



**A Land of Opportunity for the Borello Family**  
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The history of early California is abundant with stories of immigrant families from Europe who, through hard work and determination, rose from poverty to become landowners, ranchers and farmers. It must be acknowledged that the great expanses of land available to these families were once the traditional home of Native-American tribes whose populations were decimated by European diseases and the systematic disenfranchisement imposed by the Spanish, Mexican, and United States governments.

One of these immigrant families that owned three large ranches in West Marin was the Borello clan. The patriarch of the family, Allesandro, immigrated from Italy in 1909 and was joined three years later by his wife Maria and sons, Pietro, Elegio and Umberto. By 1920 the Borellos had settled along the Russian River where father and sons worked as laborers on a farm. In 1927, the youngest son, Umberto, married Helen Correa, whose parents had immigrated from Portugal and Austria. Umberto and Helen lived with her parents in the Bayview neighborhood of San Francisco where Umberto worked at his father-in-law's fruit stand.

In the early 1940s, Umberto purchased 1400 acres of ranch land near Olema and remodeled the family home there. He and Helen then acquired an additional 1000 acres in the San Geronimo Valley near present-day Lagunitas. The Borello home still stands near the intersection of Wild Iris Dr. and Sir Francis Drake Blvd. which can be seen in the image background. In 1951, they sold their Olema cattle and dairy ranch to Ernest Kettenhoffen of Novato for \$140,000. Their

son, Robert purchased another 860-acre ranch on Tomales Bay north of Pt. Reyes in 1958 where he and his wife Judy raised sheep and operated a quarry.

Ranching is a hard and sometimes dangerous life and the Borellos were no strangers to hardships caused by rustlers, illegal hunters and roving packs of wild dogs. In 1952, Umberto was gored by one of his own bulls while loading the angry beast into a truck. A few years later, marauding dogs killed two of Borello's heifers and mutilated another. In 1957, Umberto confronted four men who had broken the gate to his ranch and were hunting on his property. When he ordered them off of his land, one of them jumped in a car and tried to run him down. Al and Helen sold their Lagunitas ranch in 1959 to a development company that would eventually build the San Geronimo Golf Course and the couple moved to Oregon after purchasing land along the Rogue River.

Robert and Judy continued managing the Tomales Bay ranch together until 1992 when Robert was tragically killed in a car accident. Judy kept the ranch while managing the Old Western Saloon in Pt. Reyes. The ranch was eventually acquired by the Marin Agricultural Land Trust who retained the easements and sold the land to the owners of the Double 8 Dairy. It is now part of over 8,000 acres of agricultural land under the protection and environmental stewardship of the present owners and MALT.

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