



A section of the East Bay walls near Milpitas, California. This portion is 6 feet high and runs for about a mile along a hilltop. (R. Swanson)

California. Herds of bison and caribou never wandered across northern California, so we do not expect to find ancient game-drive fences there. Nevertheless, we do come across some very mysterious walls---many miles of them. They have puzzled San Francisco Bay Area residents for over a century. (R1)

Ranging along the hills east of San Francisco Bay, the long stretches of walls are constructed from closely fitted basalt boulders. Some of these boulders weigh close to a ton. In some places, the

walls reach five feet in height and three feet in width. The larger stones that serve as wall foundations are deeply embedded in the soil, suggesting great age. The walls extend for many miles along the hill crests from Berkeley to Milpitas and beyond---even all the way to San Jose, 50 miles south. Naturally, time and civilization have destroyed some of the walls, but what remains is most impressive. (R27, R28)

The searches of property records going back to the Gold Rush and the studies of Spanish-mission records give no hints of who built the walls or why. Evidently they are centuries old, possibly prehistoric.

Why would anyone build miles of walls from ponderous boulders along ridge crests? The walls twist and turn abruptly. They enclose nothing and appear to serve no practical purpose. At least, they serve no modern purpose. Near Mt. Diablo, a stone circle 30 feet in diameter has been discovered near the walls, thereby deepening the mystery.

Scientists show little interest in these

walls. One even stated:

I don't know of anyone who's come up with a credible explanation. I think what you're getting is an indication that there isn't any academic work in it. (R28)

In truth, this attitude makes sense to a professional scientist. There are only stones on the ridges, no artifacts, no astronomical alignments, and little that could be parlayed into a respectable research paper. Filling this scientific vacuum have been the dedicated labors of enthusiastic amateur archeologists.

For almost two decades, R. Swanson has been searching out the enigmatic stone walls that festoon the Berkeley Hills and far beyond. He summarized some of his findings in a 1997 article.

On the crest of the Berkeley hills there is a long line of large rocks, some are three feet in length, they may weigh a half ton. A century ago they ran for miles on these dry,



*Six-foot-high wall in southern Alameda County, California. This section is over 2 miles long.
(R. Swanson)*

wind-swept crests then down in a line to what is now the botanical gardens.

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In the past twelve years, I have visited over forty miles of these stone structures. To call them walls is something of a misnomer. Some do go in a straight line, others twist like a demented snake up a steep hillside, others come in a spiral two hundred feet wide and circle into a boulder with a six-inch knob carved on the top of it. Some are massive, over six feet tall and run for miles.

In the same article, Swanson related how a local TV station that wanted to film the walls took him for a helicopter ride. As expected, all along the East Bay hills they discerned line after long line of walls. Then, when the copter passed over Mission Peak toward Mt. Allison, mile upon mile of still more walls appeared. Numbed by these new discoveries, Swanson remarked:

I could see years of work just laying there waiting for me. (R34)

To the west, across the Bay, in Marin County, Point Reyes juts out into the Pacific. Here stretches another mysterious "wall." Actually, it is a line of carefully arranged stones rather than a true wall. More properly, this wall belongs in MSH2 along with other stone rows. However, everyone calls it a "wall," so we enter it here along with the East Bay walls.

Many of the stones comprising the Point Reyes wall are less than 2 feet high. Altogether, there are about 400 of them, all carefully laid in a straight line that bisects the Tomales Point peninsula. Both ends terminate in steep cliffs.

The Point Reyes wall is too low to confine animals. Its straightness suggests that it might be a boundary marker of some sort. Others note that it defines a line of sight to Mt. St. Helens in Oregon and might have had some ritual or mystical significance to whomever built it. Unfortunately, no one knows who did



The "wall" on Point Reyes, California. (R. Swanson)

build it---or when. The wall looks old,
but there are no artifacts to date it
properly. If this "wall" were seen on a
British moor, it would probably be classi-
fied as the work of the megalith builders.
Not so, on this lonely, wind-swept
point of California real estate!
