Contra Costa

The Contra Costa County Courthouse in Martinez.
Part 1of 4: Pt. Richmond, Richmond, San Pablo, El Sobrante, El Cerrito, Kensington, Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette, San Ramon, Danville.

Contra Costa County

Contra Costa Data
Population: 948,816 (Rank: 9)
Land Area (square miles): 720 (Rank: 51)

Contra Costa means "opposite coast" in Spanish because it is on the other side of the Bay from San Francisco. The county was created in 1850 and it included Alameda County that split off in 1853.

Much of the coastline of the county is dotted with industry, particularly oil refineries. Richmond, Martinez, Pittsburg and Antioch are the prominent towns facing San Pablo and Suisun Bays. Interstate 80 enters the county over the Carquinez Strait Bridge and hugs the coastline as it curves around the bay to San Francisco. To the east from Carquinez Bridge is Highway 4 which continues to the Delta and eventually Stockton.

The hills and valleys of the interior were originally dotted with small farm towns. These towns have now become bedroom communities for San Francisco. The largest are Walnut Creek and Concord. Highway 680 cuts through the Concord Valley at the base of Mt. Diablo.

The dominant geographic feature is 4,000-foot-tall Mt. Diablo which is one of the tallest mountains in the Coast Range. On a clear day, an increasing rarity because of air pollution, you can see Yosemite Valley and Mt. Shasta from the top of Mt. Diablo. The eastern side of the county extends into the Delta and includes the cities of Oakley, Bethel Island, Brentwood and Discovery Bay along Highway 4.

The county has done a good job of preserving open space through regional parks. Most notable are the Wildcat Canyon and Tilden Regional Parks behind Berkeley, and the large Briones Regional Park and the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness areas near the Concord Valley. Along the water are several shoreline parks, the largest being the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline. The largest park is Mt. Diablo State Park.

Cities: Richmond, El Cerrito, San Pablo, Hercules, Pinole, Antioch, Pittsburg, Concord, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Martinez, Lafayette, Orinda, Moraga, Danville, San Ramon, Oakley, Brentwood. Towns: Kensington, Pt. Richmond, Clayton, Discovery Bay. Crockett, Port Costa.

Larry Stevens
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Introduction

California is comprised of 58 counties. The state, the third largest in the U.S., has the greatest diversity of geography of any of the states. It has huge deserts, high mountain ranges, fertile valleys and a 1000 mile coastline. Beginning in 2001 my wife and I began to travel and photograph the state as a retirement hobby.

Now we are organizing our collection by county using all of our photos dating back to 2001.

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Contra Costa County

The coast of the Bay is rough. Still industrial. As we move inland along Highway 24 communities become nicer, wealthier.

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Point Richmond

Point Richmond is a neigborhood west of downtown Richmond. It is a quaint gentrified area. (June 2003)

Point Richmond

This was the original downtown of Richmond. (June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Point Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

Richmond is a slum. It has always been an industrial city. It boomed in World War II but with a lack of industry began to slide downhill afterward. (June 2003)

Richmond

Richmond got a post office in 1900 and the city was incorporated in 1905. With the Chrevron oil refinery and later on a Ford assembly plant Richmond became an industrial city. It was famous in World War II for its building 747 ships to transport troops and cargo. (June 2003)

Richmond

A farmers' market downtown. Richmond is mostly minority. (June 2003)

Richmond

A fish on the side of the Parks and Rec building downtown. (June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

The old Ford assembly plant which was built in the 1930's and is now being renovated into artists lofts. (June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

Murals and a community garden in the newly rehabbed area of downtown Richmond. (June 2003)

Richmond

New housing in downtown near the Kaiser Medical Center. The Medical Center and the rapid transit line are being used to gentrify the urban core. (June 2003)

Richmond

Richmond has a port. (June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

(June 2003)

Richmond

Downtown San Francisco as seen from the Richmond port. (June 2003)

San Pablo

San Pablo is a small city nearly surrounded by Richmond. Its post office was established in 1854. It was incorporated as a city in 1948. (October 2005)

San Pablo

(October 2005)

San Pablo

(October 2005)

San Pablo

(October 2005)

San Pablo

(October 2005)

San Pablo

The Indian casino in the middle of San Pablo seems to be the most prosperous business in the town. (October 2005)

El Cerrito

(October 2005)

El Cerrito

Shortly before we pulled up to photograph the city hall a fire broke out across the street from the fire house. (October 2005)

El Sobrante

El Sobrante is a small community east of Richmond. It received a post office in 1941. (June 2003)

El Sobrante

(June 2003)

El Sobrante

(June 2003)

Kensington

Kensington is a small upscale community next to Berkeley. It has a population of 5,000. (July 2003)

Kensington

Kensington is a little community next to Berkeley. It has a population of about 5,000. (July 2003)

Kensington

(July 2003)

Kensington

(July 2003)

Berkeley Hills

(July 2003)

Briones

Just behind the Berkeley Hills is the Briones Park run by the East Bay Regional Park District. The 6,000 acre park has reservoirs that store water for the East Bay. (July 2003)

Briones

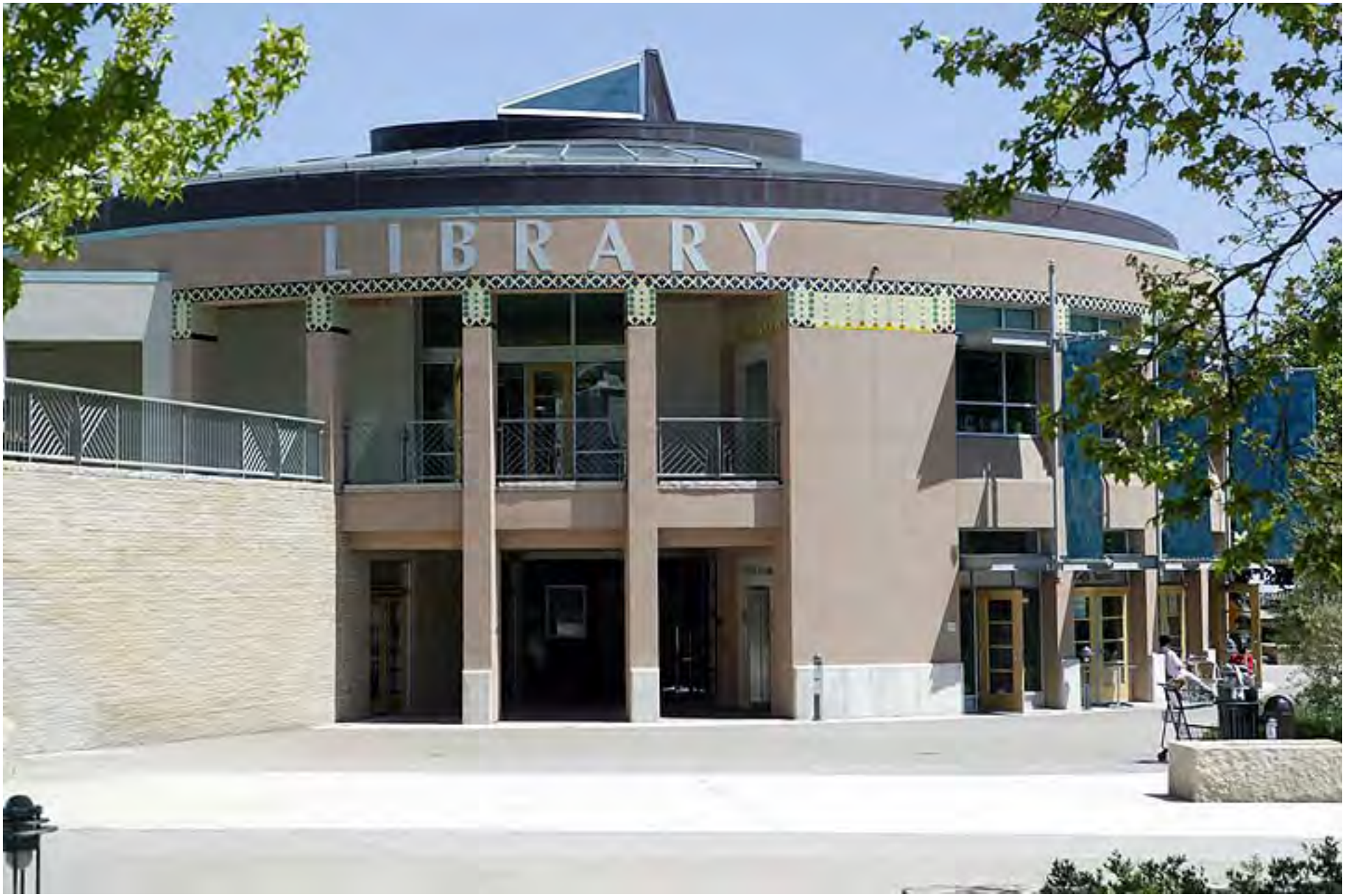
The reservoirs provide water for the communities of the East Bay. (July 2003)

Orinda

Orinda acquired a post office in 1888. It was incorporated as a city in 1985. It is famous for its theatre. (May 2003)

Orinda

This was a Sunday afternoon. The library was open with a little cafe. (June 2009)



Orinda

The civic auditorium in the civic center complex which includes the library and a park. (June 2009)

Moraga

St. Marys moved to Moraga in 1928. It was established in 1863 in San Francisco. (May 2003)

Moraga

(May 2003)

Moraga

(May 2003)

Moraga

St. Mary's has a student population of about 4,000. (May 2003)

Lafayette

Lafayette is an upscale community of 24,000. It was incorporated in 1968. (May 2003)

Lafayette

(May 2003)

Lafayette

(May 2003)

Danville

Danville was started in 1854. It grew into a ritzy suburb after World War II. It has a population of 42,000. (May 2003)

Danville

(May 2003)

Danville

(May 2003)

San Ramon

San Ramon has a population of 72,000. The Bishop Ranch industrial park provides a good tax base for this upscale community. (October 2005)

San Ramon

(October 2005)

San Ramon

The conference center next to Bishop Ranch. (October 2005)

San Ramon

(October 2005)