

Note:

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LOS ALTOS: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Context 1: Prehistory

Central California had the densest native population anywhere north of Mexico before Spain began its explorations into the new world in the latter part of the eighteenth century. There were over forty different groups of Indians living between the coastal areas of Big Sur and the San Francisco Bay. Among those groups, more than ten languages were spoken.

The Europeans who encountered the Indians referred to them as Costenos which meant people of the coast. This was twisted into Costanoan which is still used today, although the Bay Area Indian people dislike it intensely. They prefer to be called Ohlones, even though the word Ohlone is of disputed origin. It may have been the name of a village near the San Mateo coast or it may have been a Miwok word meaning people of the west. Nevertheless, Bay Area Indians prefer the word Ohlone when referring to their heritage.

There was no Ohlone tribe in the sense there was a Sioux, Hopi or Navajo. Even though each Bay Area settlement was loosely affiliated with its neighbors by trade or intermarriage, there was not tribal organization or confederation. The people who populated the region had a common root in their languages but did not see themselves as one nation of the same people.

The diaries of the early Spanish explorers and missionaries give us a rich account of what Indian life was like before the influx of Europeans. The Bay Area, two-hundred fifty years ago, would hardly be recognizable today. The land was covered with vast meadow lands, marshes spread out near the shores of the bay and thick oak, bay and redwood forest covered much of the hillsides. Animal life was plentiful. Fish and game of almost every kind flourished. Herds of elk and antelopes as well as wolves and deer were common as the bald eagles, giant condors, mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes. There were grizzly bears who fed on the abundant berries and acorns as well as the salmon and steelhead that swam in the area's creeks and streams. To the Ohlone, the grizzly was always present yet today there is not a single one left in all of California.

Water was everywhere. We know that the explorers suffered more from the mosquitoes and hard to cross rivers than they did the heat of summer. Places which are now very dry were described as having springs and ponds, even small lakes. The major rivers and streams stretched out over the winter and spring to form wide very marshy valleys. This is a very different scene from the semi-arid country the Bay Area has become. The San Francisco Bay was much larger than it is today, since much of the bay has been filled in with landfill.

The environment of the Bay Area has changed drastically from the days when the early Spanish explorers first began to penetrate. Some of the birds and animals are no longer here and others have diminished greatly in number. The characteristics of the animals have also changed. The early explorers wrote that foxes were virtually underfoot and that mountain lions and bobcats were often

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very visible. Animals then seemed to have become familiar and comfortable with man. Man, of course, was the Ohlone people. The Ohlone depended upon animals for their food and for some of their clothing. They had an intense interest in animals and knew a lot about their behavior. The Ohlone viewed animal spirits as their gods and imitated animal motions in their tribal dances and ceremonies. They looked at themselves as belonging with the animals, so the relationship was not an adversarial one, but one of living in harmony.

There were as many as forty permanent villages that rimmed San Francisco Bay, plus many other temporary encampments. The Ohlone way of life was one of treks. Following the harvest, the Ohlone would travel to the seashore for shellfish, to the rivers for salmon and trout, to the marshes for ducks and geese, to the oak groves for acorns and to the meadows for seeds, greens and roots. There were also trips to the quarries for stones and minerals and other trips for medicines, tobacco and for fiber and hemp. Because of their wandering way of life, the Ohlone built shelters of tule that could be put together and torn apart easily and quickly. The homes were a simple design made by fastening bundles of tule onto a framework of bent willow poles. Their boats were also made of tule and could be left behind when it was time to move on.

The Ohlone definitely had a very highly developed society where men and women had definite roles. The women were keepers of the family, harvested acorns as well as ground them, gathered roots and herbs, collected seeds and made baskets. The men hunted, gathered food and participated in ceremonies. The Ohlone people were generous. They did not hoard food or other possessions, but shared them with the entire settlement. Competitiveness was not encouraged. Moderation and restraint were the virtues to admire. Because of this, strong rule or government was really non-existent. The Europeans who first encountered the Ohlone called it anarchy, but on closer examination, the sense of right and wrong, modesty and truthfulness that were instilled in each individual created a much more sophisticated, controlled way of life.

The Ohlone developed basketry into a very intricate art-form. The baskets, made by women primarily, were made in many different shapes and sizes. There were storage baskets, winnowing baskets, hopper baskets, water-carrying baskets, seed beaters, cooking baskets, serving baskets and many more. Each basket had its certain shape that was both aesthetically pleasing as well as appropriate to its function. There could be as many as 25,000 stitches in a medium sized basket. Each basket was an individual piece and reflected the natural world of plants of the Ohlone environment.

Dancing was a very important part of Ohlone life. They spent days, even weeks just dancing. At feasts, they would use moderation in eating and drinking just so they could continue dancing longer. There were dances for all occasions. There were wild dances for war, acorn dances, mourning dances, dances just for men, and dances just for women. Dancing was a natural part of life, just like eating and sleeping. There was a deep religious or spiritual significance to every dance. In the dance, the Ohlones would feel power more deeply perhaps from the rhythms as they summoned spirits from their world.

The Ohlones were a strong well-developed people with an average life expectancy of about forty years. There were none of the contagious diseases that plagued Europe such as smallpox, measles, mumps and venereal diseases. However, respiratory diseases were probably prevalent. The Ohlone used natural medicines developed over the centuries to cure their ailments. They used herbs, barks

and root in a variety of ways. They steamed and inhaled them or smoked them like tobacco. They rubbed them into their skin or put them into their nostrils like snuff, plastered them on their faces or drank them as beverages or applied them as poultices to wounds. Minor illnesses like stomach aches or sprains were accepted as normal; however, major illness was believed to be caused by magic or by some evil spirit who invaded the body. When a major illness occurred the shaman was called. Shamans would pray and dance to try to force the evil spirit to leave. Families would pay the shaman with beads or animal skins. Shamans, generally women, were the spiritual advisors or leaders. They were believed to influence fertility, health, the abundance of fish and the weather. Shamans could also turn to evil and in general were somewhat feared by the Ohlone people.

The Ohlone believed that almost every object had a life force of its own. Although everything had power, everything did not have equal power. Stones, for example, had little power, but rivers, redwood trees, the moon and especially the sun were very powerful. The storytellers would tell and retell the myths that had been handed down for centuries. Animals, especially, were believed to have special spiritual powers. The animal gods were more like people than what we might imagine gods to be. The Ohlone believed in and lived a rich spiritual life. They fasted, abstained from sex, danced long dances, chanted and sometimes used bodily punishment in order to achieve a heightened sense of living in their spirit filled world.

They envisioned the world primarily in terms of witchcraft and magic. Death was a matter of tremendous grief. The Ohlone feared death because they often felt the spirit or ghost of the deceased would remain and harm the settlement. For this reason, the family or especially the spouse of a deceased person would be shunned for a period of time. The Ohlone also did not have a sense of genealogy as we do. They would not know the immediate past but would know long ago ancestors. They would know their history beyond a few generations. This contributed to their belief of only living in the present.

Ohlone had lived in an unchanging world for thousands of years until the Spanish explorers began their treks through the new world. The Ohlone, oddly enough, greeted their arrival with much generosity and curiosity. The Franciscan fathers, especially Father Junipero Serra, saw the Ohlone as ripe to Christianize. And although the idea that these Franciscans were evil, power-hungry men who robbed the Ohlone of their life in paradise, the Franciscans saw the opportunity to bring their Christian way of life to the Ohlone. The Indians would be the beneficiaries of their more knowledgeable way of life. The original intent was the Franciscans would teach the Ohlone the proper way to eat, drink, pray and farm. After their apprenticeship, the Ohlone would be allowed to farm the land and the Franciscans would go on to Christianize other peoples. Of course, that never happened. Disease and the bureaucracy of the Spanish government prevented the Indian's return to the life in natural surroundings. There was a brief period in the 1860s when Indians banded together to form settlements, but the influx from the Eastern U.S. did not allow these communities to continue and flourish.

Relics of the Ohlone have been unearthed over the last one hundred years. Mortars and pestles and an Indian skull were found east of Moody Road in 1955, and the developer of Colonial Estates on O'Keefe Lane discovered many human remains and artifacts during excavation work in 1964. The major find locally occurred in 1970, when the remains of an Ohlone village and burial ground were uncovered just across O'Keefe Lane, on the Los Altos side of the boundary on the property of Mrs. Lucile Costello, which had been acquired by Edwin C. Johnsen for condominium development.

With permission from Mrs. Costello and Johnsen, a “dig” and archeological study was undertaken by a team from Foothill College, aided by Mrs. Florence Fave (now McCliman), then historian for the town of Los Altos Hills. The ranks were later joined by students from the California History Center of De Anza College, San Francisco State, West Valley and St. Patrick Colleges.

Today, there are groups of Ohlone descendants who occasionally make their opinions public. Many of them have tried to bring back some Ohlone customs, traditions and way of life. Groups sometimes perform Ohlone dances at local churches and schools. The Ohlone still believe in treating strangers as brothers and sisters and though they can't change the past, continue to believe that life will get better if we work together.

Context 2: Agriculture 1850 to 1940

Los Altos comprises a portion of what was the La Purissima Conception Rancho and Rancho San Antonio and later, after the adoption of the State constitution in 1849 and the official creation of Santa Clara County in 1851, a portion of the Fremont Township.

In the early rancho days, much of the Santa Clara Valley was used for cattle grazing. This activity later gave way to wheat and grain fields in the 1860s and 1870s. Mountain View was the principle settlement in the area and grew primarily as a result of the old Mountain View Station, a stage stop located along the San Francisco-San Jose Stage Road. This route today is known as El Camino Real.

When the Southern Pacific railroad came through in 1864, the line was located about a mile from Mountain View Station, bypassing what was known as Old Mountain View (near present day Calderon). The “New Mountain View” was officially laid out in 1865 at the present downtown area along Castro Street. Settlement in and around Los Altos area grew as a result of the railroad and Mountain View was the center for all business activity for these early residents. One early name is that of Charles Berry, who according to Sawyer's *History of Santa Clara County*, was one of the earliest inhabitants of the area, arriving just prior to the railroad. Berry is said to have purchased 15 acres of the Taaffe Ranch and immediately planted it in fruit.

According to the *Thompson and West Historical Atlas of 1876*, Santa Clara County comprised some 578,850 acres. Nearly half of this was cultivated and included some 170,000 acres of wheat growing alone. The 1890 *Sunshine, Fruit and Flowers* publication of the San Jose Mercury Newspaper describes much of the area north of Mountain View as being planted in wheat fields with the area west and south devoted to orchards. Prior to this time, it appears that most land was used for grain growing; in 1875 some 2,000 acres in the county are listed-as vineyards and wineries.

Other accounts describe the Mountain View area as having some 22 wineries, including that of John Snyder. In 1875, over 182,000 gallons of wine were produced in the county, with an additional 45,000 gallons of brandy the same year. The Snyder Ranch was one of the largest in the area comprising 700 acres. Others include the Campbell Ranch (the present day Rancho Shopping Center) encompassing 150 acres, the Taaffe Ranch, the Madigan Ranch, and the Emerson Ranch. Remnants of the early agricultural activity in this area have not been identified in the survey. It is clear that by the end of the nineteenth century, smaller farms began to appear and the large ranches which were largely in grain began to give way to smaller subdivisions and orchards.

It is the orchards in the valley that are the emphasis for this agricultural context. The earliest farms predate the official subdivision of the town by Paul Shoup and the Altos Land Company in 1907. These farms were largely aligned economically with the town of Mountain View and along Grant Road.

By 1890, according to Eastman's *History of the Los Altos Area*, smaller ranches were producing as "much as 200 dollars per acre from prunes, apricots, peaches, cherries, pears and other fruits." The properties were lived in year round by their occupants and represent a phase in this history of the community that emphasizes farming as the means of livelihood. This activity predates the later relocation of San Francisco businessmen and their families to town after 1907. After the official establishment of the town, businesses in Los Altos grew and the beginning of residential subdivisions began to take over the orchard land use.

The impact of the railroad and subsequent layout of the townsite is another type of context that is not covered in this examination. It is in large part, due to transportation and the settlement that developed as a result of the technology that the orchards virtually disappeared in the valley. The significance of the theme did not become evident until the end of the project. Therefore, the theme of transportation and the growth of roadways in the area may be viewed as another context to be examined.

Although orchards continued up to the early 1940s in Los Altos, many of the smaller properties (five to ten acres) are not included in this category, yet provide significant examples of architectural styles and are included in the residential architecture context. The agricultural context attempts to identify properties which likely were constructed prior to the establishment of the town. An excellent description of life during this time period (and later periods) may be found in the unpublished manuscripts *Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver* by Lyle W. Huestis in 1977. This account gives detailed reminiscences of Mrs. Huestis about a farm and apricot orchard located on Grant Rd. (a copy can be found at the Los Altos History Museum). Properties that are, or were, part of this context include:

- 170 Almond Avenue (Formway Machine Shop)◆
- 210 Alta Vista Avenue◆
- 960 Berry Avenue (Frank Bacon House)¹
- 965 Berry Avenue*
- 547 Castano Court*
- 1398 Chelsea Drive
- 1330 Concord Avenue◆
- 980 Covington (Emerson House)
- 762 Edgewood Lane*
- 331 El Monte Avenue
- 236 Eleanor Avenue
- 1520 Grant Road

¹ 960 Berry Avenue is not only significant because it is an early ranch house of the area, but this property is also significant for its historical associations with Frank Bacon.

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- 1473 Miramonte Avenue (Holly Village) ♦
- 1475 Oakhurst Avenue ♦
- 1284 Paula Court
- 39 Pine Lane (Hoskins House)
- 1050 Portland Avenue ♦
- 439 Rinconada Court*
- 51 N. San Antonio Rd.*
- 175 Sylvia Court ♦
- 10 Yerba Buena Avenue (Tankhouse)

* Denotes City Designated Landmark

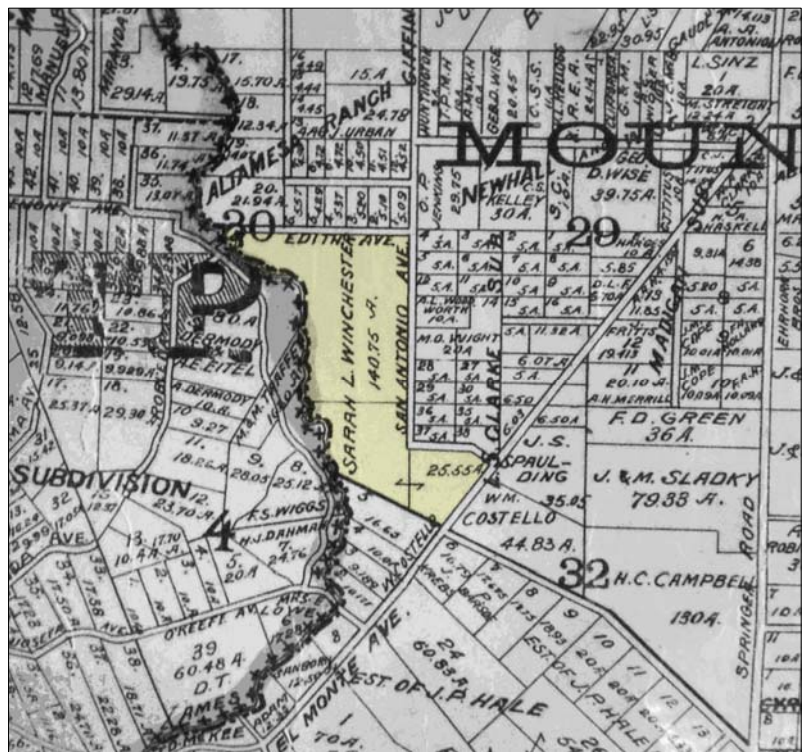
♦ Denotes that the structure has been demolished and/or is no longer on the HRI

All properties in this context represent farmhouses of the area that were tied to some form of agriculture prior to the influx of San Franciscans and other families after the town's creation.

Context 3: Residential Architecture 1907 to 1940

Many believe that the real beginning of Los Altos start with the Altos Land Company and acquisition of Sarah Winchester's 100 acres in 1906. This land became what is known today as the downtown triangle.

The earliest account, date August 2, 1906, was found in the *Palo Alto Times* in an article describing the purchase of the 100 acres mentioned above by the Interurban Electrical Railway for a right-of-way. It mentioned the creation of a new town-site to be called "Banks and Braes." Just when the name was changed to Los Altos in unknown, but we do know that the Altos Land Company and the University Land Company were formed in 1907. The October 2, 1913 issue of the *Mayfield News*, however, describes the townsite as being sold again and placed solely into the hands of Paul Shoup and George Herbert, a San Jose fruit packer. The deal is described as one of the most important real estate transactions in Santa Clara



A 1906 tract map showing the Winchester parcel that would be sold to the Altos Land Company and become the townsite for Los Altos.

Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

County.

With the establishment of the town in 1907 came the beginnings of subdivisions (although a few earlier subdivisions were recorded prior to 1907). It is with the creation of the new townsite that the context of residential architecture is examined.

The original town contains the University Avenue neighborhood. This early and very elite neighborhood contains a variety of architectural house types which are unified mainly by the street layout and alleyways. The lot sizes and scales of these homes vary in size greatly; yet there is a continuity of form in the streetscape in most cases. Dates in this area range from 1908 to the 1930s and buildings in many cases are probably architect-designed judging from the styles found, and the social status of people who occupied these buildings. Many of the homes in the district began as summer homes for prominent San Francisco businessmen and their families while others remained year round living quarters for businessmen who commuted on the train. An examination of the *Architect and Engineering Record of California* between 1906 and 1930 reveals that many well known architects worked in the Los Altos area, but little is available that sheds any light on the exact locations of residences or their occupants.

The well-known Ng Tong Temple, for example, was designed as an outdoor theater for performances. It sat upon part of the property formed by the rear yards of five prominent families (the translation means “five families”), along Adobe Creek, where Shoup Park is now located. The theater was designed by San Francisco architect John K. Branner (listed in an August, 1924 article). Henry C. Smith, architect, was the designer of the Los Altos Grammar School as well as the Wellman residence, known today as the El Retiro Retreat (1916 article). John Hudson Thomas did some work in Los Altos along Pine Lane, but the residence is apparently gone today. We know Ernest Coxhead worked in town, designing a residence and a church. Well-known landscape architect, Emerson Knight, also worked in the sea, but again, the locations are unknown. The Paul Shoup residence at 500 University was designed by San Jose architect, Charles McKenzie, in 1910. Further examination of the records may shed more light on local architects.



The Paul Shoup residence at 500 University Avenue
Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

Local contractor, Claude Taylor (later of Taylor properties), built several homes in town, including the Mabel Eschenbraecher home. The most well-known contractor in town was local orchardist, J. Gilbert Smith, whose residence is the History House Museum on the Civic Center campus. Although the architect is unknown, the Los Altos Country Club is featured on the cover of one

issue of the *Architect and Engineering Record*. The residential architecture context, thus, centers mainly on architectural styles popular between 1907 and 1940 (including some not so popular styles).

By 1911, according to Eastman's history of the town, Los Altos had only fifty homes; by 1913, only thirty-two telephones had been connected. The majority of properties in the residential context are homes built in the 1920s and 30s, reflecting the growth of the area.

By this period, the central business district had been established, roadways were more complete, and working-class families could afford to move to "the county" and grow a few apricot trees.

The dominant house types in this category include:

- Bungalows
- Mission
- Period Revival (Tudor, Colonial, Provincial)
- Prairie
- Italian Villa
- Spanish Colonial Revival

Three districts also appear: the already described University Avenue area, Los Altos Park and Loyola Corners. Los Altos Park was subdivided in December of 1925 and contains a variety of small homes on small lots of a uniform size. The tiny lots and cottages in the Loyola district contain a variety of styles and are also linked together due to the scale and size. Originally known as the Loyola Tract in 1904, the 600 acre area was purchased by the Jesuit Father of the University of Santa Clara for the purpose of relocating the college. The area also had a train stop. The financial pledges for the construction of the new school fell through after the San Francisco earthquake in 1906 and a good portion of the land was used for grazing dairy cattle. The official subdivision of Loyola Corners was recorded in 1926 and a group of investors purchased a portion of the land from the Jesuit Fathers for the Los Altos Country Club. Properties that are, or were, part of this context include:

- 11 Angela Drive
- 232 Burke Road
- 448 Cherry Avenue
- 6 Cypress Court
- 233 West Edith Avenue♦
- 1485 Fremont Avenue
- 1671 Kensington Circle
- 25 Maynard Court
- 55 Pepper Drive*
- 625 Palm Avenue
- 431 University Avenue*
- 436 University Avenue*
- 452 University Avenue
- 500 University Avenue*



An Italian Renaissance-style house designed by Andrew Knoll and constructed in 1922 at 11 Angela Drive.

Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

- 551 University Avenue
- 711 University Avenue
- 725 University Avenue
- 420 Yerba Santa Avenue ♦

* Denotes City Designated Landmark

♦ Denotes that the structure has been demolished and/or is no longer on the HRI

Context 4: Institutional Development 1907 to 1940

The development of civic organizations, schools, and clubs began shortly after the creation of the new townsite. Few resources are remaining today in Los Altos from the early days of the community, but other resources will become significant as more years go by. Civic organizations, such as the Los Altos Men's Club or the Garden Club, are recorded in detail in Joe Salameda's *Los Altos Memories*, which is available at the Los Altos History Museum or the Los Altos Library.

The most significant resource within the institutional development context that still remains is the San Antonio Club, which is currently located at 647 North San Antonio Road and is a City Designated Landmark. Started in May 1907, this organization began as the Musical and Literary Club of Los Altos. By 1908, the club had changed its name to the San Antonio Country Club, whose purpose was to devote time to charity. The property was donated to the club by Julia Chandler Hill, mother of Margaret Hill, who later married J. Gilbert Smith.

The remaining civic/institutional resources with this context include the Coxhead designed, Foothills Congregational Church (originally the Christ Episcopal Church) and the Los Altos Country Club building (original building is now demolished). The church and Country Club have been altered significantly and are probably not eligible for National Register listing. Further, the Country Club lies within the jurisdiction of Santa Clara County and not the City of Los Altos.



The Eschenbruecher Hardware Store and the Shoup Building – the first two buildings to be constructed on Main Street.
Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

Context 5: Commercial Development 1907 to 1940

With the establishment of the townsite came the beginnings of commercial development in Los Altos. The first building to locate on Main Street is the well-known Eschenbruecher hardware store in 1908 (316 Main Street), followed by the Shoup building (300 Main Street). The Shoup building may also be viewed as part of Context 3, since it was the first grammar school location as well as the meeting place for the local Boy Scouts. The Altos Land Company occupied a building at the corner of Main and First (388-398 Main Street). The Copeland building sits across Main Street (395-399 Main Street). All four buildings were constructed by 1911 and all are City Designated Landmarks.

Perhaps the most significant building within the commercial context is the Los Altos Railroad Station (288 First Street). Built in 1913 by the Architectural Bureau for Southern Pacific, the railroad station represents the real force behind the development of the town. The railroad station is a City Designated Landmark and appears eligible for listing on the National Register.

Other prominent commercial buildings located downtown that are listed on the HRI include:

- 301 Main Street (Originally Larry Nelson's Los Altos Pharmacy)
- 350 Main Street
- 368 Main Street (also known as Al's Barber Shop)
- 180 Second Street (Tudor style residential building converted to commercial)



The Los Altos Railroad Station, constructed in 1913.
Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

LOS ALTOS: THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSPORTATION ON GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Executive Summary

This study is the result of intensive research on transportation history as it relates to the broader Santa Clara Valley and Los Altos in particular. The basic thesis of this document maintains that the town of Los Altos would not have developed as it has without the coming of the railroad and subsequent mass production of the automobile. The earliest pioneer settlers of this area were primarily associated with the town of Mountain View as a source of commercial and recreational activity; the stage line was located there as well as the Post Office, mercantile and other establishments. The earliest city directories for the area show early residents of what is now Los Altos as residents of Mountain View. In fact, residents later changed their mailing addresses from Mountain View to Los Altos without moving. Los Altos does not show up as a separate directory listing geographically until 1911.

Paul Shoup, president of Southern Pacific Railroad Company and founder of the Altos Land Company, put Los Altos on the map. The acquisition of railroad right-of-way and surrounding lands, coupled with the new layout of the townsite in 1907 gave Los Altos a separate identity from the surrounding communities and enabled middle-class commuter populations to move into the area. The entire rural nature of the area was changed with the development of more roads, school, churches, commercial, and residential construction activity. Foremost amongst this built environment is the Los Altos Train Station, symbol of the town's very existence.

Early History

It was not until 1769 that the Santa Clara Valley began to feel the Spanish presence. Don Gaspar de Portola discovered the valley over 200 years after Cabrillo first arrived in California. Large land grants were subsequently issued in order to encourage settlement and increase revenue for the territory of California. Starting in 1769, twenty-one widely separated missions were established along the El Camino Real by the Franciscan Friars. Essentially, the El Camino Real became California's oldest thoroughfare (See Map One - the El Camino Real is known as San Francisco Road). Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 and the Secularization Act of 1833 soon shifted the way land was distributed.

The two land grants that are now Los Altos and Los Altos Hills were awarded by the Mexican government. Rancho San Antonio was made by Governor Alvarado to Don Juan Prado Mesa on March 24, 1839. It extended from San Antonio Creek (later named Adobe Creek) to Stevens Creek, with a division by Permanente Creek. The second was granted on June 30, 1840 to two Indians, Jose Gregorio and Jose Ramon. They sold this land to Dorms Juana Briones de Miranda on November 6, 1850.

In February of 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally transferred the California Territory from Mexican rule to the United States. Gold was also discovered in 1848. Anglo settlers had already been exploring the area and many migrated to California in the 1840s to make their fortune in mining. Several of these same settlers became the largest land holders. In 1843, one of

Santa Clara Valley's first American land holders, Martin Murphy, arrived in California. By 1849, Murphy had acquired nearly half of the rancho that is now known as the City of Sunnyvale. This began a new era in the Santa Clara Valley's history.

Early American Settlers: The Cattle and Wheat Ranches

The American settlers transformed the valley into fields and orchards mined for maximum profits. Families such as the Murphy's dominated the economic and political life of the valley during the 1850s, creating a landed aristocracy. These were the day of wheat and large cattle ranches in the Santa Clara Valley. The first agriculture had been from the mission, but the new immigrants began planting the produce they missed from home in 1852.

Joseph P. Hale, one of the largest land owners in the west (primarily due to a marriage to the daughter of a large Spanish grant holder), bought 2,000 acres of Donna Juana Biones' original ranch and became one of Los Altos' earliest large land owners. He and four other families lived on the Hale Ranch. In 1862, John Snyder became the area's first rancher, proving that wheat and grain could be grown without irrigation on his ranch along Permanente Creek. Additional map documentation also shows the Emerson and Berry families as larger land holders.

Early Ranches in Los Altos

<u>Name of Owner</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Crops</u>
Joseph P. Hale	Adobe Creek on the west to present Fremont Ave. on the north, Permanente Creek on the east and the hills to the south.	
John Snyder	Foothill Ranch along Permanente Creek.	Hay/Grain
Stone and Sanborn	Between Taaffe and Hale Ranches.	Horses/Grain
Campbell	Site of present Rancho Shopping Center.	Fruit/Vineyard
Spaulding	North of Fremont and El Monte.	
Griffin	West of Adobe Creek adjoining Taffee land.	Fruit
<u>Madigrm</u>	<u>Bounded on east by San Antonio Road.</u>	

Source: Eastman's "History of the Los Altos Area," from Memories of Los Altos, by John Salameda

In 1856, Louis Pellier introduced the Santa Clara Valley Prune in San Jose, beginning the fruit era in the valley. Although slow in its development, five and ten acre lots began being sold for fruit farms. By 1890, many of the small ranches were producing prunes, apricots, peaches, cherries, pears and other fruits at a large profit; for as much as two hundred dollars per acre.

The table below exemplifies the large growth in the number of smaller farms as the valley changed from a ranching to an orchard economy.

Number of Farms in Santa Clara Valley by Size

Year	<100 Acres	>100 Acres
1880	721	771
1890	1,470	750
1900	3,057	938
1910	3,096	825
1920	4,390	626
1930	5,616	621

Source: Lukes and Okihiro, Japanese Legacy

The Age of the Subdivision and Mass Transit

Change in land ownership by the turn-of-the-century in the Los Altos area began to have an impact on land usage and development. Some 700 acres of the Hafe Ranch were sold to the University of Santa Clara as a university site. By 1906, big ranches were sold off in smaller parcels of approximately 40 to 100 acres. Many of these lots were bought by professors from the newly formed Stanford University (1891) according to Eastman's account. Mrs. Winchester, the widow of the Winchester rifle manufacturer, purchased the present site of Los Altos.

At this time the relationship between mass transit and urban growth becomes important to Los Altos development. A brief history of the growth of transportation across the United States will shed light on the importance of transportation in the growth of Los Altos.

During the time of the Civil War, the United States was an essentially agricultural land of fewer than 34 million inhabitants. Only two of its cities had as many as half of a million citizens, and most of its people had never seen a railroad track or a three-story building.² By 1913, Henry Ford had introduced the assembly line automobile and the American nation had become the world's leading industrial power. New York was about to become the world's largest city and half of the United States population had become urban.³ The railroads played a large part in that development.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the bill authorizing the transcontinental railway. Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker formed the Central Pacific in order to build the western link. The Union Pacific was to build westward in order to connect the two lines. By 1865, Southern Pacific had been incorporated with the intention to build from San Francisco south to San Diego and then eastward. On May 10, 1869, the Golden Spike was driven in Promontory, Utah, meeting the Union Pacific and completing the transcontinental railway. In 1870, Southern Pacific came under the control of Hopkins, Huntington, Stanford, and Crocker. By 1885, The Big Four had merged all their interests into the Southern Pacific Company.

In 1890, when the federal government first canvassed the nation's street rail systems, it enumerated 5,700 miles of horsecar track, 500 miles for cable cars, and 1,260 miles for trolley. By 1893, more than 250 electric railways had been incorporated in the United States, and more than 60 percent of the nation's rail systems had been electrified. By the end of 1903, America's 30,000 miles of street

² Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*. 87

³ *Ibid*

railway was 98 percent electrified. By comparison, the recently invented automobile was slower to develop.⁴

The electric streetcar was crucial in opening up the suburbs for the common man. Traditionally, railroad suburbs had been for the elite. The introduction of improved street railway lines made possible a continuing outward expansion of the city. Kenneth Jackson describes the policy of land speculation that developed from this trend:

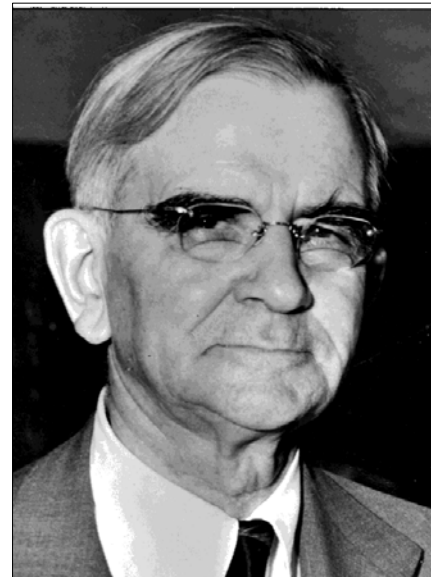
Two policies of streetcar entrepreneurs were especially important in facilitating the outward movement of population. The first was the practice of extending lines beyond the built-up portion of the city and into the open country. ...this had the practical effect of enabling heads of households to see that a convenient transportation mode would be available from their homesite. The second essential policy was the five-cent fare. ...American firms usually adopted a flat fee with fee transfers, thus encouraging families to move toward the cheaper land on the periphery.⁵

A Massachusetts Street Railway Commission noted in 1918: "It is a well-known fact that real estate served by adequate street railway facilities is more readily saleable and commands a higher price than real estate not so served."⁶ Cities such as Oakland and Los Angeles, California, and Washington, D.C. are all examples of large American urban areas that grew mainly because of land speculation efforts of transit tycoons.

Los Altos followed the same pattern as other larger cities. A typical scenario was that of a transportation official privately purchasing large tracts of undeveloped land and then subdividing the land after the development of a transit line. In Los Altos, Southern Pacific president, Paul Shoup, and his brother, Southern Pacific attorney, Guy Shoup, bought a right-of-way from Palo Alto through Los Altos to run a connecting line through Los Gates and points south.

On October 19, 1907, the Altos Land Company was incorporated with L. E. Petree as Secretary. The University Land Company was also incorporated on exactly the same day with Petree as Secretary. Paul Shoup served as a director of the Altos Land Company; there is no documentation showing the directors of the University Land Company. Both companies had as their objective the layout and subsequent sale of lots in the newly laid out town of Los Altos.

Prior to the land company incorporation, the San Jose-Los Gates Interurban Electric Railway Company had acquired



Paul Shoup, known as the "Father of Los Altos," was President of the Southern Pacific Railroad and founder of the Altos Land Company.
Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

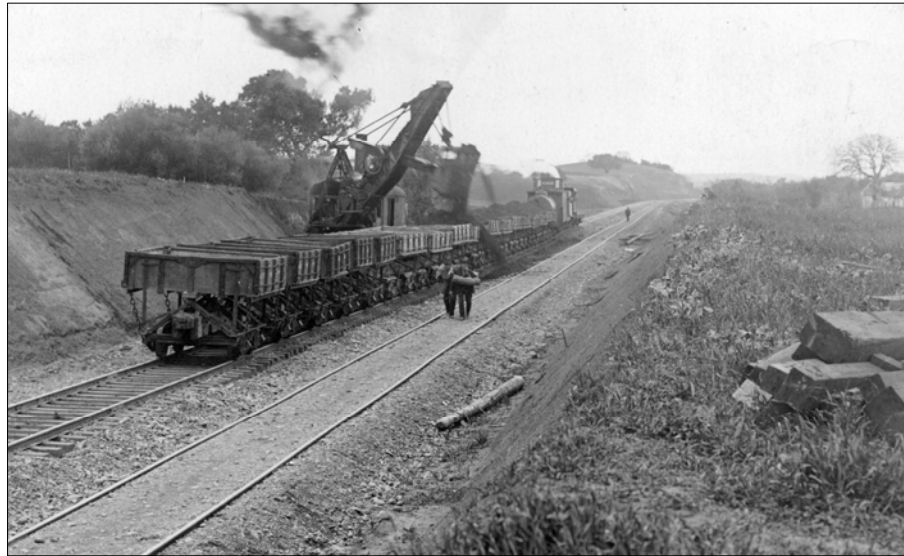
⁴ Jackson, 111

⁵ Jackson, 119

⁶ As quoted in Jackson, 120

100 acres of land from Sarah Winchester for the proposed route of the railway and townsite of what was then called “Banks and Braes.” The company was shortly thereafter acquired by Southern Pacific’s newly created subsidiary known as the Peninsular Railway with the stipulation that the Altos Land Company would lay out the lots for the townsite, and the town name changed to a Los Altos in 1907.

The Southern Pacific had already established its line from Mayfield through Los Altos and Saratoga on to the final destination of Santa Cruz. The Peninsular Railway, the suburban electric route, built its line from Mayfield to San Jose. According to McCaleb’s *Tracks, Tires and Wires*, the line was formally dedicated on April 12, 1908 when two Southern Pacific steam trains brought prospective lot buyers to a land sale and



The Mayfield-Los Gatos cut-off railroad line under construction in 1907. Train service along this line would start serving Los Altos in 1908.
Source: Los Altos History House Museum Archives

barbecue in Los Altos, Regular service was established on April 19, 1908 with five trains per day passing through Los Altos. With the establishment of this regular rail service, more families could move outward into the “country,” and many promotional brochures hailed this new lifestyle available to the middle-class. Lot prices ranged from \$400 to \$650 and homes could be built from \$2,000 to \$4,000. This era marks the beginning of small fruit farmers occupying 10 acre lots. With the movement of families to the Los Altos area, comes the development between 1910 and 1930 of many small subdivisions and the establishment of additional roadways. Up until this time, the El Camino Real, San Antonio Road and El Monte Road (Moody Road) served as major routes of transportation.

Up until 1913, the ticket office and train station for Los Altos was a boxcar setup along the tracks near the present day Safeway store. In 1913, the Architectural Bureau of Southern Pacific completed the new train depot at its present location. It was a Craftsman style building and a symbol of the beginning of the development of Los Altos. Without the arrival of the railroad, early land owners would probably still be affiliated with the older community of Mountain View, the source for all commercial and domestic activity (see Map One).

Growth and the Importance of Transportation

With the advent of the railroad to Los Altos, a town had begun to form. Shoup and the Altos Land Company had laid out the town plan and the promotion of Los Altos got into full swing. Businesses

had started; the first being the hardware store, the second the Shoup building. A dry good store and the Los Altos Water Company soon appeared in this “fast growing town of paved curved streets, lined with hitching posts every 25 feet.”⁷ According to Eastman’s “History of Los Altos,” by July of 1911 Los Altos had “boasted some fifty houses, the initial part of Sam Antonio School and an ‘unusually good water system... the water pipes of the best cast iron material that can be obtained... the water from two artesian wells 250 and 322 feet deep respectively.’”

Jackson’s account of the growth of the suburbs in America discusses the importance of infrastructure and transportation development for these new towns. Jackson explains the process in the subdivision:

Whether their subdivisions were large or small, real estate specialists were more active in the city building process than anyone else. The theory that the early suburbs grew, with owners “turning town paths and natural avenues of traffic into streets,” is erroneous. Subdividers lobbied with municipal governments to extend city services, they pressured streetcar companies to send tracks into developing sections, and they set the property lines for individual homes. Each city and most suburbs created from many small real-estate developments that reflected changing market conditions and local properties.⁸

Affordable transportation was also crucial to Los Altos’ success. According to Jackson, two important factors contribute to town development success: the quality and cost of housing and convenience, speed and cost of transportation. Generally, lower income groups have lived closer to urban centers due to the low cost of living. For the middle class, the importance of centrality decreases because of the sinking importance of transportation costs. The train fare in Los Altos was five cents.

Increased transportation in the form of the railroad opened up new markets in the East for farmers and other businesses in Los Altos and the Santa Clara Valley. In the early days of the Santa Clara Valley’s orchard economy, farmers relied on San Francisco for much of their business and support. San Jose soon replaced San Francisco’s role as a place to finance and sell the goods of the fruit industry. Farmers in the Los Altos area benefitted from the improved transit by having greater accessibility to both locations.

Transportation after the 1920s: The Growth of the Automobile.

In 1898, there was only one automobile in operation for every eighteen thousand Americans. The primary means of intraurban movement remained the electric trolley or streetcar and the railway. By the early 1920s, the rail system in Northern California was extensive. However, by 1925, Ford was turning out 9,000 cars per day, or one every ten seconds. The table below gives a better indication of how rapid the growth of the automobile was in the United States.

⁷ Eastman, “A History of Los Altos,” in Jose Salameda, Memories of Los Altos

⁸ Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 135.

Automobile and Truck Registration in the United States

Year	Automobiles	Trucks	Trucks:Cars
1905	80,000	1,400	1:55
1915	2,332,426	158,506	1:15
1925	17,481,001	2,569,734	1:7
1935	22,567,827	3,919,305	1:6
1945	25,793,493	5,079,802	1:5
1955	52,135,583	10,302,987	1:5
1975	106,713,000	25,755,700	1:4

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

With the growth in automobile usage in the United States, the need for improved roads became necessary. By the 1920s, a coalition of private-pressure groups, including tire manufacturers and dealers, parts suppliers, oil companies, service station owners, road builders, and land developers were lobbying for new streets. Road and highway building was viewed as a form of social and economic therapy, and merchants justified public financing on the theory that roadway improvements would pay for themselves by increasing property-tax revenues along the routes.⁹

Road building in the United States was primarily financed with the establishment of a gasoline tax in the early 1920s. The Depression of the 1930s helped build more roads throughout the nation because of the availability of state and federal funds that enabled employment of many workers in the road building effort. By the 1930s, the road system in the Santa Clara Valley and Los Altos had grown extensively. This growth continued throughout booming post-World War II years.

The 1920s saw the growth of the automobile suburb. Patterns of settlement began to change drastically as the use of the automobile became more common. The streetcar settlement was relatively compact with the best homes constructed within walking distance of rail transportation. The presence of the auto allowed tracks of land between rail centers to be developed. Los Altos was no exception to this pattern. The first subdivisions from the original town layout (such as the Los Altos Park Subdivision of 1925) were further from town. Although these subdivisions were laid out at the end of the 1920s, many were not built up until after the Depression of the 1930s.

By 1935, buses had begun to appear on San Jose's streets, replacing the streetcar as the preferred method of transportation. By 1933, the Peninsular Railway was beginning to substitute buses for railcars on all interurban routes. On June 12, 1935, the Peninsular Railway was legally disincorporated and its properties and assets were conveyed to its parent company, the Southern Pacific. Train service in Los Altos had stopped altogether by 1964.

Together with private sources, government subsidies helped to create a national system of interstate highways. One of the first completed interurban freeways in the United States was the Pasadena Freeway in Los Angeles. This innovation raised the value of Pasadena real estate to such an extent that developers and builders anxiously supported freeways elsewhere. The Bayshore Freeway that passes east of Los Altos in Palo Alto is the connection linking San Jose and San Francisco and was envisioned starting in the late 1920s. The final link was dedicated on June 12, 1937 with major construction into the late 1940s, starting a new direction in transit for the Santa Clara Valley. The

⁹ Ibid, 164

Bayshore further changed the patterns of settlement and working in Los Altos providing quicker access to jobs throughout the valley. In 1952, the town formally incorporated.

In 1977, The Southern Pacific Company asked the California Public Utilities Commission for permission to discontinue Peninsular Commuter service. In 1980, Caltrans agreed to take financial responsibility for the route and CalTrain was born. In October 1988, Rio Grande Industries, Inc. acquired Southern Pacific rail operations.

The Commuter and Los Altos

Los Altos is ideally situated between San Jose and San Francisco. Early promotional brochures advertise its proximity to these urban centers and their accessibility by rail. A 1946 Chamber of Commerce brochure heralds the location of Los Altos as being ideal and shows the importance of transportation to Los Altos.

“San Francisco is convenient by train, bus or motor car. The thriving industrial city of San Jose is fifteen miles to the south. Palo Alto, seat of Stanford University, lies six miles to the north. Shady, orchard-lined roads connect it directly with all Peninsula points and with busy Highway 101, the major west-coast thoroughfare. Three miles to the east stretch the salty waters of the bay, beyond which rears a rugged range of mountains extending to the north and south. The ugliness and tumult of the industrial world do not intrude on the serenity and beauty of Los Altos, although the greatest business and manufacturing centers of Northern California are within easy commuting distance, many residents gladly make the daily trip, finding adequate recompense in returning to the refreshing quiet, the clear air, and the fruitful greenery of the foothill country.”

In addition to the white collar workers who commuted to San Francisco, the rail lines and the roads that subsequently began developing from Los Altos' increased growth served an important function to the migrant worker that sustained the Santa Clara Valley's fruit economy. Worker and their families traveled throughout California depending on the crop that was being harvested or the fruit that was being canned. Better roads and increased rail lines helped them access the orchards.

PROFILE OF LOS ALTOS: 1907 TO 1930

Occupations

The following analysis is based on census data from 1910 and 1920. Los Altos during 1910 was a primarily agricultural town. Although this continued well into the 1930s, by 1920 the census showed an increase in white collar professions, a variety of business proprietors and their employees, clerical support positions, and more diversified blue collar workers.

Cooks and servants were a part of many large farm families. Many of the cooks were Japanese or Chinese men, the servants tended to be female and recent European immigrants. If the servants were male, they were primarily young Japanese “houseboys” that were common at this time. These large farm families generally had more children, a cook, and some hired men or general laborers included in their household. There is also evidence of many farm support professions in Los Altos, such as blacksmiths, tinsmiths, farm laborers, and machinists. The pre-Prohibition era is shown by the presence of vineyardists.

In 1910, Los Altos did have some white collar workers. A few university instructors lived in the town. There were many workers in administrative railroad support jobs such as ticketing agents or mail clerks. The make-up of the workforce had changed; sons of farmers were often listed as having jobs as clerks and housing carpenters instead of working in farming.

The evidence that the town was newly growing is seen in the number of building contractors, housing carpenters, and lumberyard workers. These professions were even more represented in the 1920 census that also showed the increase of real estate-related professions. In addition, 1920 showed the new importance of the automobile to the town with garage proprietors and oil station managers represented as part of the workforce.

In the 1910 and 1920 census, women were rarely listed as having an occupation. Those that did were often widowed or young unmarried women. These single women were often teachers, book writers, or clerical support staff.

Creativity was evident in early Los Altos; the town boasted a landscape artist, H. A. Straight, a handful of book writers (many female), a music teacher and a singer. Publishing house trades also appeared as early as 1910. Los Altos had the professional trades documented as well. Both attorneys and physicians lived in the downtown area.

Workers were obviously already commuting in 1910 to the San Francisco area. The representation of the professions such as tughead navigator, river steamer mate and a marine supervisor are all indicative of jobs away from Los Altos.

Shop proprietors of the machine shop, restaurant and the hardware store live in the downtown area of First and Second streets. This was a common pattern. El Monte Road and San Francisco Road remained relatively rural in 1920. Early businesses seemed to be related to farms or the growth of the new town.

The census showed that Los Altos' population had many interesting occupations. The 1910 census even lists two tramps in Los Altos. A 57 year old single male that is listed as a tramp cites the occupation of a laborer. Additional unusual professions include a book binder, a waiter, a linen good manufacturer, and a proof-reader. These occupations all show the diversity of the population.

Demographics

Los Altos in 1910 was home to one Indian (an Eskimo Indian from Alaska) who worked as a farm laborer. In 1920, a Indian woman was a live-in servant to a family and another Indian was an 85 year old farm laborer.

The 1910 census recorded no African Americans. In 1920, there were three African Americans listed, a widowed female fruit farmer and a real estate collector and his wife.

Immigrant populations in Los Altos changed drastically from 1910 to 1920. The 1910 census showed the Canadian and English as being the most numerous with the Germans, Irish, and Japanese not far behind. By 1920, the Japanese were by far the largest immigrant group with English, Germans and Canadians following. A major change between the two decades is the growth in immigrants from many different countries. Los Altos in 1920 had a population from countries almost everywhere between China and Alsace-Lorraine.

Immigrants from Italy and Portugal were not as numerous in Los Altos as in other parts of the Santa Clara Valley. This may be attributed to the fact that Italian and Portuguese communities were centered in San Jose or San Francisco, closer to the canneries that were the place of employment for many southern Europeans. Of the Los Altos southern Europeans, the majority worked in farm-related occupations and appeared to be instrumental in vineyard development in Los Altos.

Early Asian immigrants in Los Altos followed common patterns of migration. In 1910, there was only one family of Japanese in Los Altos; the remainders were single men. These single men were mainly servants, gardeners or cooks. By 1920, their family status and working patters had changed. Japanese farmers became a major presence in the Santa Clara Valley's landscape. Census data analysis from 1920 shows the Japanese as being the largest immigrant group in Los Altos (22 percent). Most Japanese that arrived to the United States came through San Francisco, so the journey to Los Altos and work in the numerous fruit orchards was not far. The Japanese in Los Altos in 1920 generally worked on fruit farms although the census does show one shop owner.

Most of these Japanese farmers leased their land because restrictive and discriminatory land legislation had made it difficult to own property. According to Greenburg's account of the orchard and canning economy of the Santa Clara Valley, each of the ethnic groups found strategies to participate in fruit growing based on their cultural traditions and the nature of their immigration patterns. While Japanese laborers used their strength as pickers and organized together under a boss and later leased land themselves, southern Europeans used their family structure and intensive agricultural techniques to combine working as laborers with their goal of farming some land of their own.

In conclusion, these early immigrants to Los Altos were vital to its growth. Often faced with economic hardships or discrimination, the immigrants joined together in order to achieve their goals

of land ownership and independence. Consequently, their growth in economic prosperity contributed to the formation of the town. In addition to their work on the farms, immigrants were instrumental in working on the railroad, beginning shops in Los Altos, and building its houses and commercial establishments.