

History of East Palo Alto
and
Palo Alto Park

The earliest history of East Palo Alto dates back to 1853, when a long narrow strip of pavement stretching from Redwood City thru Atherton and Menlo Park to the waters of the bay east of Palo Alto came to the old port of Ravenswood. The town boasted a wooden pier which jutted out 1500 feet from land to deep water. Wharf St. was the main thoroughfare and it was crossed by Woods St. Haskell St. and Charles St. all named for men interested in the towns possibilities. Lots were laid out adjoining these streets and the buildings which occupied many were built of lumber from the mills near Woodside and Searsville.

A lone steamer, the Jenny Lind, according to records was the only vessel operating between San Francisco and Ravenswood. It was a sturdy side wheeler of some 60 tons and on one of its regular trips down the bay in 1853 it met with disaster. When the laden with cargo and passengers reached a point opposite San Mateo, her boilers exploded killing 31 passengers and completely destroying the boat.

In 1864 when the railroad was completed to San Jose it brought an end to much of the bay shipping. Redwood City, which was closer to the lumber mills, was now the chief lumber port and great things anticipated for Ravenswood failed to materialize.

In 1866 - 1500 acres which now include Palo Alto Park were owned by a millionaire by the name of Joe Donohoe. It was the Rancho de Las Pulgas the ranch of the fleas. Ed Donohoe, the son put in the swimming pool as a swimming pool. He was very wealthy and maintained a play area there.

Casserly, Henry Haight (Governor of the State of Calif.) and Doyle, bought out some of the Donohoe holdings, and it was after that, that Mr A.B. Parkee rented the area around the swimming pool and raised prunes and strawberries among other things. It was he who used the swimming pool for irrigation purposes.

In the neighborhood of Weeks St. and Dumbarton Ave, the Bates Dairy put out milk and processed considerable cheese.

Camp Freemont was in Menlo Park, but a division of the camp known as Camp Remont, in order to separate the two, was here in the Park area. It was only a camp for horses and mules however.

Around 1920 a circus company went broke on the road and came to the area around Bay Road., Dumbarton and Oakwood Drive, to recuperate and to get a new show ready. They trained here all winter and started out in the spring with a successful show. One of the circus wagons is still on the Kavanaugh ranch and can be seen from Bay Road, as you drive by.

In 1924 the Park area was owned by Mr Ryder and was known as Ravenswood Park. It was bounded by Menalto Ave., Bay Road, Donohoe and Orchard Ave. (now Glen Way). The land was used mostly for pasture where the oak trees were growing and the eastern side was in prune orchards.

The only street out here at this time was Palo Verde., a path used when Camp Remont was here. This accounts for the winding route of Palo Verde Ave. To reach this area from Palo Alto, street cars ran out University Ave ~~xxxxxxx~~ as far as the bridge, you would then have to walk down University Ave. to Donohoe, then north on Donohoe to Palo Verde. The only store out e herewas a grocery store on Donohoe St. across from the present library. Mail for many of the residents was left at this store.

In 1925 the Koff Realty Co. took over this area and subdivided it, calling it Palo Alto Park. At this time the streets were laid out. Dumbarton being one of the first streets put in by Koff. The Park with the swimming pool came to life again and was used as a selling point to prospective buyers. They were selling lots with 25' frontage, but protests were made and yhe planning commission eventually ruled that no less than a 50' lot could be sold. This accounts for the few lots in the Park with a 25' frontage.

During the period from 1925 to 1930, with realestate promotion taking place and more people settling here, groups formed to petition the P G & E to extend their service, whick they did. Prior to this, anyone wishing utilities had to pay a premium to get the service.

In 1928 when surveys were made for putting Bayshore through here, protests were made by a group headed be Mr Stubbe to have the highway go through somewhere east of Bay Road., but this group was unable to accomplish their purpose and by 1932 Bayshore was opened to traffic.

In 1929 the Koff Realty Co. ran into some difficulties and the Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company. was turned over to a group of Property owners to direct the Water Co. These directors were Mr Lyons Mr Courter Mr Burdick and Mr Lynch.

On april 9, 1935 a a group of about 38 property owners of Palo Alto Park met at the home of Mrs and Mr Wm Lynch for the purpose of forming a Property Owners Association. At this meeting a motion was made and carried that this group be called the Palo Alto Park Property Owners Association. This group took an active part in all community affairs. In 1935 they dreww up pepitions to have more lights installed in the park. They had to take up with the State the installation of lights along Bayshore and motorists always could tell when they came to Palo Alto Park as it was the only section of Bayshore at this end of the county that had lights.

In 1936 a group of members secured pipe that was used to install the first street signs. Members did all of the work, installing them on week ends or in their spare time. The Club was instrumental in securing mail xx service on more streets.

In 1937 and 1938 surveys were made for the installation of sewers. Many of the poplar trees in this area were removed to the Fair at Treasure Island, held in 1939. Some of our street names conflicting with those of Palo Alto were re-named and homes were re-numbered, so that we could obtain city mail delivery instead of rural routs as previously.

None of the streets in the Park running east and west were through streets, and our children had to go via Bayshore to reach the school. As t this was a hazard to the children the Club worked for some time to get a street through to Euclid Ave. This was finally accomplished in 1939, when Bell St.(formerly Doyle) was cut through.

In 1940 work was started on the sewers by W. P. A. labor. The work went along very slowly as more and more jobs were becoming available, which left less W. P. A. labor. After about a year the work was finally let out to a general contractor, but our roads were in a deplorable condition for many months before the job of installing the sewers was finally completed.

In the period from 1941 to 1945 our Club was working to get bus service out here, but the bus company would not cross Bayshore until traffic signals were installed. We worked with other groups in the community to accomplish this, and in 1944 the signals were installed and in February 1945 bus service was started.

In 1944 we started action to get Runnymede St. cut through to Glen Way and by 1946, this was finally accomplished.

Our Club was contacted the County Engineer whenever our streets are in need of repairs. When the club was first formed, Palo Verde and Dumbarton Avenues were the only streets accepted and maintained by the county. Our club kept after our supervisors to have the county accept all out streets, which they finally did, but only as fourth class streets.

We have contributed to every worth while cause when called on to do so. Have co-operated with the Water Co., in the operation of our swimming pool and are always ready to do what we can for the good of our community.

Our money has been raised mainly from dances and card games and we are very proud that we were able to pay \$500.00 for a 5 year lease on our new Water Co., building so that we may have a Permanent meeting place.