

Roble Ridge, 1926. Photo courtesy of the Palo Alto Historical Association.

Centennial Edition!
Barron Park 1921-2021

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



Happy Summer, Barron Park! It has been quite a while since my last message, and much has happened since our Spring issue. Covid vaccines are continuing to be widely administered in our region. California "opened up" on June 15.

Unfortunately, we suffered an inadvertent diesel fuel spill from the VA campus into Matadero Creek on May 6, caused by a failed sensor in a generator plant pump. Cleanup and mitigation were promised and are ongoing. You can follow the status of the remediation here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/News-Articles/City-Manager/Matadero-CreekVA-Palo-Alto-Health-Care-Diesel-Spill-Community-Update>

You have in hand the commemorative Centennial Edition of our Barron Park Association Newsletter! Hope you enjoy reading about our first ten years as a neighborhood, which began (you guessed it) just about 1921. Our longtime historian Doug Graham has provided an extremely interesting account of when Barron Park was a rural, semi-agricultural neighbor of Stanford, a stop on the Peninsular Railway, with change and development still in the offing.

Doug and his committee are also planning independent neighborhood History Walks for late summer. I for one am looking forward to reading and experiencing the history of our wonderful neighborhood! Stay tuned for details!

Hopefully, by our Fall newsletter publication date, we will be actively planning some of our much missed, time-honored events, such

as Movie Night, Holiday Caroling, the BPA Annual Meeting (in person!), May Fête, and even Ice Cream socials! Who knows what new ideas will emerge?

Stay cool this summer, and remember to save water as you can during the drought.

The Barron Park Association is always searching for new Board members and committee and neighborhood volunteers, so if you are interested, please let me know at: president@bpapaloalto.org

Join the BPA or renew at: <https://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/>



Sunrise seen from Strawberry Hill. Breathe with Me panels cover the Gunn fence. For more on Breathe with Me visit [page 11](#). All photos courtesy of Breathe with Me Palo Alto.

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Helping Palo Alto Switch to Electric: A Chance to Have Your Voice Heard

By Katie Rueff, Gunn H.S. Junior

My name is Katie Rueff, and I am a rising junior at Gunn High School. I have lived in Palo Alto my entire life, and I feel fortunate to have been able to call it my home for so long. A few years ago, Palo Alto passed the "80 by 30" goal, which aims to meet an 80% reduction in carbon emissions from the 1990 level by 2030 and is what scientists say is needed to keep the global temperature from increasing by more than 1.5° C.

Unfortunately, even living in such a sustainably driven city, I haven't been able to escape the effects of climate change. The California wildfires and the droughts we're perpetually in have made the reality of global warming all too real for myself and everyone living here.



When I was younger, I thought of climate change as this monstrous problem that was simply too complicated and unsolvable for one voice, especially one as small as mine, to make a difference. But, as my school was almost forced into lockdown several times because of the fires and our gardens died off in an attempt to save water, I grew determined to finally have my voice heard.

Just earlier this year, Palo Alto's 350 Silicon Valley team made a presentation to my school's Green Team, and their mission of ensuring clean energy really hit home for me. When I heard they were beginning an electrification campaign, I knew I had finally found a platform to drive the change our city needs.

The goal of this campaign is to educate the public and spread awareness of the importance of switching to electric appliances in homes. This includes advocating with the City Council to implement more programs and ways to help residents move away from gas-powered appliances. Since our city's electricity is carbon neutral, eliminating all the major uses of fossil fuels in our homes will greatly reduce our overall carbon footprint, taking us one step closer to the city's "80 by 30" goal. This campaign relies heavily on the dedicated community members of Palo Alto,

WE'RE GOING ELECTRIC!

Healthier, Safer, Greener Home

You too can protect the climate by switching from gas to electric.
Talk to a neighbor about upgrading your house.
Scan the QR Code for more info.

FossilFreeBuildings.org

As part of the Switch to Electric campaign, residents who have replaced any or all gas appliances with electric ones and would like to spread the word about electrification can receive a yard sign from Fossil Free Buildings. Visit: <http://bit.ly/Goelectric> to request a sign. "Switch to Electric" logo designed by Daniel Barszczak, Gunn High Class of 2021. Lawn sign graphic courtesy of the Fossil Free Buildings Silicon Valley Campaign.

and I am proud to call myself one of them. Since we tackle such a diversity of campaigns, from lawn signs to electronic posts to communicating with the City Council, it's easy for everyone to find a place where they can feel capable of making a difference. Not only will this be an incredible step forward in ensuring a sustainable future for our city, it will also serve as a powerful encouragement to other cities across the nation to electrify their own communities.

The more voices we have contributing and generating ideas, the stronger and more valuable we as a team become. If you're a citizen of Palo Alto, especially if you've ever felt, as I did, too young or simply not powerful enough to make a difference, I cannot urge you enough to join this campaign. If you're interested in getting involved, please don't hesitate

to reach out to me at k.rueff3@gmail.com



Katie Rueff is a rising junior at Gunn High School and the co-president of the Gunn Green Team. Courtesy of Katie Rueff.

Tips for Changes in Your Garden

By Melanie Cross, Native Habitat Committee



Eriogonum californicum (California Buckwheat) close-up with two Bumblebees.
Photos by Melanie Cross.



Eriogonum californicum (California Buckwheat).

Gardens evolve, either because plants leave us of their own accord or we want something different. You may be looking at gardens you pass by and considering changes you would like to make in your garden.

Summer is an excellent time to do that. Because of the drought, this summer is a perfect time to learn more about water-wise plantings. Summer is not a good time to plant most drought-tolerant plants, because they evolved in areas where the soil is dry when it is hot. They don't have resistance to the many root pathogens that grow rapidly when soil is moist and temperatures are high. Wait until Fall to plant, when temperatures come down. The other thing to remember is that new plants, drought-tolerant or not, have small root systems that will need regular water, from rain or from the gardener, until their roots grow deep and wide. This usually takes several years.

You may be considering planting more local, California native plants, which not only tend to be drought-tolerant, and evoke a sense of place, but importantly, increase biodiversity. The plants feed the local insects, in both adult and larval stages, that nesting

birds need to feed their broods. Landscape ornamentals tend to be exotics that may offer pollen and nectar to adult insects but usually cannot feed insect larvae. Our many species of native bees will pollinate your fruit trees and vegetable plants. We need them to thrive.

You can find sources of information for gardening with California native plants online:

<https://www.laspilitas.com/nature-of-california/plant-articles>

<https://www.cnps.org/category/gardening>

ART IN YOUR YARD



We know that Barron Park has many examples of outdoor or "yard" art, either made by you or other artists. We'd love to see photos of them in upcoming newsletters. Please send reproducible photos to Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net Tell us something about the art, but you don't need to include your street address.

Or at the public library:

Bornstein, Carol, David Fross, Bart O'Brien, *California Native Plants for the Garden*. Cachuma Press, 2005.

Fall BPA Newsletter Deadline

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

To All Our Past and Future Contributors:

Please submit articles (preferably in Microsoft Word) for the Fall issue of the Barron Park Association Newsletter, along with photos/illustrations (separate from text), by **Wednesday, September 1, 2021**, to Myrna Rochester at mbrbpa@sonic.net

If your Fall idea is a query (for an article, story, report, update, interview, announcement, review, anecdote, or artist's page...), please contact us in advance. The Fall issue will be mailed (US mail) in early October 2021, and available immediately online to subscribing members of the BPA.

Announcements should be for events scheduled **after October 15, 2021**. Please keep this in mind, especially for neighborhood and school activities. Thanks!

Nature's Wonderful Ingredients: Curry Leaves

By Jaya Pandey, Green Beans Committee



Curry leaf plant (*Murraya koenigii*) in my garden. Photo by Jaya Pandey.

Curry leaf – from the curry tree or curry leaf plant, *Murraya koenigii* – is a versatile culinary herb that is also known for its health benefits. Note that curry leaves and curry powder are two different ingredients. In South Indian cooking, curry leaves are often used as an ingredient in curry powder. Curry leaves are mainly used in South Indian cooking as well as in some recipes from Maharashtra (west central India, capital: Mumbai) and Gujarat (on the western coast, Kathiawar peninsula, capital: Gandhinagar).

Curry leaves are usually purchased fresh in Indian or world markets, and can be frozen for later. The curry leaf plant is also easy to cultivate in our Bay Area climate, indoors or outdoors, from seed, cuttings, or purchased as a plant. Curry leaves bring a 'twist' to simple cooking mainly because of their

unique flavor and aroma. Its family (*Rutaceae*) also includes citrus. Rich in alkaloids, glycosides, phenolic compounds, and antioxidants, this fragrant herb has potent health benefits.

* * *

Here is a simple recipe from among my favorite dishes. It's often served at breakfast. You can find many more curry leaf recipes on the internet.

Rice Poha

- 1 cup white or brown rice flakes (This is parboiled, flaked, dried rice; sold in Asian markets.)
- 1/2 cup green peas
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Finely chopped green chilies to taste
- 1/4 medium onion finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon black mustard seeds

- 6-8 curry leaves, thoroughly washed
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- Salt to taste
- Finely chopped cilantro for that finishing touch!

Use a non-stick pan on a medium to low flame. Add olive oil to the pan. When it is warm, add the mustard seeds. When the seeds start popping, add the curry leaves to brown, just a little. Now add the finely chopped onions, and sauté till the mixture is golden brown. Add turmeric and continue cooking for 1-2 minutes. Add the chopped green chilies and the green peas. Add salt, along with 1/4 cup water; this will soften the green peas. While the mixture simmers, rinse the rice flakes in a sieve; then drain the water and put the rice flakes aside. When the green peas are cooked, add the water-soaked rice flakes, mix them well with the rest of the ingredients, and simmer covered for about 2 minutes until the mixture is well blended. Before taking it off the flame, add the lemon juice and stir well. Garnish with chopped cilantro before serving. Enjoy with tea or coffee.

* * *

I also recommend this soothing yogurt drink that uses curry leaves.

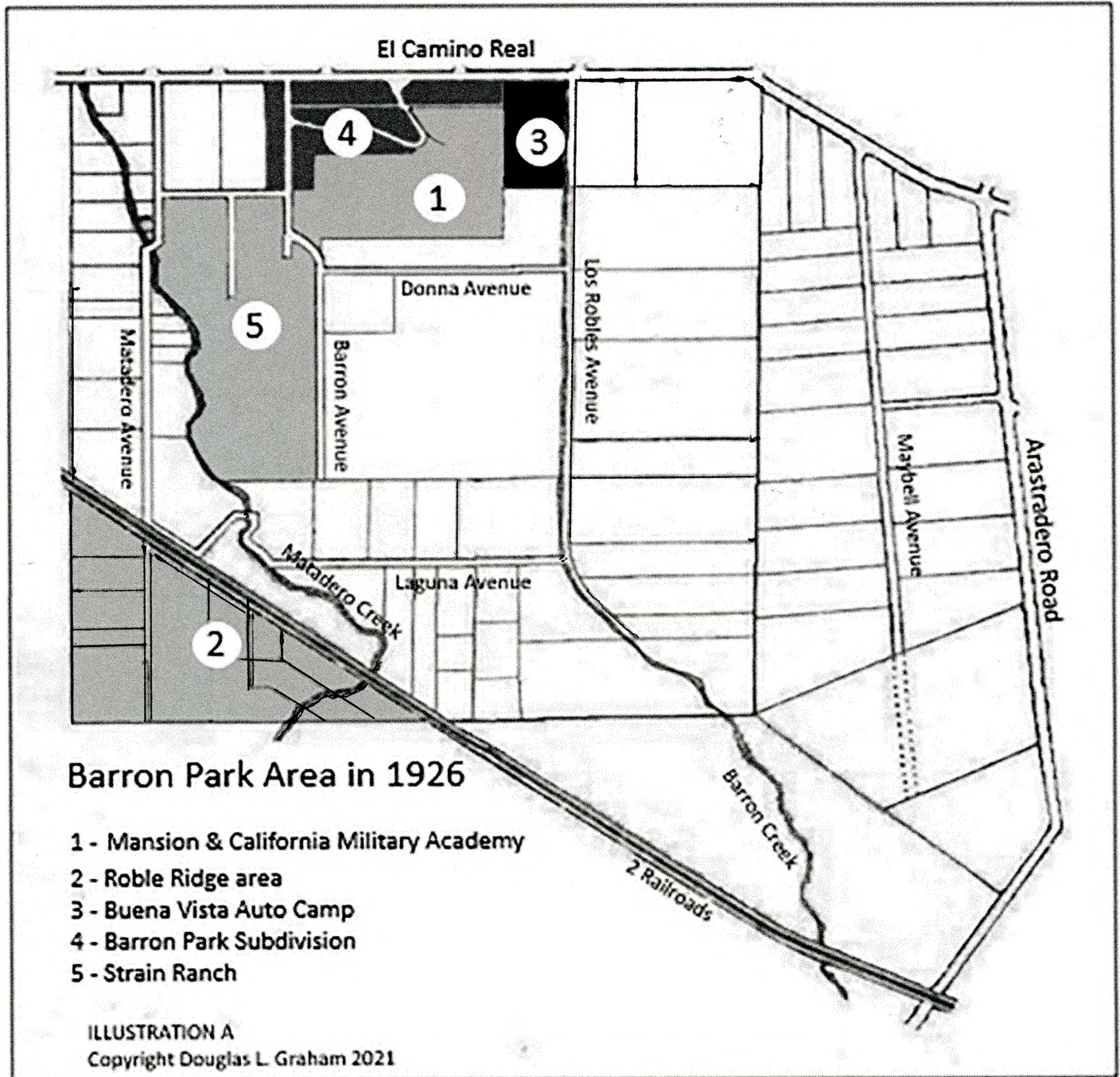
Cold Spiced Yogurt Drink

- 2 cups plain yogurt
- 1 cup water
- Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- Approx. 5 curry leaves
- Red chili powder

Take 2 cups of plain yogurt, add 1 cup water, and blend well. Add a pinch of salt to taste. In a small pan, sauté 1/2 teaspoon black mustard seeds along with about 5 curry leaves and red chili powder (to taste!). Roast the spice mixture till it sizzles. Add the mixture to the blended yogurt and mix well. Add ice, and enjoy on a summer afternoon!

Birth of the Neighborhood

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian



2021 Chosen as Barron Park's Centennial Year

We're celebrating the Barron Park Neighborhood Centennial this year, even though Covid restrictions kept us from throwing a party or inviting a large audience for a live presentation. We hoped to organize a virtual presentation, but second thoughts about Zoom fatigue and

technical complications ultimately led to a different plan. We will instead use several history-related approaches that should add up to a suitable celebration of this major milestone! First, there's the article you're reading now.

How Do You Determine a Beginning Point?

The exact beginning of a neighborhood is

hard to define unless the neighborhood is restricted to a single development tract that was all built up during one short period. This didn't happen here. Our neighborhood developed in fits and starts in a near-random fashion. It was never planned as a whole entity. This is not unusual for suburban neighborhoods.

We Picked 1921 as the Best Choice

We considered several different years as plausible “beginning” points. We could have said 1910, when two houses were built on Maybell Avenue, but they and the Barron Mansion remained the only ones until the 1920s.

More significant was 1919, when the Barron Estate (Mayfield Farm) was sold to developers. 1920 was when they began subdividing the 350 acres into three-to-five-acre parcels. Construction of six houses was started in 1920, but 1921 was the first year when enough people were living here to call it a neighborhood.

In 1923 the developers split off about 50 acres of landscaping and orchard surrounding the Barron Mansion and sold the big parcel to Colonel Sebastian Jones. 1925 was the year that Jones filed a 72-lot subdivision which he named “Barron Park,” thereby creating the name by which the entire area soon came to be called. We finally chose 1921 as being the first year when we could legitimately call the area a neighborhood. (See Illustration A, Barron Park Area in 1929.)

Barron Park’s Roots in Rancho Santa Rita

The neighborhood’s roots were in the Barron Estate and the Maybelle Tract (original spelling) during the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth. Each of the two tracts was a major subdivision of an original Mexican land grant, Rancho Rincón de San Francisquito, which by 1847 was owned by two brothers, Secundino and Teodoro Robles. Secundino liked to call it “Rancho Santa Rita.”

Elisha O. Crosby Founded Mayfield Farm

The first “Anglo” (a non-Hispanic white person) to build a residence on the land that became Mayfield Farm was Elisha O. Crosby, a lawyer from New York State, who bought about 250 acres from the Robles brothers for \$2,000 in 1853. This comprised more than half of the “core” area of modern Barron Park. Crosby named his purchase “Mayfield Farm,” which was the probable origin of the name Mayfield for the village begun in 1855 where El Camino Real is intersected by California Street today – the first village in the Palo Alto area. Crosby built a large two-story farmhouse near the public stage road (later named El Camino Real). There may also have been a Butterfield Stage route stop for swapping horses near today’s intersection of

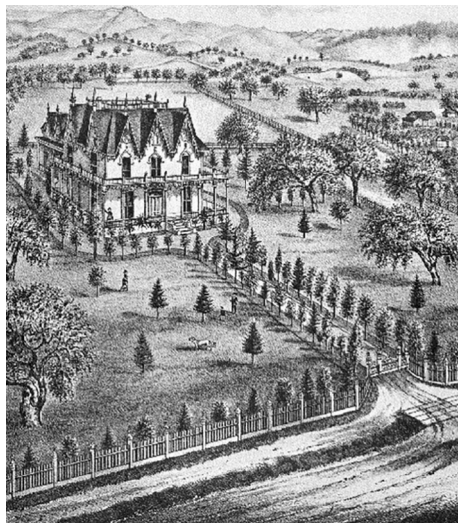
Matadero Avenue with El Camino Real (probably built by the Butterfield Company, not by Crosby). Elisha Crosby is memorialized in the name of Crosby Court, a cul-de-sac running off Georgia Avenue near Gunn High School in the extreme southwest corner of the neighborhood.

Sarah Wallis Built a Mansion

California was hit hard by the national financial crisis and recession of 1856-57. Crosby lost his fortune and lost Mayfield Farm in a court-ordered sale in 1856 for \$10,701 to John W. Armstrong, trustee for the wealthy San Francisco society matron Sarah Wallis (Armstrong’s sister). It was held by Sarah for 22 years, during which time she built a famous and beautiful Victorian “gingerbread” mansion onto the front of Crosby’s farmhouse and landscaped the property. She also dug the first deep well for irrigation, planted extensive orchards, and added many outbuildings, including stables, a barn, and a water tower. Wallis is also memorialized by a cul-de-sac off Georgia near Gunn, and by a State Historical Monument at the mansion site on La Selva Drive. (See Illustration B, below).

Edward F. Barron Added Features

Another financial crisis and recession, even more devastating, hit the nation in 1878, lasting for several years. Sarah was in debt and had to sell her lovely home. The buyer was



B - Sarah Wallis's Mansion - Lithograph from Historical Atlas of Santa Clara County 1876.

Edward F. Barron, a wholesale meat magnate who paid \$36,500 for the property. He held the property until his death in 1893, and then his estate held it until 1919. During the first years he owned it, he made quite a few major improvements, including adding about

100 acres to the south side, thereby rounding out the “core” 350-acre area of the neighborhood. He added a large west wing to Sarah’s mansion, as well as a third-floor cupola. He planted additional lavish landscaping, making a real park around the mansion, with curving drives (now La Selva Drive and Military Way). He also ended troublesome winter flooding by excavating a straight channel for “Dry Creek” along the line of present-day Los Robles Avenue. The creek, now known as Barron Creek, would spread out all over the property during rainy periods. (Crosby’s farmhouse had been built on the highest ground to be found near the stage road.) During the estate period 1894-1919, Barron’s second wife moved to San Francisco, and the estate had a caretaker for the remaining 25 years.

Subdivision of the Maybelle Tract

Meanwhile, other portions of Rancho Santa Rita were being sold to “Anglos.” One large portion, the 100-acre Maybelle Tract (original spelling) was acquired by Mrs. C. Clarke prior to 1890. She may have acquired it from her husband, C. Clarke, by inheritance. I do not know from whom he bought it or how much he paid. By 1908, it belonged to “M. Debre and L. Vercotere,” and the southeasternmost “tip” was split between “L. Distel” and “J. L. Hermite.” By 1910, the Distel portion was the Distel Subdivision of the Maybell Tract (changed to modern spelling). The final 10 acres at the very tip is labeled “A. W.” on the 1910 County map. So, the best I can say is that it was probably subdivided sometime between 1908 and 1910. By 1910, it is shown as having an east-west street (presumably Maybell Avenue) straight through the middle from the state highway (now El Camino Real) to the Stanford land (now Gunn High School). In 1910, the Maybell Tract had about 140 acres. (The 10 acres at the tip later brought the total to 150.)

Sale of the Barron Estate

The big news in the area, however, was the sale of the 350-acre Barron Estate to Watsonville “capitalists” J. E. Reiter, R. F. Driscoll, and B. L. Driscoll. (On deeds, and in subsequent documents, this business group was usually referred to as “Driscoll and Reiter,” or simply “Driscoll.”) The sale was on December 11, 1919, and the price was quoted as “nearly \$200,000.”

Driscoll’s Plans

The Driscoll business was packing, shipping,

and selling strawberries, grown by themselves or small farmers in Santa Cruz County. They intended to expand into Santa Clara County and exploit the San Francisco market more readily. Their business model was to acquire the Barron Estate and subdivide the land that was suitable for raising strawberries into three-to-five-acre plots for sale to people with farming experience who had paying jobs but would care for the plants on weekends and evenings to earn extra money – the so-called “weekend farmers.” The remainder – the “unsuitable” land – would be sold in larger parcels as quickly as possible.

The Strain Ranch

They soon found a ready buyer for a major chunk of the suitable land for agriculture: J. K. Strain bought 31.5 acres on the south side of Matadero Creek for pasturing dairy cattle in 1920. His house was built at or near the intersection of Whitsell and Kendall Avenues, and the dairy cattle were pastured nearby. He called the property “The Strain Ranch,” and it morphed into the Freund Dairy in the 1930s.

Ultimately, the dairy farm became a nuisance to the residences being built all around it, and it had to be closed. The pastures were sold to the Cornelis and Josina Bol family, who in turn sold most of it to Joe Eichler who built University Gardens, one of the earliest Eichler developments in Palo Alto. The rest was sold to the Palo Alto Unified School District, who built Barron Park Elementary School on Barron Avenue – all this in 1948.

Roble Ridge

In the northwest corner of the Barron Estate an oak-studded ridge rose some 50 feet above the flat land. The rolling hill comprised about 30 acres, separated from the rest of the estate by the southern Pacific branch line and parallel track of the Peninsular Railway, an electrified interurban line. In 1920, Driscoll started subdividing it into one-and-two-acre residential lots for “suburban” housing. A private road was built along the railroad tracks and up to the top of the ridge and named “Roble Ridge.” Along this unpaved road, Stanford Comparative Lit Professor William Herbert Carruth (1859-1924) began his hoped-for “intellectual community,” which Cornelis and Josina Bol joined when they immigrated from Holland and settled here in 1936. A similar area began developing, amid new orchards and hayfields, along the



C – Buena Vista Auto Camp and Richfield Gas Station in 1929 – Weiler family photographs. Courtesy of Ann Knopf.

extension of Matadero Avenue up the same hill. That part of the ridge, called “Sunset Hill” then, is generally known today as “Matadero Hill,” but both areas lumped together, along with a small triangle of flat land by the railroad tracks, are collectively referred to as “Roble Ridge.” Because of the large lots and the seclusion, most of the original houses and cottages have today been replaced by mansions and large homes.

Buena Vista Auto Camp

In the early 1920s, a 5.4-acre lot on the northeast corner of Los Robles Avenue and the State Highway (El Camino Real) was acquired for the Buena Vista Auto Camp – the first, or one of the first, “motels” opened on our stretch of the highway. This property has retained the Buena Vista name right down to the present day. (See Illustration C, above). The roadhouse restaurants and bars and other retail businesses appeared in the 1930s, beyond the time frame of this story.

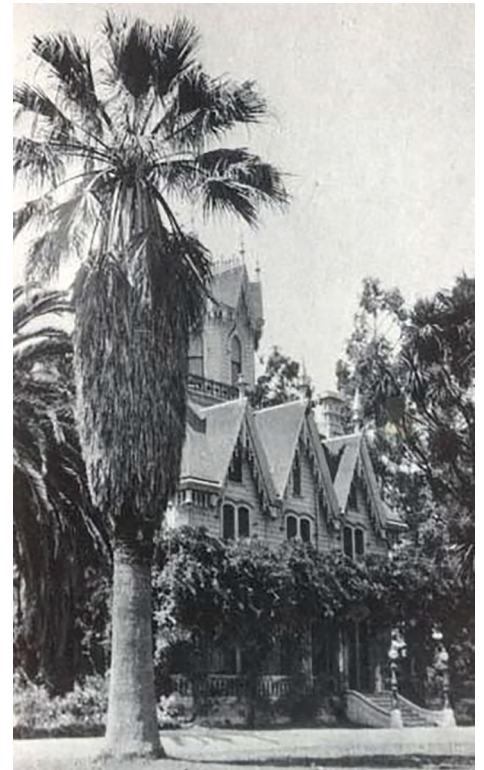
Birth of the Neighborhood

The Barron Park neighborhood was born without any mystery, drama, party, or even an announcement. Unheralded, the neighborhood began in historical obscurity, with the construction of six houses in 1920-21 scattered on lots subdivided from the former Barron Estate. These houses had been preceded by five other houses scattered in the Maybell Tract. Except for Professor Carruth’s house, all these houses were built for farmers, mostly orchardists in the Maybell Tract and berry farmers or orchardists on the Barron Estate. In 1921 there was probably little sense of a neighborhood since it was basically a rural area.

California Military Academy

By 1923, the most significant remaining parcel was some 53 acres that included the gorgeous but aging 25-room Barron Mansion, with surrounding park-like grounds, outbuildings, and orchards. It was sold to Colonel Sebastian C. Jones to establish a military

academy. Colonel Jones came from running several military academies in upstate New York and was looking for a warmer place to live. He built barracks and a swimming pool. He and his extended family moved into the mansion, which had “at least 38 rooms” on three floors and a two-story attic. The cadets ate their meals in the large dining room of the west wing. (See Illustration D, below).



D – Barron Mansion in 1925 – Forbes family photographs; Courtesy of Ann Knopf.

“Barron Park” Subdivision

More subdivisions came in the mid-1920s: the Irven subdivision in the Maybell Tract on Arastradero Road in 1926 and the Oak subdivision on Los Robles and La Pera Avenues in 1927. But the big news was the 76-lot Barron Park Subdivision of 1925 on El Camino Real, Woodland Drive (later renamed La Selva), Military Way, and Barron Avenue. “Barron Park” was widely promoted and soon the whole area became known by that name,

even on the east side of El Camino. Colonel Jones's small lots were marketed in San Francisco as "summer homes" for well-to-do city families to escape the cold, foggy and windy summers. The lots on El Camino were intended for small roadside businesses. The sales of these lots provided more capital for Jones to apply to the Military Academy.

The Strawberry Boom

The strawberry farms were initially successful. By the late 1920s, the north end and the center of Barron Park were largely planted to strawberries. Driscoll had leased much of the land to Japanese, Latino, and Filipino farmworkers, and arranged the marketing of their crops. At the height of the season, Barron Park growers were shipping \$5,000 to \$7,000 worth of strawberries per day (equivalent to at least \$110,000 today), mostly to San Francisco. But it didn't last long.

The Mites That Ate the Neighborhood

According to Ernest Johnson, the fields produced at a profitable level for only about five years or less. Then the red spider mites would multiply and ruin the crops. The Driscoll Company would shift production to a new field. Eventually, the entire area became infested. The last field to succumb to the mites was on the southeast corner of La Donna and Barron Avenues. Some fields were replanted by the owners or lessees to tomatoes, which did well. Along with the strawberries went the Driscoll Company, but not before it helped start the process of residential subdivision in Barron Park. The Driscoll Company itself continued to be successful in other areas and is a thriving business today, still headquartered in Watsonville.

The Johnsons Came to Grow Berries

Ernest and Lena Johnson moved here in 1926 from San Francisco. A neighbor encouraged them to drive down to Palo Alto and look at the Driscoll properties available to grow strawberries. They thought they could make a lot of money. It didn't work out that way when the red spider mites hit, but they toughed it out and stayed on to try raising pears instead. They had one good year at that – the Cannery took their crop. But Ernest put in irrigation lines and later started a domestic (drinking) water company that grew to service the entire south end of our neighborhood. Ernest was also involved in the Improvement Club (an early forerunner of the Barron Park Association) which got



E - Orchard and hayfield on Matadero Avenue - Preminger family photographs; Courtesy of Else Preminger.

bridges put in on Laguna Avenue (first known as "Neal" and then on the 1926 plat map, as "Matadero," before the bridges were built). Ernest said there were no paved roads in the area in 1926, nor was there telephone service until 1935. However, there was newspaper delivery. And if you bought an electric stove and water heater from PG&E, they would provide electric service – they erected five poles on Laguna to serve the Johnsons.

Both Areas Went to Fruit Orchards

By 1930, much of the land in both parts of the Barron Park Area (Mayfield Farm and the Maybell Tract) had been replanted in apricot, prune plum, or pear orchards. They can be seen on the 1941 aerial photo (the first aerial image that exists for our area), and remnant trees still exist in a few neighborhood yards. Apricots were particularly predominant in the west end of the Maybell Tract, and along upper (western) Los Robles Avenue along both sides of Barron Creek. Pear trees were predominant in central Barron Park, especially along Donna (later renamed La Donna), El Centro, La Pera (later and still misspelled, La Para) and Laguna Avenues. Prune plums were planted in the largest orchard of all – the entire area now occupied by Encina Grande Park, from Los Robles Avenue south to Florales Avenue and between Verdosa Avenue near El Camino Real on the east to Amaranta Avenue on the west. (See Illustration E, above).

The "Roaring Twenties"

Many historians have commented about the interesting cultural attitude during the 1920s that led the decade to be called "The Roaring

Twenties." This makes it sound as if it were a boom time of general prosperity. But it was not. Agriculture, which in 1920 still employed half of all Americans, suffered a severe depression during almost the entire decade, resulting in about half the farm population giving up and moving to the cities seeking work. The only real "boom sectors" were hospitality (hotels and restaurants), upscale retail, oil and gas, automobile manufacturing, and finance.

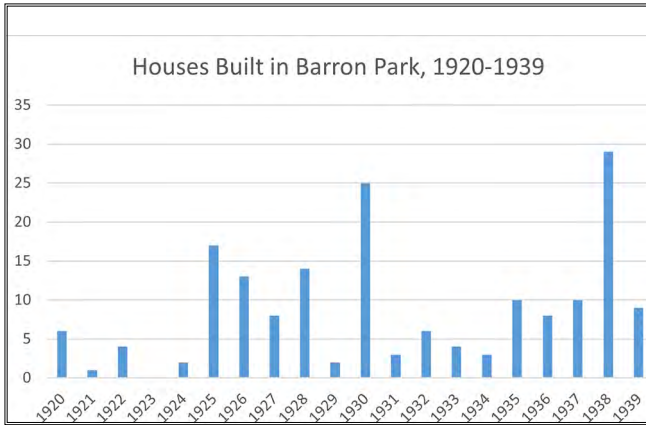
House Building in the 1920s

The residents of Barron Park were struggling to augment their incomes with strawberry, vegetable, and fruit production, but the most successful folks may well have been those who sold out and moved on. Nevertheless, building of new homes here continued and accelerated during the later Twenties. The numbers show this in Box 1 on page 9.

Note that there was a little spurt (six houses, some of them close together) in 1920, the first year the lots became available. Then the poor market for rural land dominated, due at least partly to the national agricultural depression, and for the next four years the average build was 1.5 houses per year. Then there was our first big spurt of building, with 17 houses going up in 1925, followed by the next four years averaging a little more than four per year. I don't have a ready explanation for the low number in 1929, but it may reflect buildings-in-progress where construction temporarily stopped when the stock market crashed.

Onset of the Great Depression

Beginning with the tremendous Wall Street



Box 1: Houses built in Barron Park between 1920 and 1939. Image by Douglas Graham.

stock market crash in October 1929, the Great Depression lasted until World War II rearmament began in 1938-39. By far the most serious depression in our history, it had negative economic effects everywhere in America, including in California and in our own neighborhood. Again, to understand the record of new houses built, see Box 1. Note that there was another “spurt” in 1930 – 25 houses. I think this may reflect construction projects being completed after temporary stoppages in October or November of 1929.

The fruit orchards planted in the wake of the strawberry bust did well in the Thirties and began helping Barron Parkers make some extra income in that very trying time. However, the economic depression really shows up in the numbers from 1931 through 1934 – with an average of only four houses built per year. Faster growth started up again in 1935 with ten houses built and a three-year average of more than nine per year, 1935-37. Then there was a boom in building with 29 going up in 1938, despite (or maybe partly because of) the looming war clouds in Europe and East Asia, where militaristic fascists seemed poised to attempt a takeover of the entire Old World.

Nine more houses built in 1939 rounded out the decade with a resounding total of 107 new houses, bringing the total housing stock in Barron Park to 176 – we had truly become a neighborhood, not just a rural area. This was also shown in the beginnings of a community, with the activities of the Improvement Association and attempts at political influence when the Maybell Tract residents fought the threatened destruction of their area by the state government’s huge “borrow pit,” dug to supply fill for the new Bayshore

Highway.

References to Detailed Stories

The brief descriptions in this article may have left some readers wishing for more detail. If you feel that way, please consult Box #2, “References,” for a list of previously published stories in the BPA Newsletter archives at <https://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/>. The limited selection listed

includes only the articles covering what was happening in the 1920s – our first ten years as a neighborhood. Feel free to further explore the BPA Newsletter archive.

Please contact me anytime with corrections, tidbits, questions, or suggestions of topics for further research and writing. I am reachable at dgrahampaca@gmail.com, 650-493-0689, or by US mail at 984 Ilma Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

Please stay tuned for news of the late

Summer Barron Park History Walks you will be joining!

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Box 2 – References to Detailed Stories

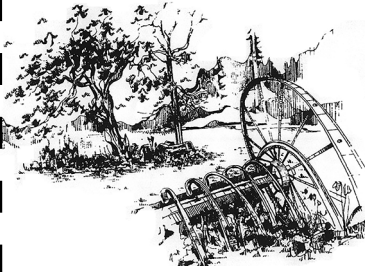
References below are to earlier articles in the BPA Newsletter.

Consult them at bpapaloalto.org

- “Elisha Crosby Founded Mayfield Farm” – Spring 2003, Summer 2003
- “Sarah Wallis Built a Mansion” – Fall 2003, Winter 2004, Summer 2007, Fall 2007
- “Edward Barron Added Features” – Spring 2007
- “Subdivision of the Maybelle Tract” – Winter 1999, Winter 2018
- “Sale of the Barron Estate” – Spring 2019
- “Roble Ridge” – Fall 2015
- “Buena Vista Auto Camp” – Spring 2015
- “California Military Academy” – Spring 2008
- “The Mites That Ate the Neighborhood” – Summer 2015

BPA EMAILS AND WEB LINKS SUMMER 2021

- **BPA Website:** <https://bpapaloalto.org>
- **BPA Newsletter Archive:** <https://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter>
- **BPA Membership (Join/Renew):** <https://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association>
- **Membership Questions:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- **BPA Email Lists:** Join at: <https://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists> or write to: listmanager@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA President:** John W. King at: president@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Treasurer:** John W. King at: johnwadeking@gmail.com
- **BPA Newsletter Editor:** Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net
- **BPA Business Liaison:** Paul Yang at: pabloyang@yahoo.com
- **Support for Buena Vista neighbors during Covid-19:** Karen Ratzlaff at: karen.ratzlaff@hotmail.com
- **Welcoming Committee Chair:** Gwen Luce at: gluce@cblnorcal.com
- **Emergency Services Volunteer Program:** Maurice Green at: mauryg3@comcast.net
- **Barron Park Historian:** Douglas L. Graham at: dgrahampaca@gmail.com
- **BPA Webmaster:** Maurice Green at: bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org
- **Barron Park Donkeys:** To volunteer, donate, or purchase merchandise, go to: <http://barronparkdonkeys.org> or contact Jenny Kiratli at: barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com
- **Bol Park Native Habitat:** Donate to the Bol Park Fund at: <https://friendsofpaparks.org/donations2> Or by mail or phone: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323. To volunteer, contact Rich Elder at: rich.e.elder@gmail.com
- **Cool Block:** Learn more or join the list of interested Cool Block residents: hglann@gmail.com



2021 Barron Park Association Membership

Thanks to all the supporting members of the Barron Park Association! If you haven't yet, please join or renew for January 1, 2021-December 31, 2021. (If you joined or renewed after December 1, 2020, your membership is current.) To check your membership status, email: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Your annual dues go toward BPA-sponsored and Committee activities. They include all four quarterly Newsletters, the BPA Website, neighborhood and COVID financial support – and soon, hopefully – Happy Hours, May Fête, Movie Night, and other social events!

Basic Business members may run one print Newsletter ad each year and are listed on the BPA Website. Supporting Business members may run four ads per year. Write to: pabloyang@yahoo.com

Join online at: <https://bpapaloalto.org/membership-form> using PayPal, or mail this completed form with your check to:

Barron Park Association
724 Barron Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Name(s):	Primary email address:
Address:	Secondary email address:
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter: please send me the online edition instead of a mailed copy	Phone:

☐ **Fellow** \$100

☐ **Patron** \$50

☐ **Member** \$30

☐ **Senior** \$15

☐ **Business** \$50

☐ Additional Contribution: \$ _____

Total Contribution: \$ _____

If sending a personal check, pay to: Barron Park Association.

Note: Membership and contributions are not tax deductible.

CONNECT WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS

Businesses in Barron Park! Businesses owned by BP residents! You'll have an ad on the back page of the newsletter when you join the BPA as a Business member. You will also get a spotlight article on your business during your first year as a member. Sign up now as a Business Supporter at <https://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/>

Dear Stephanie: The jokes you posted in your front yard helped us smile during the pandemic. Many of us stopped by your house daily to see your latest pun. Your efforts brought joy to seniors and children alike!



Thank you! Gracias! Mahalo!

Image by Harwaa Alsalman, Noun Project

BPA EMAIL LISTS

The Barron Park Association offers three community email lists, hosted on Google Groups, for any resident to post: *bpa-news*, *bpa-misc*, and *bpa-issues*.

To join a list, go to: <https://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/> The link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe to one or more of them.

More Than 600 Community Members Join *Breathe with Me!*

By Svetlana Gous

Starting on Earth Day, April 22, 2021, students, Gunn High School staff, and Barron Park community members were invited to “paint their breath” in one or more simple blue strokes from top to bottom, on a canvas that extended 350 feet along the Gunn fence. (CDC safety guidelines were followed.) The installation was taken down at the end of May, but not before several Gunn Honors art students had created beautiful paintings using the blue-striped panels as a

starting point.

A number of student clubs enthusiastically helped with the event: SEC, YCS, Dream Volunteers, Green Team, BEAM, Street Art, and Gardening, along with staff members and parents in a profound celebration of community and humanity.

Breathe with Me photos continue on [Page 12](#) and thoughts left by *Breathe with Me* participants begin on [Page 13](#).



Althea Brown, Gunn parent, paints while Ian Brown, Gunn junior, films her. Ian's video about the project will be available later this summer. Steve Schecter's film about the painting of the installation can be viewed on the *Breathe with Me* Vimeo channel. <https://vimeo.com/breathewithme>

El azul de mi ser

A poem inspired by the *Breathe with Me* project

By Mariana Cordero

Los ojos se cierran,
el corazón se abre.
Sin prisa y lentamente
la consciencia vuelve a nuestro ser,
y flotamos libremente
en este espacio presente.

Brocha que pintas de vida
el azul de mi ser,
has que esta línea de amor
deje al pasar
un rastro de brillo y esperanza.
Que esta línea de amor
abraza el perdido espíritu
de la soledad y la indiferencia.



The eyes close; the heart opens
Without hurry and slowly.
Consciousness returns to our being;
and we float freely in this ever-present
space

Paintbrush that colors with life the blue
of my being . . .

May this line of love leave in its wake a
trail of hope.

May this line of love embrace the spirit
lost to loneliness and indifference.

Mariana Cordero, a Foothill College student from Costa Rica, lived in Barron Park during the pandemic. She composed this poem as *Breathe with Me* was getting underway. Translation by Martha López.



Kitchen Sink Molly, a Morris dance group, came to perform their "Covid-affected" choreography, accompanied by Gary Breitbard on accordion, Hal Macbeth on concertina, and Bill White on fiddle.



Perry and Buddy check out the project. Mike Holland and Jeralyn Moran are on a regular walk with the Bol Park donkeys, chatting with Charissa Gering, who brought her dogs to the park for the first time.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS SUMMER 2021

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BPA Board Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.
Neighbors are welcome.

For Board Meeting Schedule write to:
president@bpapaloalto.org

www.bpapaloalto.org

Thoughts Inspired by *Breathe with Me, April 22-24, 2021*

By Community and Student Painters

The invitation for those who painted:
"Add a word, feeling, or phrase about
your painting and meditation experi-
ence."

The thoughts below were curated and
arranged by poet and physician Diana Farid,

from words and phrases community partici-
pants left behind during their *Breathe with
Me Palo Alto* experience, April 22-24, 2021.
Diana made occasional changes to tenses
of the words and added the refrain "Breathe
with me."

Wind tickles my face.
The quiet melody
of wind chimes,
the soft murmur
of people's voices.
Specks in the universe.
Belonging.
Breathe with me.



I feel
the wind
and hear
my breath,
everything is calm
calm.
Breathe with me.



The rustle of the canvas,
whistle of the trees,
mother earth,
true understanding,
mindful,
perfection.
Breathe with me.



Present
in the moment.
Inspire.
Everything else
fades away.
Breathe with me.



Draw air
into my lungs.
Create blue

[\(Continued on Page 14\)](#)



Many painters left their words and thoughts behind. The prompt for those who painted: "Add a word, feeling, or phrase about your painting and meditation experience," April 22-24, 2021.

and white.
Stay alive.
Comfort. Relief.
Bliss in my breath
Breathe with me.



Sometimes nothing but
breath and air
and wind
feels good.
Respite.
Body and breath,
my senses
and spirit
connected.
Honor what unites us.
Breathe with me.



Relaxed and calm,
grounded.
Tranquil.
Love and peace.
Appreciate the moment,
of balance
and nothingness.
Breathe with me.



Time, under the oaks,
life moves slower.
I lost my breath,
but see what others have lost,
still with me,
paint bitter-sweet poetry.
Breathe with me.



Blue,
wistful, lovely.
"It might have been"
destiny.
Love, friends, family,
breathing in life,

go soft
serenity.
Breathe with me.



Here with my
community,
release.
Connection with nature,
with others, together.
The sweet birds sing,
acceptance.
Breathe with me.



A wave of calm
connection.
Peace, calm,
peace, calm,
peace, calm,
connected,
love.
Unity.
Breathe with me.



Body to its center,
focus,
find your heart.
Heal.
Such a pretty view.
Breathe with me.



Me sentí conectada
con la tierra,
—calma, sueños
realidad,
unidad
amor.
Breathe with me.



Gratitude.
Compassion.

View this Newsletter in Full Color!

You can read this issue in full color and with live web links at <https://bpapalo-alto.org/bpa-newsletter/> as soon as it's posted. While you're there, check out our Archive of past Newsletters. Your small screen is an easy way to review past activities in the 'hood and catch up on issues you may have missed.

Thanks! The Editors

Honesty.
Calm tree.
Poet tree.
Absolutely
ascended.
Breathe with me.



Know yourself.
Refreshing.
Want the breath
to breathe me.
Compassion.
Happy.
Breathe with me.



Kindness. Free.
Peaceful. Relief.
Hope. Aware.
Grateful. Inhale,
exhale, repeat.
Breathe with me.



Stillness out of chaos,
centered, content,
my sunshine,
shimmer of light –
peer into your soul
breathing.
Breathe with me.



Energizing. Good vibes.
I feel like I'm part of something.
Connected to the surrounding

blue lines on my canvas.
I feel united with you.
I feel full again.
Breathe with me.



Walking on our planet,
feeling bathed in love,
courage, joy,
honesty.
Rejuvenated.
Breathe with me.



Fluid stillness.
The last wish on this tree
has been given,
sparrow winged, clarity.
Breathe with me.



All oneness
in this tree of life,
breathe love,
light, replenished.
Breathe with me.



Wind icon by Alex Sheyn, Noun Project



Donkey Art! Enjoy these sketches from anonymous local artists, courtesy of the Donkey Project. To contribute your donkey art, please contact Sarah Vue at vuesarah@gmail.com or James Witt at jw@jameswitt.com

CALL FOR ARTISTS!

Do you enjoy the creative work in the BPA Newsletter? Would you like to see



your art, photography, crafts, writing, published (or unpublished) book, etc., featured in a future issue? Please send your idea with a draft Artist's Statement and reproduc-

ible samples or a description of your work to Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net

Easel icon by Nate Driscoll, Noun Project

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021

Barron Park Association

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Palo Alto, California 94306

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