

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lynnne Melena, BPA President

By the time you read this, the Barron Park Association (BPA) will have sponsored its fourth major event of the year—the annual Welcoming Party at Bol Park on September 7. About 200 people attend this event, which is coordinated every year by Board Member Gwen Luce.

The Welcoming Party introduces new neighbors to the rest of us—old timers and in-betweeners, while we enjoy Gary Breitbard and Jenna's "Side by Side" traditional song fest, have fun with Perry and Niner, our neighborhood donkeys, and indulge in six flavors of free ice cream. The usual 4 p.m. parent-child soccer game is the grand finale.

The other major events the BPA has sponsored this year were the annual meeting in February, the May Fete in May and the Green Tour in June. The next event is the holiday party on December 20 (see notice on page 14).

The Green Tour was new this year. We had 175 people sign up for the June 22nd tour and there were many others who dropped in at neighbors' houses when they saw the signs. Besides the 13 houses on the tour, there were nine commercial and non-profit vendors who set up their tables and tents at Bol Park. It was very festive, fun and informative.

Some of the homeowners on the Green Tour (featuring photovoltaic systems, gardens and energy efficient home design) said they

had many more visitors than when they had participated in citywide or countywide tours. That says a lot about the power of neighborhood associations to bring issues of global significance down to the grass roots level. Other neighborhoods are now interested in learning how we did it.

Thanks to the following Barron Park residents who joined my committee to make the Green Tour a success: David Coale, Mark Georgia, Gale Henshel, Tom Wagner and Jean Wren.

The membership of the Barron Park Board is too small to manage all of these events without help. We thank the residents who step forward year after year, but we need more volunteers to pitch in on these one-time events that are so important to maintaining the sense of community and the pride we have in our neighborhood. Please consider offering your help when you send in your membership form in the Spring.

Our greatest need right now is for a Membership Chair. Linda Elder, a Board member who has been handling all of your membership forms for the past 2 years, is ready to take on another Board job (see article on page 3). Managing our membership is critical to everything the Barron Park Association does—including mailing out this newsletter—and we thank Linda for keeping it running so smoothly.

## FRESA BOUTIQUE

(to occupy former Maytag location?)

by Hilary Grant-Valdez

Malika Parker (the incredibly successful former buyer for Leaf & Petal in Palo Alto) opened Fresa Boutique at the foot of Barron Avenue on El Camino last Spring.

Fresa proved to be a phenomenal hit with the community and shoppers from Mountain View, Los Altos, Palo Alto and Redwood City. The location, the clothing and accessories and the wonderful atmosphere were an instant success, and Fresa was immediately profitable. Malika sells hip and fashionable clothing that appeals to all ages. The store is always bustling with moms, grandmoms, teens, and even moms with toddlers because the owner is very welcoming, and the clothes and accessories are beautiful and affordable. I have never seen anyone walk out of there empty handed.

Fresa is temporarily closed, has chosen the Maytag dealership across the street to launch the re-opening, and is looking to lease the space as soon as possible.

Malika is an expert at renovating industrial locations and making the space and property beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. Fresa's presence on that block would certainly be a boost to Barron Park, to the community here, and to all of Palo Alto.

Please see: [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)

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# LIGHT BROWN APPLE MOTH UPDATE: Quarantine Zone Expands; State Deploys a New Strategy

By Sue Luttner

As the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) count inches upward on the peninsula, the state has expanded the quarantine boundaries. Our neighborhood is now part of an unbroken stretch of quarantine zone that runs from the foothills to the bay, from Los Gatos to San Francisco.

Until the quarantine is lifted, residents in affected areas are asked not to move plants or plant parts off their own property, which means no sharing of cuttings or bouquets with neighbors. The city treats all yard waste left for compost pick-up as potentially contaminated. Nurseries and florists are under strict inspection regimens, so commercial plants and flowers should be safe to transport.

The California Department of Food and



**The LBAM egg masses usually appear near a vein on a leaf.**

Agriculture tracks the spread of the LBAM, an Australian agricultural pest that's been spreading quickly in California, by monitoring baited traps. Fifteen

LBAM specimens were captured in Santa Clara County in August of 2008, bringing the count so far to 66 individuals in 2008. Our total for 2007 was 20.

Although our numbers are rising, our local infestation is minimal compared with areas like Santa Cruz County (19,000 total through the end of August, 2008) and San Francisco (9,742). The only abatement strategies the state has used so far in Santa Clara County are the quarantine and the deployment of pheromone-soaked

**Individual patches of quarantine zones have been consolidated into a large zone up and down and peninsula.**



**The damage is done by the feeding larvae. Note the white webbing produced when the larva is preparing to pupate.**

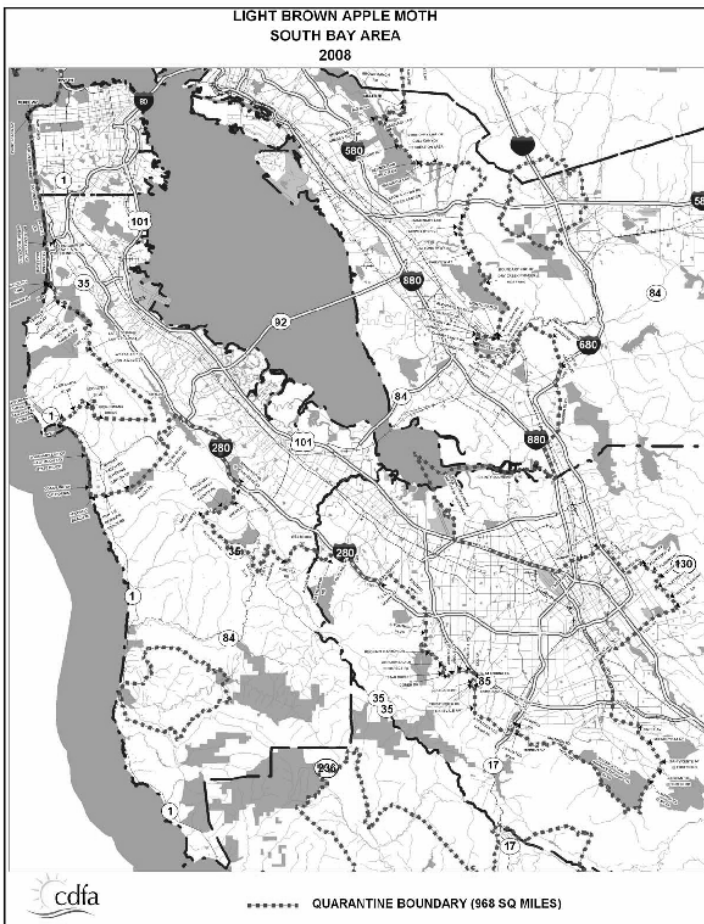
twist-ties, the latter in Cupertino only.

Inundated with protests about aerial spraying of insect hormones in Santa Cruz, the state has announced a new weapon in the fight against the invader, release of sterilized insects. The technique for raising sterile LBAMs, an adaptation of the technology developed to control the Mediterranean fruit fly in the 1970s, has been in development since the moth's detection in 2007.

The sterilized individuals, both males and females, will be released into heavily infested areas, where they're intended to distract the feral, fertile moths from successful mating. The first field-test releases of the sterile specimens are planned for the spring of 2009.

Some aerial spraying will continue, officials said, especially in forested areas, but the deployment of sterile insects will become the main weapon in the arsenal as soon as testing is complete.

For more information:  
<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/>



# Time to Step Up

By Linda Elder

We are grateful to all our members of the Barron Park Association! (If you are received this newsletter in the mail, you are a member.) Thanks to your support we can continue to have our delightful neighborhood events. These events come about because one or a few folks want to build a sense of community in Barron Park. I'd like to thank Gwen Luce, a Director on our Board who created and coordinated the recent Welcoming Gathering on Sunday, September 7th.

We are always looking for volunteers to step up and help out with events and other BPA activities. We appreciate any help at whatever level you can provide. However, now we are looking for someone to step up and become the new Membership Chair. After two years in this position, I am ready to move on. The Membership Chair is the member of the Board who keeps track of the membership which allows you to receive your newsletter and other important BPA mailings and serves on the Board.

Perhaps you are someone out there that thinks there is room for improvement. Involvement on the Board is the best way to make changes. The Membership Chair opening (along with a few other vacant positions), creates a strong need for your help and an opportunity to make some changes. Whether you like the ways we are building the community or see areas that need improvement, we invite you to consider volunteering your time and energy to the BPA Board.

Although I'm moving on, I'm not going very far. I've volunteered to become the BPA Secretary and I'm looking forward to serving the BPA in a new capacity. I hope to see a new face, serving as Membership Chair, soon. If you would like to find out more about what is involved, please contact me at [RLelder@pacbell.net](mailto:RLelder@pacbell.net) or the Board at [bpa-board@googlegroups.com](mailto:bpa-board@googlegroups.com) to let us know if you are interested. Thanks!

# Volunteers sought: Bol Park Bike Path beautification

By Doug Moran

An informal group of Barron Park residents is starting an effort to convert the area along the Bol Park bike path from predominantly weeds to native plants. The long-term goal is to make this visually a more attractive area, both the plants themselves and the wildlife they support (birds, butterflies, bees,...). There have been meetings and conversations with the City staff and they are enthusiastic supporters of the goals. However, much of the work will need to be done by volunteers.

This is a large undertaking—too much to do at one time—so the plan is pick a small segment that is manageable and will show results the first year and then expand as resources become available. I plan to announce a meeting on this in October or early November via the email list [BPA-news@googlegroups.com](mailto:BPA-news@googlegroups.com). If you aren't on that list and want to participate, send me your contact information (650-856-3302 or [dmoran@dougmoran.com](mailto:dmoran@dougmoran.com)).

We haven't decided on the initial target segment, but it will be somewhere between the Bol Park play structure and the Matadero Creek bridge. Its size will depend upon the volunteers available. Similar projects could be done on the segment of the path on School District property, but the District has been decidedly unresponsive to such proposals.

Our biggest need is for volunteers to manually weed the section to be reclaimed. The

goal is not to eliminate all the weeds, but to reduce them enough so that the area doesn't have to be mowed. Because the weeds grow fast and die young, they need to be mowed—for fire protection—before the natives have set seed and too late for them to recover. Experience has demonstrated that simply sowing native seeds will produce a good display the first year, with very little returning the next year.

We will be taking an unconventional approach to weeding such areas. Rather than one mass effort as the weeds mature, we want to have a series of individual and small group efforts throughout the winter—pulling weeds as they become identifiable. For example, if you take a daily walk along the path, consider committing to stopping once or twice a week and spending 5–10 minutes pulling weeds.

Underneath the bike path runs a bypass tunnel to carry away flood waters from Barron and Matadero Creeks. The construction project left a very hostile environment for plants: The soil was very compressed and some of it of low fertility. Compost would speed recovery, but it will need to be spread manually because there is a surprising amount of Purple Needlegrass in this area and we don't want to smother it. This and other native grasses are important "pioneer species." Purple Needlegrass can have roots that extend 20 feet deep and can live for hundreds of years. When well-established, it can out-compete weeds.

# Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!

All those who care about Perry and Niner seek to guarantee their proper on-going care and shelter, as well as to ensure that assets will be available for health concerns as the donkeys age. The handlers hope that those generous neighbors who have contributed in the past will consider increasing their support this year. Contributions for the donkeys' care may be sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA (Action



for a Sustainable Earth), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303. The check must be made out to "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund." All of the above must be included.

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Bob Frost, 493-8272 or email at [bobfrost34@yahoo.com](mailto:bobfrost34@yahoo.com).

# THE CREEKS OF BARRON PARK—PART TWO

By Douglas Graham, Barron Park Historian

## What this article covers

This article is part two in a planned series of four parts. In this part I will cover flooding in Barron Park from the 1940s through the 1973 Flood. I will also discuss the Barron Creek Flood Control Projects in the 1950s and 60s, including the undergrounding at Gunn H.S. and along Los Robles Avenue. Proposals for controlling flooding on Matadero Creek were also made in the 1950s and 60s and will be explained—including the proposal to put the creek in a straight concrete ditch through the neighborhood. The more modest proposals made after the 1973 Flood and the work that was finally done in 1978-79 will be discussed. The founding and subsequent actions of both the Barron Creek Committee and the Matadero Creek Committee will be covered briefly, as well as the eventual moves by the Barron Park Association Board to accept both committees, combine them, and take general responsibility for coordinating neighborhood action on creek concerns.

## Recap of Part One

In the summer 2008 issue of this newsletter, I wrote about the modern creeks, their watersheds and channels. I wrote about why Matadero Creek is always flowing (at least along some stretches) and how Barron Creek dries up each summer. Part One also covered the wildlife in the creeks, especially the passing of Pacific Tree Frogs that used to serenade us every night in the warm months of the year. A new map showed the “natural” vegetation patterns and creek channels of our land in the 1840s. Finally, Part One included a summary of the geological background of the creeks, the natural levees along their banks and the nature of the floodplain we live on.

## Flooding in Barron Park since 1853

Barron Park has probably experienced frequent flooding from both Matadero Creek and Barron Creek ever since the recorded history of Mayfield Farm began in 1853. However, I have not found any written records of floods from the days of Mayfield Farm and the Barron Estate. This may be partly because, in those days, flooding was usually considered a private problem and governments generally did not get involved.

Later on in the 1920s and 1930s, when our neighborhood was being subdivided into berry patches and orchards and the resident population was growing rapidly there were still no written reports of the creeks overbanking. There are only a few vague mentions of flooding, made in oral histories of seven old-timers taken by Ann Knopf in 1977. It would not be surprising to find out that there had been no floods at all in those years, for in general, northern California would not be so dry again until the bad drought of the late 1970s.

However the climate cycle turned wetter about 1940. We know that there was flooding in Barron Park starting in 1940, with a lot of references from the famous flood of 1955. Even a bare listing of the years when there was flooding is impressive; 1940, 1941, 1945, 1951, 1952, 1955 (December 22-26, “the flood of the century”), January 1956, 1958 (twice—March and April), February 1962, 1968, March 1973 and finally 1983 (twice—January and February). This is at least 14 flooding incidents in 44 years, or just about once every third year on the average. The April, 1956 report on Dry Creek (Barron Creek) refers to “particularly severe rainfall in storms of 1940, 1945 and 1955.”

## The Las Encinas Sanitary District (LESD)

From 1947 until annexation to Palo Alto in 1975, the Las Encinas Sanitary District (LESD) was responsible for both sanitary and storm water sewerage and garbage collection in Barron Park. This district had taxing authority, although it did not collect taxes after 1957 since all bonds had been paid off by then. Presumably garbage collection fees continued to be collected. The primary function after 1957 was to inspect and approve all new connections to the sewer system, and for that purpose it contracted with a local engineering firm, Jones, Thann and Associates. Under a 1950 agreement with the City of Palo Alto, the city maintained the system and was responsible for construction. The district also used the city’s sewage treatment plant under the same agreement. The district had a locally elected Board of Directors. For many years the Secretary of the Board

was Julius Rapp, who lived at 659 Los Robles. In 1958 the Board consisted of Jerome Peck, President, Robert Phillips, William Faulkerson, Donald Brooks and Rapp. It met monthly at Barron Park Elementary School. During this period it was, along with the Barron Park Fire Protection District, the only local government that we had in Barron Park. The last President of the LESD was Robert O’Connor of Josina Avenue, who turned the remaining assets over the City of Palo Alto in late 1955.

## LESD Asks for County Aid against Flooding

The LESD apparently communicated frequently with the county, asking for help with the flooding situation in Barron Park, particularly on Barron Creek. A July 1952 letter from LESD to the Santa Clara County Surveyor refers to Barron Creek flooding Barron Park “...on two occasions...last winter...The District Board has authorized the deepening of Dry Creek. The work should start almost immediately.” The project included the enlargement of the culvert at La Donna Avenue.

Another letter, in October 1953, discusses the problem of pooling of storm waters along ECR between Adobe and Matadero Creeks. Adobe Creek, which is the boundary between Palo Alto and Los Altos, flows under El Camino Real (ECR) at the Cabana Hotel. Matadero Creek flows under ECR at the Creekside Inn. In their letter, the district wrote that “The construction of the State Highway (ECR) with its raised elevation presents a barrier...storm waters therefore must dam along the ECR making it hazardous at road and street intersections. When excessive water develops, it floods business establishments located therein...” (i.e. in the Barron Park business strip). The letter suggested a large storm drain along ECR.

## The Flood of 1955

During the period from December 22 through 26, 1955, there was serious flooding throughout Northern California, most famously on the South Fork of Eel River where the lumber mill town of Scotia in Humboldt County was removed by the river, which briefly exceeded the average flow of the Mississippi. Locally many areas



**Flooding on El Camino Real, probably in the 1955 storm. The gas station now sells the Valero brand.**

of Palo Alto were flooded—all four creeks overflowed. There was flooding in Barron Park from both of our creeks, possibly several times. See the accompanying photo showing flooding on El Camino Real at the Barron Park Texaco Station (now Valero). Farther north on the Sacramento, Feather, Russian and Eel Rivers this was considered “The Flood of the Century.” It probably was in Barron Park also. In the Twentieth Century, only 1983 may have been worse, but that one had a very different flooding pattern because of the flood control work done after the 1955 flood.

### **Flooding from Matadero Creek**

I have been told that Matadero Creek over-banked at both bridges because of debris dams that formed in the culvert choke-points. I have interviewed long-term Barron Park residents Bob (Robert) O’Connor of Josina Avenue, Chris O’Connor Stafford of Matadero Avenue and former Barron Park residents Kellie O’Connor Gutman, with telephone input from former resident O’Mallie O’Connor Stoumen. They each told of their experiences in the 1955, 1958 and 1983 floods.

### **The O’Connors’ Reminiscences**

In the 1955 flood, Bob remembers looking out his front window, across his front yard and the width of Matadero Avenue and actually seeing the water in the creek. That’s when he realized that the creek was going to flood. This was about noon on that dark December day, and it was still pouring down hard. The kids had been released from Barron Park Elementary School that morning so that they could get to their homes before the streets were flooded too much.

Kellie, who was only 3 years old at the time, remembers riding in her Uncle Tommie’s truck to get sandbags and a dump

truck load of sand. There were five O’Connor girls, Chris, Kellie, JoJo, Pattie and O’Mallie. Chris O’Connor Stafford told me that she and her sister Kellie (the older two sisters) were excited at being out of school and they helped with the sandbagging. Chris was in second grade at the time.

### **Hundreds of Sandbags**

The family used hundreds of sandbags and made a wall along the street front of their property at 655 Josina. But the creek water was hitting the bridge bulwark on the opposite side of the creek and ricocheting directly at the O’Connor’s property. In spite of their best efforts, water was leaking through the sandbag wall and rising in the front yard. The creek was still rising and spilling over and it was still raining hard.

### **Rolling up the Rugs**

As it began to get dark, it was obvious that the water was going to rise high enough to flood the house. Everybody helped move things on top of furniture. They rolled up the rugs and put them on the tables. When the water started coming in the front door, they channeled it from the living room into the kitchen and let it out the side door. The water was real muddy and got 3-4 inches deep in the house.

The creek water was also coming around the house on both sides, so the back yard was soon a lake. It drained into the lot next door (towards El Camino Real) and the lot behind (towards Kendall Avenue). The neighbors were helping also, but the water was soon two feet deep even inside the sandbag-protected area. It is interesting to note that there was no sign of help or even presence of any government representative before, during or after this storm. It was after later floods that sandbags and sand were provided in Barron Park by the city.

### **The Aftermath**

The flood aftermath wasn’t much fun, either. Bob says: Did you ever try to get rid of 100 filled sandbags? The wet sand stuck to everything. Later, when he was washing the mud and goo off his driveway with his garden hose, he heard some people commenting “Look at that guy wasting water!”

The interior of the house was relatively undamaged. Luckily for the O’Connors, their interior walls are constructed of vertical redwood lumber—the soaking would have wrecked wallboard. The house had been built in 1949 by McCormick, for Eichler, as part of a test marketing scheme to see how homebuyers would react to contemporary design features. So, even though

the attractive house has a similar “look and feel”, it is not a true Eichler. It was one of the first houses built in Tract #533 along Josina Avenue—all of which were built in 1949 and 1950 by Eichler on land purchased from Cornelis and Josina Bol.

### **Flooding from Barron Creek**

In 1955, Barron Creek still flowed in an open, earthen-banked channel across the Stanford-owned pasture for Peers Dairy cattle (the future Gunn High School property) and then down the left (northwest side) of Los Robles Avenue all the way to El Camino Real. Please see the accompanying map of the December 22–26 flooding (Map 2 in this series). Barron Creek was bridged by the Southern Pacific Railroad where the Regional Bikepath is today, then by El Cerrito Road and by at least five private bridges between the cow pasture and the Laguna Avenue Bridge. Below there it was bridged by another street (La Donna Avenue) and “several dozen” private bridges carrying driveways.

### **Private Bridges Made Debris Dams**

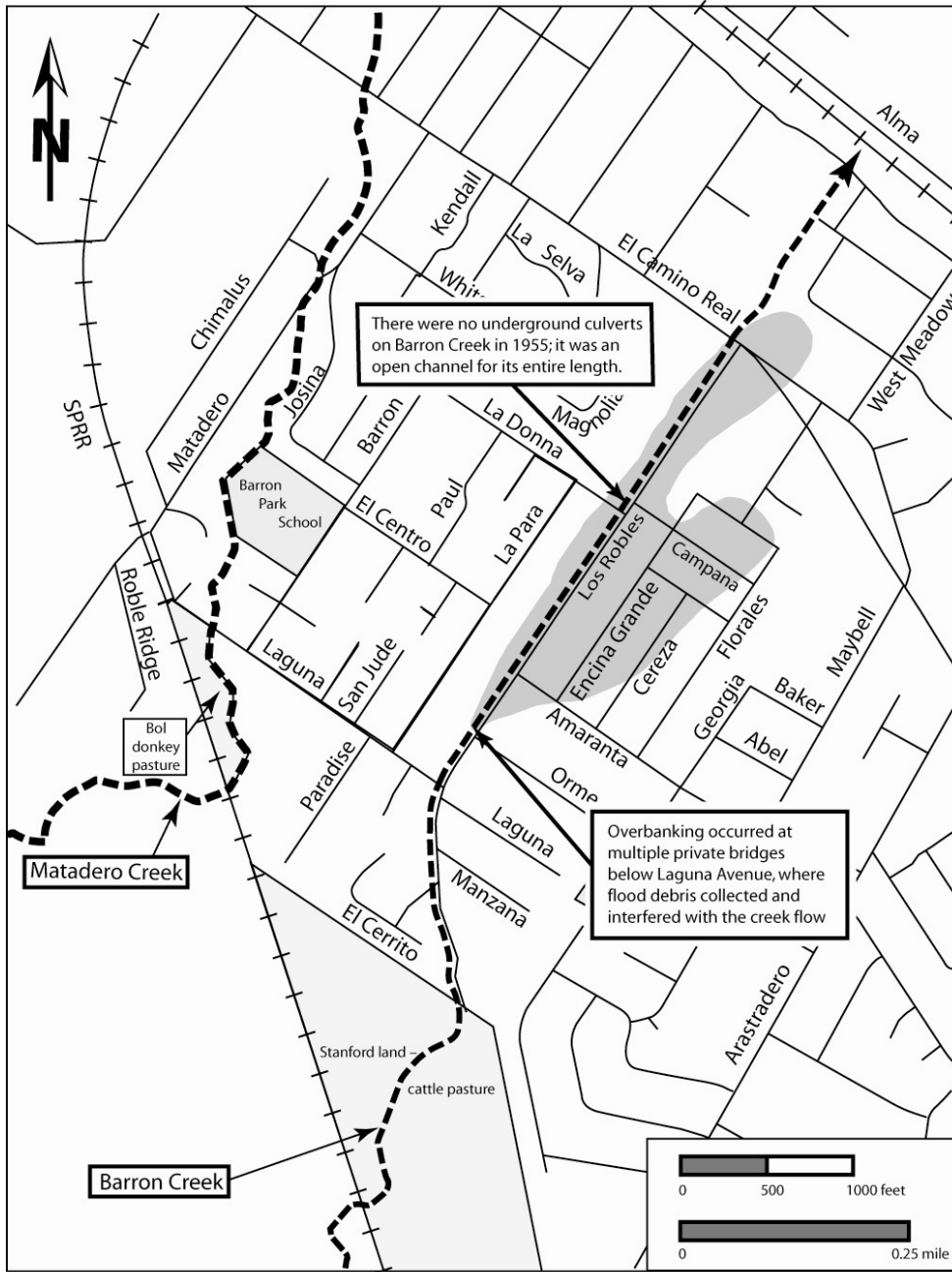
Barron Creek was a torrent, carrying brush, small trees and miscellaneous debris from its watershed up in the hills. The wooden driveway bridges, of varying designs, clearances and ages, acted as impromptu trash racks, catching the floating debris and forming dams. This caused the flood current to slow and rise, over-banking at many of the bridges. At least two bridges gave way under the strain, were carried away by the flood and their structural elements were added to the debris dams lower down. Thus many people who lived streets away from the creek got flooded and blamed the bridges for causing it.

### **Eleanor Rhoades’ Reminiscence**

Eleanor has lived in Barron Park since 1946, at first at 719 La Para and since 1955 at 845 Los Robles. She remembered that: “Everyone on the creek side of Los Robles had a bridge to their driveway. During a heavy storm, one of these bridges would sometimes collapse into the creek causing a flooding. Usually somewhere between Laguna and La Donna the water would flow toward La Para. It has flowed through our garage on La Para, and always seemed to enter the yard (and under the house) across the street.”

“We moved to Los Robles in November of 1955, after sanding and refinishing the hardwood floors, just in time for the 1955 flood. The water came up to the doorsill!

Map 2 – December 22–26, 1955 flooding in Barron Park



This map was adapted in 2008 by Doug Graham and Patrick Muffer from a map prepared in 1955 by the Santa Clara County Flood Control District for the City of Palo Alto. The County map probably under-reported Barron Park flooding significantly (Barron Park was not yet a part of Palo Alto and was sketchily served by County agencies at the time). The area shown flooded is inconsistent with memories of residents.

Of course it went under the house and flooded our floor furnace. The bridge across from us fell into the creek and formed a dam. My husband took his cutting torch across the creek and cut the bridge loose so the water could flow down the creek channel, but not before it found its usual channel over to La Para.”

**The Official Map of 1955 Flooding**

The map shows the area of flooding, as it

was officially recorded by the Santa Clara Food Control District for the City of Palo Alto. I have heard several stories from older residents who lived through the flood, however (in addition to the two reminiscences quoted herein), and I am convinced that this map is very incomplete. I have been told that debris in Matadero Creek dammed up and caused overflowing at both the Laguna Avenue and Matadero Avenue Bridges. There was

consequent flooding along Laguna, Matadero, Whitsell, Kendall, Barron and El Camino Real. In the mid-1950s, the County took little responsibility for Barron Park. The city also took little interest: we were in the middle of the 30-year “cold war” with the city over annexation. I doubt that either level of government took much care in recording our neighborhood’s problems.

**Government Responses after the 1955-56 Flooding**

However, after the flood the County began to respond to Barron Park residents’ complaints. The Barron Park and Maybelle Improvement Association worked with the Santa Clara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SCCFCWCD) to develop proposals for flood protection, particularly on Barron Creek (the district was later renamed the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the name that it still has today). The SCCFCWCD contracted with a consulting sanitary engineering firm in late December, 1955 to assess flood control needs for Barron and Matadero Creeks.

The Las Encinas Sanitary District also chimed in with letters indicating very heavy rains causing local flooding in December 1955 and January 1956.

The City also responded to complaints from its citizens in the neighborhoods downstream from Barron Park, and made proposals in April, 1956 covering only reaches below El Camino Real (i.e., not in Barron Park). They called for widening and deepening the straight ditch that existed, lining it with concrete and constructing larger culverts at street crossings.

**The Consulting Engineer Found Inadequacies**

The consulting engineer’s assessment was contained in a preliminary report to SCCFCWCD in April 1956. In the next two paragraphs the report has been paraphrased in part but quoted extensively. The verb tense has been changed for readability from present to past. To summarize, the assessment declared that;

The Barron Creek culvert at El Camino Real (ECR) was inadequate due to excessive siltation.

The “ditch” (open channel) along Los Robles Avenue from ECR up to Donna Avenue (La Donna) was barely adequate and subject to bank erosion.

The Donna Avenue culvert had an inadequate opening.

The ditch along Los Robles up to Laguna

Avenue was not adequate for the design flow (50-year flood) and was subject to erosion and slides. Existing driveway bridges obstructed the flow.

The Laguna Avenue culvert was inadequate. (The existing channel from Laguna Avenue up to the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) was generally adequate but meanders caused erosion, existing bridges obstructed flow and there were fallen trees and debris in the ditch.

The culvert under the SPRR was inadequate.

The assessment also covered Matadero Creek. It stated that;

The ECR culvert was adequate.

The channel from ECR to the Matadero Avenue Bridge meandered and was subject to bank erosion, silt deposition and sloughing, while obstructions caused by trees growing from the banks, fallen trees, debris and (private) bridges blocked flow and caused flooding.

The Matadero Avenue Bridge was adequate for design flows (50-year flood).

From the Matadero Avenue Bridge to the Laguna Avenue Bridge, the channel meandered and had an irregular cross-section, some spots were inadequate (for the design flow), it was subject to bank erosion and sloughing, debris traps were caused by trees growing from the banks or fallen trees which blocked the channel and caused overflowing.

The Laguna Avenue Bridge was adequate to carry the 50-year flood.

From Laguna Avenue to the SPRR (the stretch that currently flows past Bol Park), a very meandering channel was adequate for flow but subject to erosion and sloughing, with trees growing from the banks, fallen trees and debris and silt deposits retarding the flow.

SPRR culvert was adequate (this is where the Regional Bikepath Bridge, flood control confluence structure and entrance to the bypass tunnel are now located, by the donkey pasture).

### **The Key Finding for Matadero Creek**

The key finding that roused the neighborhood concerned the stretch between the two street bridges (item 4 above). The report went on to say that the channel was located approximately midway between several residential streets and was bordered by the back of residential lots. The banks were overgrown with trees and

shrubby. These back yard areas had been extensively developed in the form of patios and outdoor living areas. Many of the trees which grew in the creek banks obstructed the channel flow, causing erosion and sloughing of the banks during storm periods. As bank erosion has progressed, many of these trees have fallen into the stream damming long reaches of the channel with attendant flooding. In attempts to alleviate these problems, many residents have attempted to stabilize channel slopes with various forms of retaining walls, bulkheads and protective features. These have served, in many cases, merely to shift the locale of the bank erosion and to increase the rate of bank deterioration.

(Historian's comment; these characteristics of the creek channel were the expression of its semi-natural state and constituted a major part of the esthetic appeal that endeared Matadero Creek to the creek bank homeowners and other residents of Barron Park.)

### **Findings Lead to Concrete Proposals**

For Barron Creek, the engineer's proposal was to build an open concrete channel from the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) through the Stanford cow pasture and Barron Park to ECR (the SPRR ran where the Regional Bikepath runs today). A more costly alternative, mentioned and then dismissed due to cost, was "the installation of underground pipes or culverts along Barron Creek..." This alternative, however, was the one eventually selected and carried out, as the reader will discover later in this article.

For Matadero Creek, the proposal was that, "...that portion of Matadero Creek between the (railroad) right-of-way and ECR be cleared of trees and brush which mitigate (sic) against the unimpeded flow of water, and that the channel be lined with concrete..." Street bridges were to be "...improved and transitions at them to aid in smooth flow characteristics have been designed. "Sharp bends in the existing channel (will be) eliminated, and rectification of the channel and confinement of the bank to a uniform, adequate cross-section is contemplated...a ten-foot service or maintenance road (will be) acquired on the westerly side of the channel..." (in the area where Bol Park is today).

(Historian's comment; this was the proposal that really roused the neighborhood in 1956. Barron Parkers proved willing to fight to keep many of the very features—meanders, trees on the banks and in some

cases, old retaining walls that protected lushly landscaped terraces—which the engineers identified as problems.)

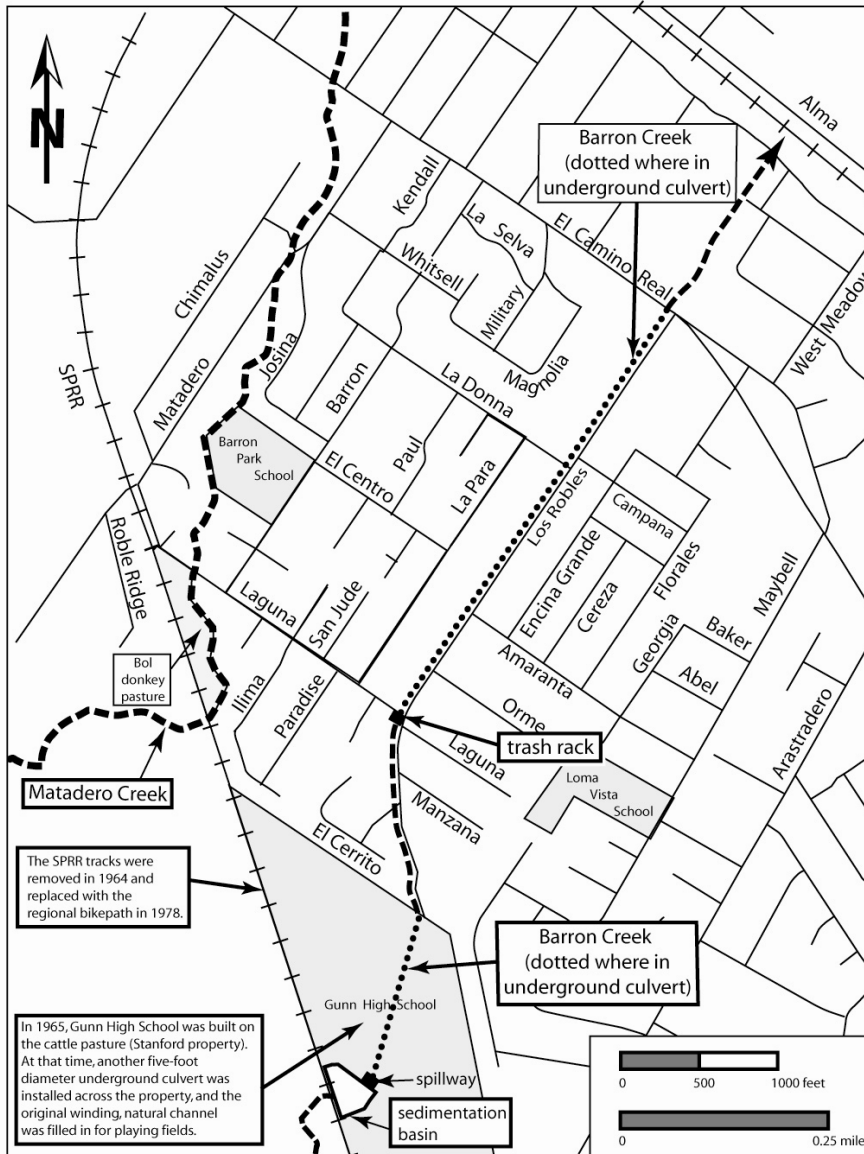
### **Dam Matadero Creek!**

The engineers considered the feasibility of providing one or more retention dams in the upper reaches of Matadero Creek in order to reduce the magnitude of peak flows. Certain high value lands would need to be acquired and extensive relocation of (Old) Page Mill Road would also be a necessity. (This was before the construction of Page Mill Expressway). A preliminary estimate showed that the costs of land acquisition and highway relocation would far exceed any savings brought about by the diversion of Barron into Matadero Creek."

The proposal for a dam continued to beguile Barron Park citizens for quite some time. The Barron Park and Maybelle Improvement Association wrote a letter in August, 1956 in which they foresaw the proposed dam as providing water supply, recreation and flood control. In September, 1956 they wrote another letter supporting the idea of building a "water conservation dam and a reservoir in the upper reaches of Matadero Creek" rather than widening the creek channel in Barron Park or Palo Alto.

Evidently this letter and other communications convinced the SSCFC&WCD to contract for a formal feasibility study. The consulting engineers' proposal contained in the study report in March, 1957 was for a 90-foot high flood control dam and 1500 acre-foot reservoir on Matadero Creek. The dam crest elevation was to be 250 feet above sea level. Study of the Palo Alto USGS topographic map quadrangle reveals that the dam would have located on Old Page Mill Road where the creek crosses the 160-foot contour line, about 500 yards south (west) of the road intersection with the current Page Mill Expressway near Junipero Serra Boulevard. This is just before the creek comes out from its small canyon between Stanford's Radio Telescope Hill and the ridge between upper Matadero and Purissima Creeks (see the watershed map accompanying Part One of this article). The 68-acre reservoir would have flooded the creek canyon where Old Page Mill Road runs, and the valley where the I-280 interchange with Page Mill Expressway was built later. Arms of the reservoir would have extended up both Arastradero and upper Matadero Creeks. The total cost was to be \$2.7 million. The SSCFC&WCD transmitted a copy of the

Map 3 – Barron Creek Flood Control Project, 1958–1965



In the autumn of 1958, the P&E Construction Company, contractor for the Santa Clara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, built a flood control project on Barron Creek. From Laguna Avenue down to El Camino Real, they removed private bridges, excavated the open channel deeper, laid a concrete pipe five feet in diameter, and replaced fill to the level of Los Robles Avenue and adjoining private properties. In early 1959, they constructed a "retention" basin at the SPRR tracks, now known as a sedimentation basin.

This map was adapted in 2008 by Patrick Muffler and Doug Graham from a Santa Clara Valley Water District map.

study to President J.L. Silvey of the neighborhood association.

**Barron Creek was to be Buried**

Meanwhile, communications between the SCCFC&WCD, the City of Palo Alto, the LESD and the Barron Park-Maybelle Improvement Association were gradually leading to a consensus decision to solve the flooding problem on Barron Creek by burying it. In October, 1958 a soils test report indicated that Barron Park soils were too corrosive to use steel pipe for the culvert; concrete or copper alloy would be necessary. The decision was to go with

concrete. It was also decided to build a dam, spillway and "retention" basin at the SPRR tracks.

The design flow for the project was the 50-year flood, which has a 2% probability of occurring in any one year. This was a critical decision which had unfortunate ramifications for the future, particularly since it the magnitude of the 2% flood turned out to be grossly underestimated.

**Undergrounding Barron Creek along Los Robles, 1958–59**

The contract was signed September 22, 1958. Construction started immediately

and all the work was completed during the autumn. See the accompanying map of the Barron Creek Flood Control project, 1958, Map 3 of the series. There were three main parts to the project. From the upstream end, they were;

A new railroad bridge that would allow more water to flow under it. It is ironic that only two and one half years later, the railroad received ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) permission to abandon the tracks from Alta Mesa Cemetery to Cupertino, so that the state could use the right-of-way to construct Foothill Expressway.

A retention basin on both sides of the tracks. A dam, a culvert entrance with trash straining rack, and a spillway were built in the Stanford cow pasture below the tracks. The description of the basin was later changed to "sedimentation basin" to more accurately reflect its true purpose; which was to cause sediment to settle out before the flow entered the underground culvert. The trash rack caught and retained the floating debris. The concrete spillway was to allow flood waters in excess of the design flow to overflow without damaging the dam.

The channelized creek from Laguna Avenue down to El Camino was cleared of vegetation and the private bridges were removed. The channel was deepened and a five-foot diameter concrete culvert was laid in it and covered over. The accompanying photographs (pages 9 and 10) show this work being done along Los Robles Avenue near the Buena Vista Trailer Park. A trash rack was installed on the culvert entrance at Laguna Avenue.

The Barron Creek work was accepted as complete on January 24, 1959. In parallel with this work, the LESD had overseen the relocation of house sewer laterals and the construction of a new sanitary sewer down Los Robles Avenue under contract by the City of Palo Alto.

**Where is the Creek Now?**

As was noted in Part 1 of this article, you cannot see Barron Creek from Laguna Avenue to El Camino Real because it is in the five-foot diameter cement pipe that was buried in 1958. It runs along the north side of Los Robles Avenue in the space between the street trees and the front-yard fences and hedges. This narrow strip of open space is an easement to the Santa Clara Valley Water District. It has about 13 storm drains (by my count on the city storm drain map) that empty into the buried stretch. I





**Previous entrance to the culvert under El Camino Real when Barron Creek was still an open ditch along Los Robles Avenue. Fall 1958.**

have been told that each storm drain is equipped with a flap valve to prevent the culvert, when full, from backing storm water up through the storm drains.

### **Matadero Creek Issues**

Meanwhile, progress on the Matadero Creek proposals was slowing as more problems were uncovered and neighborhood resistance grew. The SCCFC&WCD wanted to straighten the channel along the 600 block of Matadero Avenue (from the avenue bridge down to Whitsell Street), but the Palo Alto city emergency well was in the way. The city had acquired the well and pumping station when it bought the private Barron Park (Bol) Water Company in 1953, and had just finished upgrading them to serve as key elements in the city's emergency backup water supply in the event of damage to the Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct. The city wasn't about to give this up merely to eliminate a small meander in the creek—and the Barron Park neighbors didn't want the creek concreted, anyway.

### **Remove 166 Trees?**

The real kicker, though, was the publication of the "Tree Removal Schedule" in February, 1957, for Matadero Creek "improvement" from the SPRR (now the Regional Bikepath) to ECR. This included 138 oaks with five- to sixty-inch diameters, and 28 other trees. I believe that this was the proposal that provided the necessary impetus to crystallize the neighborhood opposition.

### **A Diverting Proposal**

By early 1958, the SCCFC&WCD had clearly dropped both the dam and the straight-line concrete ditch proposals for Matadero

Creek in Barron Park. But the pressure was still on to do something about the repeated flooding, and the correspondence was flying back and forth. The Las Encinas Sanitary District (LESD) wrote letters in April reporting the "recent flood" and told that they had provided sandbags and sand for both "Dry Creek" (Barron Creek) and Matadero Creek. (There actually were two floods—one in March and another in April). In May they wrote again complaining about flooding in the recent past.

On May 10, 1958 the SCCFC&WCD wrote John Silvey, the Barron Park-Maybelle Improvement Association President, in reply to a letter from Silvey that apparently requested details of their planning for Matadero Creek. They wrote: "The plans encompass a diversion at the Southern Pacific Railroad, diverting the water on the westerly (upstream) side of the railroad right of way, to the Stanford Ditch (a tributary of Matadero Creek that was channelized along the boundary of the Stanford Research Park, behind the houses on the north side of Chimalus Avenue), thence down the Stanford Ditch to El Camino Real and back into Matadero Creek at the Flamingo Motel (now the Creekside Inn). The channel is proposed to be lined throughout its length and carry from one-third to one-half the flood flow of Matadero Creek, with the remainder going down the natural channel." This sounds functionally similar but esthetically inferior to the solution that was finally designed after the flood of 1983, built during the Nineties and completed in 2006.

In August, 1958, the SCCFC&WCD signed a contract for "improvements" on Matadero Creek below ECR for a concrete-lined channel from Lambert Street (across ECR from Barron Park) to the Bayshore Highway (this was before the freeway was built). Interest in "fixing" Matadero Creek in Barron Park diminished somewhat during the relatively dry years of 1959 through 1961.

### **More Problems with Barron Creek**

Let us return to the problems associated with Barron Creek. In December, 1958, the LESD wrote the SCCFC&WD again about Barron Creek—this time asking for cleanout of debris on "upper Barron Creek." Since this was after the construction of the sedimentation basin, I speculate that they meant the open-channel stretch from Laguna Avenue up to the Stanford cow pasture.

In 1959, communication between the Bar-

ron Park neighbors and the various government agencies concerned with Barron Creek got more complicated, because part of Barron Park "seceded" and annexed to the City of Palo Alto in the "Foothills #2" annexation. This included the area west of Amaranta Avenue and South of Shauna Lane and Paradise Lane—in other words, the mini-neighborhoods branching off Barron Creek above Laguna Avenue, plus Laguna Way, Orme Street and the west side of Amaranta. So now the County and City had two "Barron Parks" to deal with—one in the city and one still out. The area I just described, plus the area around Loma Vista School (now Juana Briones School) began calling itself the "Loma Vista" neighborhood and there was even a neighborhood association that lasted until the rest of Barron Park joined the city. Because this neighborhood was now a part of the city, the LESD lost jurisdiction over it.

### **The LESD Declines Responsibility**

In 1960, the LESD wrote a letter to the SCCFC&WCD indicating that the LESD "formerly hired a man to watch for jamming of debris at this point (the Laguna Avenue trash rack); however, this place is now a part of the City of Palo Alto and the hazard is no longer in the district." Be that as it may, almost all the area downstream from this chokepoint was still a part of Barron Park and in the LESD. The district's stand, declining responsibility, was soon to be highlighted by another twist in the ever-changing weather picture.

### **The Flood of 1962**

In February, 1962, there was another flood, the trash rack was for the first time the major scene of overbanking and a considerable area of Barron Park (and of the LESD) was once again flooded—just a little over 3 years after the problem had been "fixed"! This occurred even though the flood flow was much smaller than the calculated magnitude of the 2% design flood, and so, in theory, should have been accommodated nicely by the culvert. So the clamor arose to do something about it, and March found the LESD writing another letter, virtually a copy of their 1960 disclaimer.

### **Matadero Creek Anti-Erosion Work, 1960**

Meanwhile, residential development of the remaining pockets of open land in Barron Park had been proceeding forward rapidly. In 1960, Doug Couch laid out Ilima Way, McGregor Way and lots for 24 new homes, a development which he named "McGre-



**Deepening the creek channel to enable emplacement of the culvert alongside the Buena Vista Trailer Park, Fall 1958.**



**Pipe laid in trench. The building in the background was in the BV Trailer Park. Fall 1958.**



**Excavation machinery on Los Robles by the McElroy Lumber Yard across from the BV. Fall 1958.**

gor Glen." Five of the home lots backed on to Matadero Creek, from the old railroad bridge (where the Bikepath bridge is today) to 960 Ilima Way. The creek had been eroding both banks of its channel below the bridge, particularly at 996, 984 and 972 Ilima Way. (Note: 984 has been my home since 1973).

### **Oregon Street comes to Ilima Way**

In order to protect the houses he planned to build on that stretch of the creek, Couch made arrangements with the City of Palo Alto for rip-rap materials. The city was in the process of removing Oregon Street to build Oregon Expressway, and they had lots of material to get rid of. They dumped large quantities of very large, irregularly-shaped chunks of reinforced concrete on our banks. They apparently thought that they had thereby solved the erosion problem. Some of these chunks were as large as 6x4x3 feet, and contained nearly 3 cubic yards of age-hardened reinforced concrete. There was no effort made to tie the blocks together into a single unit. I presume that the weight of the blocks was considered sufficient to make them immovable by the creek. I do not know if the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD), which has jurisdiction over all stream channels in the county, was consulted on this action, or not. If they were, I'm surprised they let such a haphazard job be done.

### **Erosion from the Flood of 1962**

Construction proceeded on McGregor Glen and before the end of 1961 all 24 houses were built and occupied by the initial owners. At 996, the new owner had installed an in-the-ground swimming pool in the relatively narrow space between his house and

the creek bank, which was very steep and about 12 feet deep along this entire stretch. When the flood of 1962 came, the bottleneck formed by the railroad bridge abutments (which were closer together than those of the current bridge) acted as a hose nozzle does, and aimed the full force of the accelerated stream against the bank at 996 and 984. The force of the water undercut the lower concrete blocks and they began shifting in the flow. This brought some of the upper blocks tumbling down, exposing the original soil and creek gravel banks, which provided almost no resistance to the accelerated flow. The new swimming pool at 996 was severely undercut and left hanging, as were parts of its surrounding patio and some of the creek-side fence on both properties.

Although damage in Barron Park was not widespread from the flood of February 1962 that was small consolation for who were affected. To quote from a March 6, 1962 letter in the SCVWD files from the neighbor whose pool was undercut at 996 Ilima Way; "This letter is...an appeal for...assistance from your District in controlling the erosion of my property located on Matadero Creek in Barron Park...The property backs on Matadero Creek and because of the recent high water a large part of my back yard is now either in East Palo Alto or enroute thereto. Ordinarily, I would not like to ask for assistance, but I now consider this situation to be bordering on an "imminent danger" basis, particularly if this area continues to receive more rain."

I do not know if anything was done to correct the bank situation, but I doubt it because when I moved in eleven years later, the pool next door was shored up by

a wood frame structure and a wooden deck covered the area that had been a patio. Some of the blocks from my property were down in the middle of the channel, partially blocking it. I will cover the mini-flood of 1974 and the formation of the Creekbank Owners Committee in Part Three of this article.

### **Exacerbating a Meander**

When the full force of the creek would come shooting through the railroad bridge "nozzle" during floods, and impact on the right bank below the bridge as discussed above, there were additional consequences. The water would then rebound from the right bank, swing across and impact the left bank farther down. The left bank erosion began opposite 984 and continued down past 972 Ilima. Streams and rivers do this naturally, developing curves and meanders. The railroad bridge was merely exacerbating the growth of an already-developed meander.

### **Bol Park Construction, 1972-73**

When Bol Park was planned, the state of Matadero Creek's left bank from the railroad bridge down to Laguna Avenue had to be carefully considered. The plans included provisions for anti-erosion rip-rap on the left bank in several spots, one being the area mentioned above. The Creekbank work was planned and executed by the SCVWD and consisted of sandbags filled with wet concrete. This method does not look pretty but is cheap and easy to install and it holds together well over time. In Part Four of this article, I will cover the later installation of wire-basket riprap below the Bikepath Bridge, a superior solution.

The water district also constructed the ramp that leads from the undeveloped part of Bol Park down into the creek bed, which allows the district to move machinery into the creek when necessary for vegetation removal or other maintenance operations. They approved the construction of the steps that lead down from the developed portion of the park into the creek bed for access to the creek by the general citizenry. When you use those steps, please remember that the Creekbank opposite the park is privately owned by eleven separate homeowners and should not be trespassed upon.

**The Cow Pasture Becomes a High School**

In the early sixties, the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) was still expanding. With about 8,000 students, two high schools (Palo Alto and Cubberley) weren't enough, and there was no open space left in the city for a third high school. However, the district successfully negotiated with Stanford University, to acquire the cattle pasture crossed by Barron Creek as the site for the planned school, which was to be named for Henry Gunn, the former Superintendent who had guided PAUSD's tremendous growth.

Land preparation for construction began in 1963 with the leveling of a small knoll

located southeast of Strawberry Hill, just where the district wanted to build the football and track stadium. If you look at Map 3, this knoll was located where the word "Gunn" occurs in the label Gunn High School. The district also wanted the creek underground and the existing creek channel filled in so that playing fields could be built there.

**Barron Creek Buried Under Gunn Playing Fields**

Therefore, a five-foot diameter concrete pipe was laid in a new trench on a straight line from the culvert entrance to the spot at the end of Los Robles Avenue where the open creek channel left the Stanford lands and entered Barron Park. The meandering natural creek channel was cleared of vegetation and partially filled with the dirt left over from the new trench and finished with spoil from the knoll being removed. A slight swale was left in the vicinity of the filled-in natural channel, running from the spillway to the open channel at Los Robles Avenue. This was meant to handle any flood overflow that couldn't fit in the five-foot culvert. The culvert was calculated to be more than adequate for the fifty year flood (the 2% probability flood). All the construction was finished and the school opened for students in the fall of 1964.

In January of 1964, the last train ran on the Southern Pacific tracks and shortly thereafter they were removed and Foothill Expressway was constructed. The bridges were left standing and eventually used for the Regional Bikepath (which was built in 1977-78).

**Part 3 of the Story in the Next Issue**

I hope you have enjoyed this part of the story of the creeks of Barron Park in the 1950s and 60s. The next issue of this newsletter will pick up the story with the 1973 flood. The consequent formation of the Barron Creek Committee and the Matadero Creek Committee and their subsequent merger and absorption by the BPA Board will be discussed. The article will cover the extensive anti-erosion and culvert-widening work on Matadero Creek in the 1970s, and the severe pollution of Matadero Creek by the VA Hospital in 1982. Most importantly it will cover the damaging flood of 1983 and the extensive work done by the BPA in the mid- and late-1980s to obtain approval for the flood control project that has finally ended the threat of regular flooding in Barron Park. The construction of that project will be covered in Part 4, which will bring us up to the current time.

A 300-year-old oak tree on La Donna recently toppled, injuring no persons or property—only a few hearts. To the right is a poem written by a young piano student, and a few words from the former tree's owner.

"A sad day for me was the first Saturday of April at 8:30 p.m. That's the evening my oak fell down. It was a calm evening and it had looked so healthy, so why?"

"Nearly fifty years I shared my life with the three-hundred-year-old oak that shaded my yard. This year's acorns were the largest I've ever seen.

"My family has memories of their mar-



riage, birthday celebrations, games and looking up to see the artistic way the limbs interlocked.

"I loved my tree even though it wasn't really mine because I think of an old tree in the neighborhood as a common asset that is not so much owned by anyone but shared by all." —Alice Prender, 2008

**ODE TO AN OAK**

You splendid tree,  
Majestic is all I can say  
Your branches were lords of the sky  
The tips of your fingers  
Could tickle the belly of the clouds

Amazing, Majestic,  
That's all I can say  
Supreme, Commanding,  
The King of all trees

You were firm and dependable  
A watchful eye...

Which is why  
We grieve for you right now

—by Grace (age 10)

# Barron Park's Special Street Design Guidelines

By Art Liberman with contributions by Bob Moss and Lynnne Melena

Residents who have recently moved into Barron Park may be unaware of the history underlying the appearance of the streets in our neighborhood. Old timers, those who were here before Barron Park became part of Palo Alto, take this look for granted. The special look of our streets is the result of a promise the City Council made when Barron Park was incorporated into the city in 1975. The promise was to preserve the semi-rural character of our neighborhood,<sup>1</sup> and that curbs, gutters and sidewalks would never be imposed on the community. This promise was a key factor in convincing voters to approve the annexation of Barron Park to Palo Alto.

Instead of curbs and sidewalks, strips of land of irregular width border most of our streets. Property owners might consider the strips in front of their homes an extension of their property, but this is not the case. They are a legal part of the public right-of-way and are owned by the city (or controlled by the city through an easement).

The strips of land are a part of the area acquired for street purposes when the individual lots were subdivided many years ago. These strips were meant to be available for on-street parking and sidewalks, but the County did not require these kinds of improvements (in most places) at the time Barron Park was being developed. When Barron Park was annexed, the city assumed ownership of the public right-of-way, including these strips, from the county.



“encroachments.” A “Construction in the Public Street” permit is required whenever work will be done which will break the surface of the ground<sup>3</sup>. A permit for paving must be obtained by the resident or the licensed contractor performing the work. Paving with asphalt or permeable blocks is allowed, but not solid Portland cement concrete<sup>4</sup>. Maintenance of the paving is the responsibility of the property owner.

The city prefers that homeowners use gravel or asphalt in the right-of-way rather than permeable pavers. They conform more easily to the contours of the drainage pattern along the side of the street and tie more easily into the rough edge of street pavement. However, many residents have installed permeable pavers in their driveway, which sometimes extend into the right-of-way. Permeable pavers, if installed properly, reduce the amount of runoff after a storm, but they are often installed on compacted baserock instead of gravel, so the water can't really soak in. Also, some contractors install concrete curbs along the

## Individual Street Frontage

Over time, property owners have customized the right-of-way in front of their homes. Some residents have cultivated bushes or planted trees. Any trees in the right-of-way are “street trees” and, if requested, the city will plant street trees in the right-of-way in front of a resident's homes free of charge.<sup>2</sup> However most residents have covered the right-of-way with gravel or asphalt and many use this space for parking their cars.

Before a resident undertakes any work in the right-of-way, the city, as owner of the land, should be consulted. These improvements have the potential to alter the drainage patterns along the edge of the street and cause ponding during periods of heavy rainfall, which can, in turn, create hazards and undermine the pavement.

Technically, any private improvements within the public right-of-way are

## BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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1 Letter to “New Residents of Palo Alto,” Mayor Stanley R. Norton, November 12, 1975.

2 “Street Tree Removal and Installation Procedure”, Palo Alto Public Works Engineering Memo, 12/16/04.

3 “Street Work Permits,” Palo Alto Public Works Engineering Memo, 1/15/2002. Information on these and other permits can be found on the City of Palo Alto website: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pwd/forms\\_permits.asp](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pwd/forms_permits.asp)

4 “Paving of Parking Areas Adjacent to Edge of Pavement in Unimproved Street Areas,” Palo Alto Public Works Engineering Memo, 9/19/2002

5 Staff Report, “Barron Park Drainage and Street Design Guidelines, CIP 47704”, CMR 542:92

6 “Barron Park Drainage and Street Design Guidelines, CIP 47704”, CMR:151:93, Feb 4, 1993.



edges of the pavers to lock them in place, which can create a mini-dam and prevent drainage along the side of the street.

**Need for Special Standards in Barron Park**

We do have some sidewalks in Barron Park. Most, such as those on Timlott, were in place before the annexation. But the city has honored its promise to preserve the rural character and, by and large, has given the neighborhood considerable latitude to leave its streetscape looking as it did in 1975, before annexation. However, several issues arose in the years following the annexation that required the city to develop special standards for Barron Park.

Street design guidelines tailored to Barron Park came about when the city needed to reconstruct a street and determined that it also needed to improve street drainage or solve pavement deterioration problems. The Barron Park Association created a Traffic Committee, under the leadership of former resident Will Beckett, which worked closely with residents in the neighborhood and with city staff to craft a set of regulations that were flexible enough to satisfy the city’s need to respond to the street problems and the community’s desire to maintain its appearance. Following a public hearing on December 1992<sup>5</sup>, the City Council adopted the “Barron Park Drainage and Street Design Guidelines” in early 1993<sup>6</sup>.

The guidelines address what improvements the city can make, and on what basis they would be decided. The guidelines allow for sidewalks to be built (called pedestrian walkways) but only for streets identified as collectors (Matadero, Barron, Los Robles, Maybell, La Donna, Amaranta and Laguna), and only if requested by the adjacent residents. Another requirement is that any proposed pedestrian walkway must fit within the existing right-of-way. Some streets, such as Matadero for most of its length, do not have a public right-of-way that is wide enough for both parking and pedestrian walkways.

When a drainage improvement or a pedestrian walkway is proposed, the guidelines require staff to meet with the residents living on streets abutting the work. If a pedestrian walkway already exists or is to be incorporated as part of the street improvement project, the city might incorporate a rolled curb along the walkway. Where pedestrian walkways do not exist or would not fit, valley gutters (rather than vertical or rolled curbs) can be placed at the outside edge of exist-

ing pavement. Valley gutters do not affect parking patterns since vehicles can drive or park over them. Or the city might not propose any drainage improvement and leave the right-of-way as it is.

As far as possible, City improvements are constructed on a block-by-block basis, rather than in a piecemeal fashion. Sometimes piecemeal projects cannot be avoided, especially where pedestrian walkways already exist mid-block. So, for example, on Barron Avenue, between the intersections of Josina and Cass Way, you can see rolled curbs on one side of the street and valley gutters on other.

The guidelines also direct the city to try to avoid removing landscaping or fences when installing new valley gutters or other street improvements. But the City reserves the right to remove paving (such as driveways) installed in the public right-of-way when constructing public street, drainage, or walkway improvements. The city will attempt to conform any new improvements to existing paving, where feasible.

**Drainage Improvements**

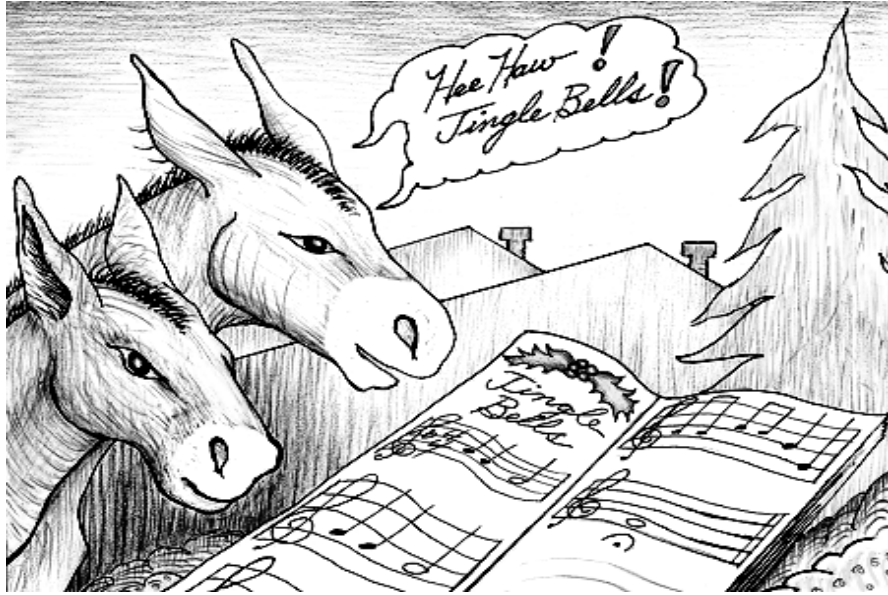
Following the adoption of the Street Guidelines, the city undertook a major upgrade of drainage in Barron Park. City staff looked at where poor drainage existed and where valley gutters could be considered. Valley gutters were installed on many streets. But in areas that were isolated and rather far from storm drains or creeks, the cost of adding valley gutters was excessive. In a few cases residents on a street opposed the valley gutters, so they were not installed. However the city did agree to try to work on individual sites if possible, for example by providing gravel to fill in low spots alongside the street.



\* NINTH ANNUAL \*

# Barron Park Neighborhood Holiday Party and Donkey Parade

*Featuring the Gunn High School Chamber Singers*



Pericles (Perry) and Miner 49er (Niner), the Barron Park community donkeys

Say hello to Perry and 'Niner—Stroll through our neighborhood!  
Sing seasonal favorites! Bring your kids and animals!

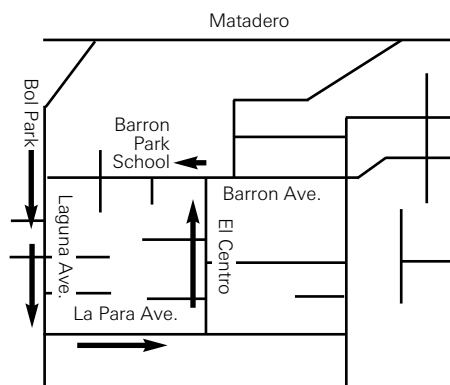
Saturday, December 20th

Parade: 2:30 pm Bol Park – Rain or Shine!

Party: 3:15 pm (Approx.) Barron Park Elementary School

## Parade Route:

Meet at Bol Park 2:30 pm  
Leave Bol Park 2:45 pm  
Laguna to La Para  
La Para to El Centro  
El Centro to Barron  
Barron to Barron Park School



Refreshments and singing at  
Barron Park Elementary School  
Multi Purpose Room 3:15 pm  
(If you can bring goodies for the  
party, please call Alice Frost  
at 493-8272)

# BUSINESS BEAT

By Bob Moss

## Keys School replacing the motel at 3981 El Camino

August 14th the ARB had what should be the final hearing on the Keys Middle School that is going to be built on the former motel site at 3981 El Camino. After the motel was demolished in July construction preparations began in August. The campus will have 4 buildings. The biggest is next to Barron Creek at El Camino with the gym and music room and an office plus storage on the street. There will be 2 classroom buildings behind the gym also close to the creek, and a faculty lounge and offices at the rear of the lot. Entrance will be at the side farthest from the intersection, but there still may be some traffic problems when kids are dropped off and picked up at the start and end of classes. Look for lots of U turns from parents coming south on El Camino.

The buildings will be 28' tall, but will have solar panels on the roof raising total height to about 35'. Total cost will be at least \$20 million. In mid-September the City Council will pass a resolution stating that the \$20 million in bonds to build the Keys Middle School is for a tax-exempt non-profit. It's needed to allow Keys to get the lower interest rate of a non-profit, but the City has no participation, obligation or interest in the bonds. They did the same thing for bonds to finance construction of the Campus for Jewish Life that is going up at Charleston and San Antonio.

## We'd like to welcome Candice Kistner, State Farm Insurance Agent, to Barron Park.

Her office is at 3944 El Camino Real Suite 200. Candice is a third generation insurance agent, who's business is the first insurance company certified "green" in Palo Alto. She specializes in assisting Stanford Students & Faculty with their insurance needs.

Candice says State Farm's mission is to "help our clients achieve their financial goals by providing customized risk protection. We will determine each client's need for transferring risk based on professional relationships and personal care. Our vision is to be identified as a consistent representation of class and professionalism combined with strength and modernism."

Please call her at 650-424-1100.  
[www.CandiceKistner.com](http://www.CandiceKistner.com)

## EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has three email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, and bpa-misc. They are hosted at Google Groups (moved in January). To join bpa-news, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/bpa-news> and click on "Join this group." Similarly for the other lists.

For more information on these email lists, go to the BPA home page—<http://www.bpaonline.org> and click on the button "BPA Email Lists."

## BPA NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

We have created PDF files of past newsletters. See the complete newsletters, including full-color photos!

The web editions of the BPA Newsletters usually appear one or two months after the paper editions are mailed. The files may take awhile to download (sizes given in advance).

BPA Website: <http://www.bpaonline.org>

PDF full color newsletter archive: [www.bpaonline.org/www2/BP-News/index.html](http://www.bpaonline.org/www2/BP-News/index.html)

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd

Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

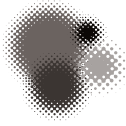
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BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2008



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