

# San Quentin's Liberal Neighbors Wish Now It Would Go Away

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Special to The New York Times

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., Nov. 11—

From highway 101 on the slope of the mountains just north of the Golden Gate bridge the clump of faded yellowing buildings that make up San Quentin prison rise on the distant horizon. They sit there on the edge of the blue waters of San Francisco Bay, all but lost in the shadow of Mount Tamalpais and the split level homes that are lodged in the hills nearby.

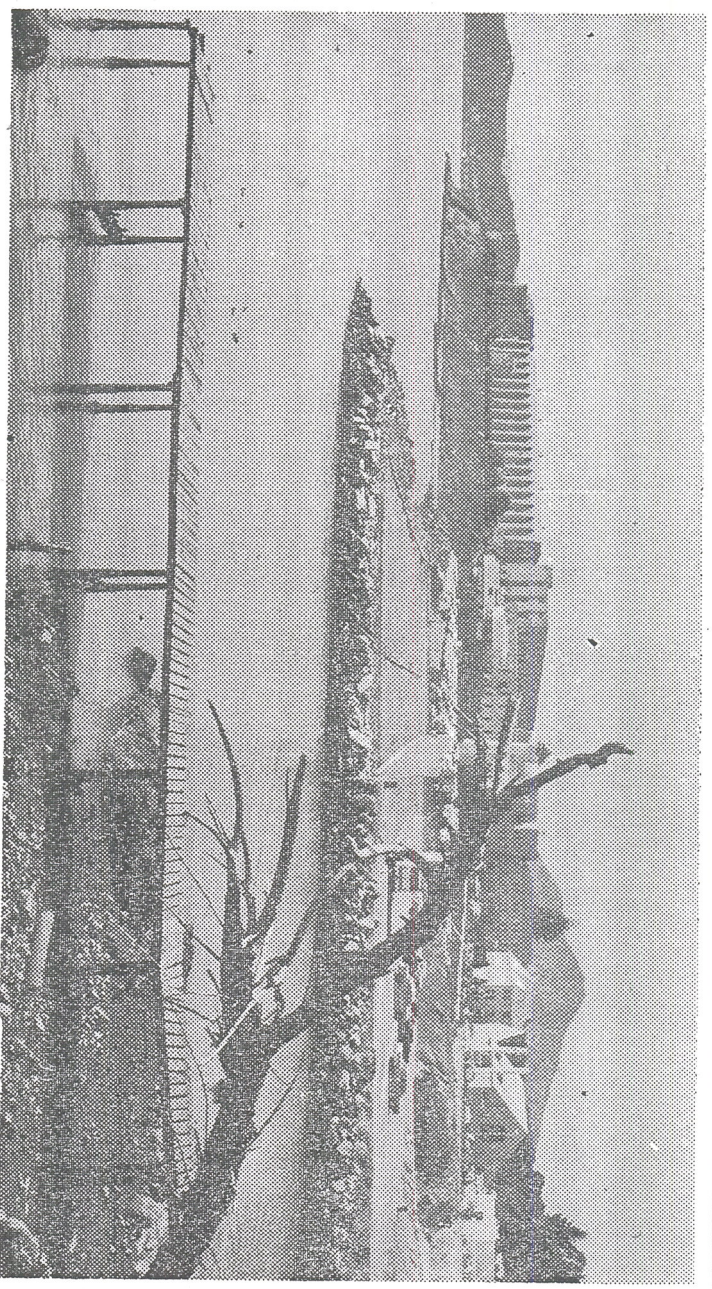
**The Talk of Marin County**

It is an old prison. It has been there since 1852, and through most of those years it was largely ignored. But now it has become something of an anathema for the people who live here in the pleasant mountains of Marin County.

They look at the rotting old prison and they blame it for all that has gone wrong here in the last year.

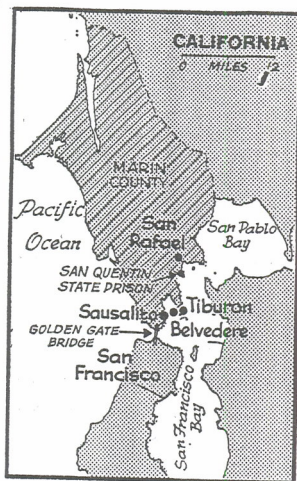
They say that it was the prison that was responsible for the bloody shootout here at the civic center in August of 1970, the shootout that took the lives of four persons including a judge of the Superior Court.

They say that if it were not for the prison, Angela



The New York Times/Teresa Zabala

The buildings of San Quentin prison, just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, on the edge of San Francisco Bay. The residents of Marin County feel that it is to blame for all that has gone wrong in the last year and want it removed.



The New York Times/Nov. 12, 1971

Davis would not be in jail here, the civic center would not be the target of angry militants and would not have been bombed several months ago.

Everything goes back to the prison. It was there just a little more than two months ago that George L. Jackson was killed along with three guards and two other inmates. And before that, another guard was killed.

The prison is to blame, most of Marin County feels, and so now they want the prison moved; they want it out of here.

"It's no wonder," Douglas Maloney, the county's lawyer, explained. "You know, after a while these things begin to grate on people."

Mr. Maloney, a red-haired young man who grew up in San Francisco, understands how the people here feel. "These problems with the prisons," he continued, "they are state and national problems but Marin is beginning to feel that it's getting stuck picking up all the marbles."

The killings that have taken place here, just those related to San Quentin prison, have given Marin County one of the highest per capita murder rates in the country.

They have also changed the feel of life in this once quiet county. There are demonstrations around the prison or the civic center regularly now, and the constant threat of violence has cut back on the privileges of all citizens.

The library in the civic center—a Frank Lloyd Wright creation and a source of much county pride—is closed nights now. Groups that once held meetings there are now

forced to go elsewhere. No-body even enters the building without first being checked out by deputy sheriffs.

Residents look at the demonstrators, the outsiders and the security and their faces go red.

"Why are these bastards bothering us?" one long-time resident asked. "Why don't they go back to Berkeley or San Francisco?"

The attitude that is developing here is a new thing for Marin County. The people who live here consider themselves liberals and they take pride in it.

They point out that they were one of the first counties in the state to create a Human Relations Commission. And a few years ago, when there was a sharp dispute in California over an open housing proposition on the ballot, this was the only county in the state where voters gave it their approval.

There is other evidence of their liberalism: In an election just a year ago they approved a resolution calling for complete withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in six months. And on the sensitive issue of welfare, they have long had a policy of supplementing grants and they have even made welfare recipients members of a special advisory board that suggests policy.

Mostly, Marin (pronounced muh-RIN) County is white.

There are fewer than 3,000 blacks in a total population of about 210,000. Most of the blacks live together in a small village known as Marin City. But the whites here refer to the town as the "golden ghetto." They point out that the homes are good, that the people have jobs and that the schools are better than those across the bay in San Francisco.

"Why then," they ask, "are we having all this trouble?" The answer always comes up the same: "It's the prison, it's that damn prison."

The residents of Marin County are doing something about their wish that the prison would go away. Recently, the Board of Supervisors here passed a resolution voicing the county's feeling. And a bill has been submitted to the state legislature that calls for the prison's removal.

"It shouldn't be in an urban area like this anyhow," Michael Wornum, one of the

county's supervisors, said. "It just makes life very unpleasant for the people here. We'll look after our own problems but we resent being the depository for the state."

If the prison cannot be moved, Mr. Wornum feels that the least the state could do is transform it from a maximum security to a minimum security institution, a prison meant to house inmates considered unlikely to cause trouble.

Arnold M. Baptiste, another member of the Board of Supervisors, is in complete agreement. But he points out that the county's wanting the prison moved does not mean that the county is not socially concerned.

"Of course we're concerned," he said. "We're simply saying that San Quentin is not compatible with a county like Marin."

Mr. Baptiste pointed out

that in recent weeks the Board of Supervisors even set up a committee to study

prison improvement and reforms.

"But having the prison here costs the taxpayers' money, too," he said. As a result of increased security needed now because of the violence that has erupted, he said, a special levy was imposed on the taxpayers, and residents have also had to bear the cost of the many trials that emanate from San Quentin.

"It's becoming too much," he said. "We care but this is getting out of hand."

When San Quentin was plumped down in Marin County years ago, state officials thought that they were putting the institution in the boondocks. And at the time, they were. Back then, there were only the dairy farms and the mansions in the county.

But in the late thirties the Golden Gate bridge was opened and then after World War II, the population in the county began to swell.

Now, Marin wants no more people, no more development. It just wants to be left alone.