

From: [Tina Hugg](#)
To: [Robert Dooley](#)
Cc: [Melissa Borgesi](#)
Subject: RE: Supplemental Public written comment by Robert Dooley for Dec 12, 2019 meeting La Honda Public Access working group
Date: Friday, January 31, 2020 10:48:23 AM
Attachments: [red barn history.pdf](#)

Dear Mr. Dooley:

Thank you for your email. It will be included with its attachment and this response in the packet being sent to the Working Group for their February 6, 2019 meeting and posted online.

The District appreciates the historical perspective that you have shared about this former pond at the Red Barn site. As you mentioned, recreating the former pond at the Red Barn was discussed during the previous site planning effort. At that time, it was deemed infeasible for the following reasons.

- The pond existed before Highway 84 was constructed, and there are ecological concerns with restoring a pond so close to a busy thoroughfare and close to public use. The pond would attract wildlife and result in possible mortality of threatened and endangered species such as California red-legged frog and San Francisco garter snake.
- The District does not have water rights for a pond in this location.
- La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve has the greatest number of ponds of any Preserves within the District's boundary, which provide ample habitat for wildlife species and enjoyable aesthetic opportunities farther inside the Preserve and away from busy roadways.

Over the last several years, the District has worked on pond restoration projects at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, where 25 ponds, about one quarter of all the District's ponds throughout its lands, are located. Ecologically valuable ponds exist farther in the Preserve and have been the District's focus. The District has restored five ponds at the Preserve and is working on future restoration of a sixth pond, Lower Turtle Pond, which has high ecological value. However, because of the large number of ponds at the Preserve, there are no current plans to construct a new pond. Currently the District is shifting its focus to restoring other high priority ponds for which the District has water rights and that provide wildlife habitat in other preserves.

Thank you for your interest in the project and your comments.

Regards,

Tina Hugg, PLA, ASLA

Senior Planner

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From:**Sent:** Friday, January 10, 2020 4:09 PM**To:** Tina Hugg <thugg@openspace.org>; Melissa Borgesi <mborgesi@openspace.org>**Subject:** Supplemental Public written comment by Robert Dooley for Dec 12, 2019 meeting La Honda Public Access working group**EXTERNAL**

Madam Chair and members of the working group:

Please accept my attached supplemental comments following your December 12, 2019, meeting in Los Altos.

In my testimony that evening I referenced my oral Comments from a May 2018 meeting of the Board in La Honda. After the meeting in Los Altos I remembered that many of you were not present at the earlier meeting to hear my comments regarding the Pond that existed east of the Red Barn. I thought I would take this opportunity to provide you with a copy of my testimony and pertinent excerpts from the two District Commissioned Historical reports that support the assertions made in my testimony.

It is my hope that you will understand the equal importance of the Pond Restoration while continuing to preserve the historical Red Barn and surrounding property.

Thank You

Robert Dooley

June 4, 2018

Board of Directors,

I am sharing my views and asking some questions regarding the Red Barn Public access plan (*agenda item 6*) from the May 9, 2018 meeting.

First I would like to thank the staff for providing the reports the Trust commissioned and used in designating the historical significance of the Red Barn area and justification for its preservation. These documents are entitled Historic Resource Evaluation August 2016 and The History of the Weeks Ranch at La Honda.

After reviewing these documents over the last few weeks I became more aware of, in my opinion, one of the most significant features of this historic site. I knew that the Red Barn and adjacent corrals were built by the pioneering Weeks Family in the period between 1892 and 1923. What I did **Not** know was that the pond that existed immediately east of the Red Barn appears on maps as early as 1868 (*pg 8 History of the Weeks Ranch*). That pond was filled in after 1960, according to the report, by the McDonald family.

On the cover page of the Historic Resource Evaluation is a picture taken on June 21, 2016 (the height of summer) during possibly one of the most extreme droughts this state has ever seen. It shows the Barn and in the forefront is the old pond area. It is distinctive in that while all the grass around it is brown, that area where the old pond used to be is **Green**. My experience from driving regularly by the barn on Highway 84 is that it is always green, **year around**.

In May of 2017, at a meeting at the Red Barn area with MidPen staff where they presented the initial proposal for this project to a number of local residents and concerned neighbors, one of the neighbors with a long family history in the area asked if they were going to restore the original pond. My recollection of the answer to her question was that it was sensitive habitat with all sorts of creatures and grasses peculiar to such a wetland. It was also pointed out by Mid Pen Staff, at the time, that the area was fenced off to protect the sensitive area from cattle.

On Page 24 of the report it states that the pond was home to “willow trees along the banks and reportedly a haven for frogs”. It goes on to say “Its location is still evident marked by grasses and Reeds that grow there”.

On the final sentence on page 25 of this report, I quote, “Restoration of this pond would be appropriate to consider both for its wildlife habitat and for its value as an historic landscape feature of the ranch”.

There are many photos of the Barn and the Pond laced throughout this report ranging from 1904 until the present.

My question is... In that your mission here and in all the property you manage and control is to preserve, protect and restore the natural environment, **Why is the restoration of this critical area not being addressed?** Not only is it not being addressed but according to the plan being presented it apparently is being slated to have the dirt fill entry ramp and road constructed over it and paved.

This seems inconsistent with your stated mission.

I believe Joni Mitchell said it best “ They paved paradise and put up a parking lot”

It is not too late to address this and Restore the Pond.

Thank you,

Robert Dooley



Update January, 2020

Beginning in the spring of 2018 the District opened the gate to the aforementioned sensitive habitat area and mowed the green grass down to

approximately 8 inches in height. This was a departure from their previous position that this was sensitive habitat and home to all sorts of previously protected plants, grasses, animals and amphibians.

Despite this mowing the area remained green even though the surrounding fields and hills were dry and brown.

History of the Weeks Ranch at La Honda



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve
150 La Honda Road, Woodside, California

Prepared By: Nancy Elizabeth Stoltz, AIA, AICP
April 1, 2002

Although no photographs of the Robinson Weeks ranch house were located depicting it during his family's time of residence, **View 1** shows what is believed to be his house and barn. The house was located in approximately the same place as the smaller red ranch house on the site today. The house in the center was built later by his son, Burt Weeks, as his family residence. The barn is located near the former pond. Though its left wing is obscured by vegetation in the photograph, the roofline of the barn appears to be symmetrical upon close inspection. **The pond appears on maps of the property as early as 1868. It was filled in sometime after 1960.** The date of construction of the house is probably somewhere between 1866 and 1873 – the period during which Robinson Weeks is known to have owned the land. The original house, located closer to the creek as depicted on maps dating back to 1855, reportedly burned down in 1888. It was not unusual for a family to build a more spacious house and convert the original to some other purpose. Even on the map of 1868 the original one had been described as "Old House."

Business Ventures of Robinson Weeks

A primary and essential activity in the county during this decade was road construction, either sponsored and paid for directly by the County, or by private corporations formed to build turnpikes, or toll roads. Although a road of sorts had existed connecting Redwood City with Pescadero for some time, it was principally a logging road, unsuitable for coach traffic and, no doubt, requiring numerous fords at the streams along the route. Ranchers had also built private roads connecting their properties but these did not provide continuous routes of travel.

According to local newspaper accounts, the Searsville and La Honda Turnpike Co. was incorporated on November 28, 1874, with capital stock of \$10,000.¹⁶ The proposed road was to connect the settlement of Searsville, on the bay side south of Woodside, to La Honda. (Searsville is now under a lake by that name on the Stanford University campus). The contract to construct the road was given to R. J. Weeks and was commenced in March of 1875.¹⁷ Despite some financial problems with the stockholders of the company, the road was completed as far as La Honda by early 1876.¹⁸ The route is essentially the same as that of Old La Honda Road and would have cut through the Weeks ranch in its larger incarnations, though today the ranch is located only on the west side of the road.

Although the turnpike was only a link in the Redwood City and Pescadero route, the entire route became known as the Redwood City and Pescadero Turnpike due to the necessity of paying a toll along it. The section of road from San Gregorio Creek running south to Pescadero Creek was built at public expense, authorized by the Board of Supervisors. The remaining link in the route was finally completed in late 1877. As with other toll roads in the County, the turnpike was made public and toll free when it was taken over by the county less than a year later. The price of \$2,500 was much less than the purported value of the capital stock.¹⁹ With the newly improved roads came expanded stagecoach service. Stagecoach service was provided by the Knights line, operated by Simon Knights and his son, Walter, from 1866 to 1906. Service terminated at Searsville until 1868, then was able to expand to San Gregorio via the King's Mountain route and soon after on to Pescadero.

Completion of the Searsville and La Honda Turnpike brought stagecoach service to the "Scenic Route" along Old La Honda Road and past the Weeks ranch.²⁰ Robinson Weeks decided to build a hotel "for the accommodation of the traveling public."²¹ The hotel was evidently completed by

HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION

RED BARN STAGING AREA
LA HONDA CREEK OPEN SPACE PRESERVE,
UNINCORPORATED SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT



LSA

August 2016

State of California — The Resources Agency DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION CONTINUATION SHEET	Primary # HRI # Trinomial
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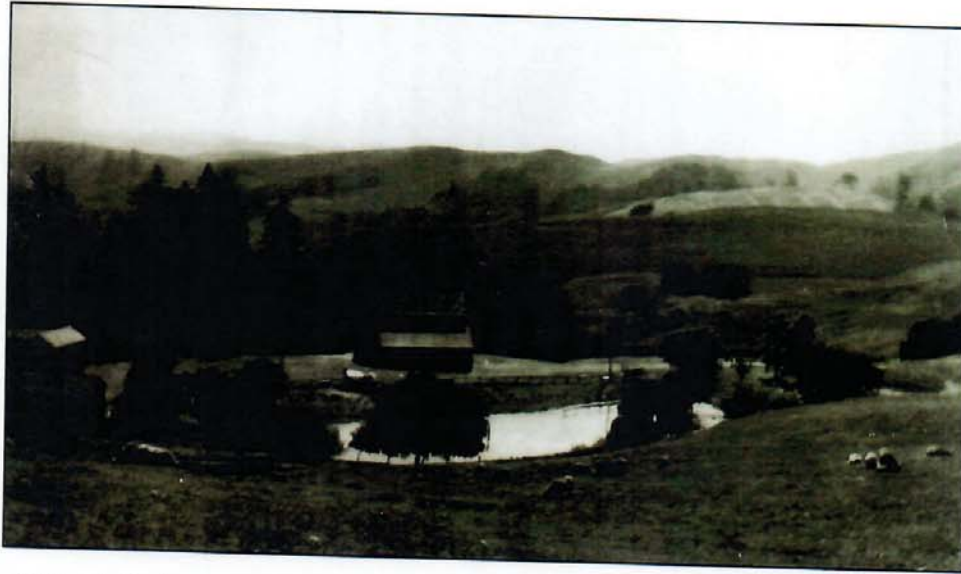
Page 21 of 22

Recorded by: Michael Hibma

Resource Name: Red Barn

Date: August 3, 2016

P5a. Photograph (Continued)



Red Barn, La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. Circa 1920 image of Red Barn and pond in foreground. View west from modern La Honda Road/State Route 84. Photo courtesy Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

The small ranch house that became the Glass residence was built by the Weeks family during the first quarter of the twentieth century, probably sometime between 1905 and 1920. It was clearly not the principal residence for the Burt Weeks family. However, it may have provided housing for ranch workers or even other family members. It is a vernacular style ranch house that was common to the region and similar to the houses located near the original Weeks dairy. The building has a partial finished basement with poured concrete walls and floor. According to Mrs. Silva, this room was reportedly used by the Weeks family for processing of milk and dairy products for family use. The subterranean concrete walls would have provided the constant cool temperatures needed for that purpose.

Reports that this ranch house served as a stop on the stagecoach line could not be confirmed. Such a use is very unlikely given the estimated date of construction of the building. The Knights Line stage, which operated along Old La Honda Road between Redwood City, Pescadero and San Gregorio, ceased operations on July 31, 1906, according to local historian Gilbert Richards.¹²

The McDonald Family

Sometime in the early 1960s, Jack and Marion Glass sold the property to Edith Chamberlin Field, who married William McDonald. The McDonalds raised beef cattle on the ranch and undertook a series of additions and alterations to the small ranch house. They expanded the ranch house northward by approximately 14 - 15 feet and added two rooms at the back, on the west side, one at approximately a half-story below the main floor level. The first addition is the area marked by the window bay beyond the four closely spaced posts at the north end (View 17). The McDonalds also added outbuildings nearby, including a stable/barn and garage. In addition Mr. McDonald filled in the pond near the barn which had been there since at least 1868. Over the years it had been planted with willow trees along the banks and was reportedly a haven for frogs. Its location is still evident, marked by the grasses and reeds that grow there.



View 17 : East Elevation of Ranch House
(by author)

2002

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

The District acquired the ranch from the Edith McDonald trust in 1990 as a major addition to the adjacent La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve lands to the north. District crews have recently completed stabilization work on the foundation on the west side of the barn where the top of the bank has eroded away over the years. Historic photographs of the barn indicate that although it was sited initially at the top of the bank on a level site, considerable erosion of the bank has occurred. The relative dates of photographs can be estimated by the progress of erosion of this bank.

Crew members have also completed a restoration/reconstruction of the cupola which has now been restored to the barn roof. The barn was re-roofed in the first quarter of 2002 with cedar shingles, similar in appearance to its original wood shingles. Preparations are underway to paint the barn in the spring and maintenance and repairs of the fences are underway, with the District crews assisted by volunteers. Like many farm buildings, the barn has become an attractive habitat for bats and owls which, no doubt, will continue to reside in their adopted habitat. Restoration of the historic pond would be appropriate to consider both for its wildlife habitat and for its value as an historic landscape feature of the ranch.

P5a. Photograph (Continued)



Red Barn, La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. Circa 1900 image of Red Barn, north façade, view south.
Photo courtesy Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.



Red Barn, La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. Circa 1920 image of Red Barn (at left) and former Weeks house (at right).
View west from vicinity of modern La Honda Road/State Route 84. Note cupola on Red Barn roof.
Photo courtesy Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.