Rankin Olive Grove, singular remnant trees of varying type on proximal hillsides, and strewn remnant stones from the quarry—some with drill holes in them. A large portion of the Rankin estate acreage that did not include the Olive Grove was sold to the City of Martinez in 1937.³⁶ However, in 1978, the remaining portion of the once original estate grounds, that includes the Olive Grove and a large area of property to the west of the Grove, was gifted to the City of Martinez.³⁷ James Rankin’s Olive Grove planted 125 years ago is today a unique character defining geographic feature of Martinez.

The author of this nomination found a weathered square nail in Rankin Park. The nail was given to a granddaughter of James Rankin prior to the granddaughter’s death. The granddaughter was also a Civic Leader in Martinez and the County of Contra Costa.³⁸ Rankin’s great grandson, her son and once a Martinez City Councilman, has initiated recent actions to conserve and manage the Olive Grove.

The Rankin Olive Grove is an Integral Part of Martinez’s Economic Historic Context

In 1876, with 1,000 inhabitants, Martinez incorporated itself. In 1877, the Railroad arrived in Martinez. As a result, there was a building boom. The Italian Fishermen and the canneries came. The Martinez Water Company organized municipal water supply and pipes were laid under the town and in the foothills. Around this time, the same process occurred with gas and electricity.

Martinez’s first refinery, as well as a copper smelter, arrived during this period. John Muir arrived in 1890 to help with his father-in-law’s, John Strenzel, ranch. In 1893, Strenzel bought the Granger’s Wharf complex for \$22,000. At the turn of the 20th Century, Martinez was combining its agricultural strength with a new industrial expansion. This led to the economy diversifying. In 1901, the County of Contra Costa replaced its 1855 pioneer courthouse with a monumental granite Greek-revival building. And by 1905, industrialism began to outpace agriculture.

Amongst 1,400 or so inhabitants, there were some extremely astute business people interacting with one another who also maintained farms and ranches. These people, such as Muir and Rankin typify that crossroads between the small, rural town Martinez was and an industrializing Victorian commercial center.³⁹

The Rankin Olive Grove in Retrospect

In 1915, Royal Dutch Shell Corporation completed construction of its massive refinery in Martinez. This would result in the biggest building boom in Martinez’s history. Residential developers began buying ranches on the edges of Martinez and building subdivisions of modest frame houses.⁴⁰ The Rankins sold off their estate in 1916 and the era of residential ranching in Downtown Martinez was over forever. There was no more crossing back into rural times. *The Martinez Daily Standard* wrote that the purchaser of the Rankin property would subdivide and sell that land immediately. Moreover, that “With the passing of the Rankin property into new hands, the last of the famous landmark sites will pass into history, for the march of progress has wiped out all the old estates that once surrounded the entire

³⁴ Martinez Daily Standard. (1921 October 21). *Home Guttled by \$5,000 Blaze*.1

³⁵ Martinez Daily Standard (1916 April 26). *\$20,000 is Price Paid for the Old Rankin Property*. 1.

³⁶ Contra Costa Gazette (1937 July 22). *Brady Opposition Fails to Halt Park Site Purchase by Council*. 1.

³⁷ Martinez News-Gazette (1978 December 08). *Olive Grove Area is Accepted*. 1.

³⁸ Burt, H. (2011). *Phyllis Butcher Wainwright: 1916-2011. At rest in the Alhambra Cemetery she helped preserve*. Retrieved June 28, 2012 from http://www.martinezhistory.org/html/phyllis_butcher_wainwright.html

³⁹ Kelley & VerPlanck (2008). *Architectural and Historic Survey of Downtown Martinez, California: Historic context statement*.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

city.”⁴¹ For some reason, the Rankin estate was only divided into two parcels, and both made their way back to the City of Martinez and are a City park today.

Relinquishing self sustaining residential agriculture was a trend throughout the nation, and a trend that would lead in part to the Great Depression.⁴² When people left behind agrarian values for consumptive ones borne from and dependent on an industrial complex, driven by commercial media, they lost economic autonomy.⁴³ As Dorothea Lange (1895-1965)⁴⁴ observed:

There is no place for people to go live on the land any more, and they're living. That's a wild statement, isn't it? And yet, it begins to look as though it's true in our country. We have, in my lifetime, changed from rural to urban. In my lifetime, that little space, this tremendous thing happened.⁴⁵

The Olive Grove not only provides a visual and environmental interest to Downtown Martinez, it also is a singular, substantial, intact, and living expression of the pre-1915 historic context in Martinez. The Olive Grove is the last vestige of agricultural life that disappeared from Downtown Martinez and many places forever.

This glowing outcome of pioneer efforts was not accomplished without toil, labor, land struggles, elements, finances and other obstacles. What moderns are prone to bemoan as hard luck, the sturdy first settlers took a part of the run of things. After each succeeding catastrophe or calamity, they worked all the harder to accomplish the task which they had set themselves to do. The thought of government aid or help was beyond the pale of American acceptance in pioneer days. Confidence and reliance on their own courage and ability were outstanding traits of the west's builders. It was not a place for weaklings. Self reliance and sturdiness of its people made Contra Costa and America great.⁴⁶

Reminders of our agricultural past have tremendous value. New Deal Federal Building Art represented the national agrarian past to spur the depressed national spirit. And the Olive Grove, planted around 1887, remains for 125 years the spirit of the end of the agricultural era in Downtown Martinez--and self-starting, community-developing, pioneer spirits such as James Beveridge Rankin.

⁴¹ Martinez Daily Standard (1916 April 26). *\$20,000 is Price Paid for the Old Rankin Property*. 1.

⁴² Collier C. & Collier J. L. (2001). *Progressivism, the Great Depression, and the New Deal: 1901-1941*.

⁴³ McElvaine, R.S. (2002). *The Depression and the New Deal: A history in documents*.

⁴⁴ Wikipedia (2012). *Dorothea Lange*. Retrieved June 30, 2012 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothea_Lange.

⁴⁵ *Dorothea Lange: A Visual Life*. (1994). Edited by Partridge, E. 114.

⁴⁶ Purcell, M.F. (1940). *History of Contra Costa*. 423.