

History of Palomar Park

Palomar Park, California - Its Beginnings

We live in a very rural and unique area located in the midst of a metropolitan center known as the Bay Area. Gratitude for our good fortune can be extended to A. J. Harwood and his wife Laura, who were the primary instigators in the development of Palomar Park. At one time they owned 75% of the property on the hill.

In 1915, the City of San Francisco hosted the Pacific International Exposition and one of the exhibits included photographs and descriptive stories about the Peninsula, particularly the areas between Hillsborough and Atherton. At the exhibit, the Allis Chalmers Corporation from Wisconsin was displaying tractors. Soon thereafter, the Allis Chalmers Corporation bought up a large tract of unimproved real estate including what was to become Palomar Park. Later, the corporation sold those lands to the Bulletin Publishing Company, which apparently was owned by Mrs. Laura Harwood's family before she married A. J. Harwood. Laura Harwood inherited these lands in 1927 and her husband Al became the developer.

A. J. Harwood was a San Francisco attorney and quite a character. He drove an old Franklin touring car and prospective homeowners had to deal with his many eccentricities. He was Palomar Park's "land baron" and the way he sold properties was unique - sometimes he walked off a property line, surveys weren't always necessary!

The Harwoods owned almost 423 acres in Palomar Park. A few houses existed prior to their ownership. About 6 summer homes were built in the early 20's, but it wasn't until 1927 that the Harwoods began developing and building homes. A. J. Harwood's first home was built in October of 1927 and is located at 158 South Palomar Drive. From this beautiful Spanish hacienda-style home he enjoyed the view of the Peninsula. Upper Palomar Park was not developed so Harwood could appreciate the wide-open spaces. The Harwoods formed the development company PalPar, Inc., and between 1927 and 1933 they built 8 homes, the original Harwood Spanish-style homes beginning at lower Palomar Drive, the 300 block of Palomar Park. A. J. and Laura Harwood continued to subdivide their properties to future residents in the early 30's to the late 50's.

The Formation of Palomar Property Owners



A. J. Harwood – Palomar’s developer

At some stage, prior to 1955, a Palomar Improvement Association was formed by landowners living in the Palomar Park area to maintain the atmosphere and resolve problems facing the residents as the population continued to grow.

The primary guidelines used by the association were those issued by Mr. Harwood, the original subdivider of the area, who attached a set of restrictions and covenants to the deed of each site upon sale.

However, concerns about the development continued to escalate, and at the beginning of 1956 a group of concerned landowners met to discuss new restrictions on the existing property in Palomar Park. One of the primary instigators was Mr. Harwood, who felt that the area was building up so rapidly and the property had become so valuable that a new set of restrictions and covenants were necessary to protect the interests of everyone concerned. He also owned a considerable amount of acreage adjacent to Palomar Park and

indicated that he would impose the new restrictions on that area as various sites were sold.

As a result of the meeting, a research committee was formed to prepare the Articles of Incorporation and a set of by-laws for review and approval by the landowners of Palomar Park. The documents were prepared, reviewed and approved by the landowners on May 14, 1956, and were notarized on June 20, 1956. The documents listed nine individuals as directors who subscribed to and executed the Articles of Incorporation and indicated that the entity was to be called Palomar Property Owners (PPO). The land area defined in the Articles of Incorporation was that “Bounded by Cañada Road, Edgewood Road, Alameda De Las Pulgas and the Prolongation's of the 500 Block on Eaton Avenue to Cañada Road and Alameda De Las Pulgas.”

The Secretary of State affixed the Articles of Incorporation with the Great Seal of the State of California on July 13, 1956. The nine original directors were W. H. Clover, John Dern, Joseph P. Hull, Bardt H. Ohlsen, Gale Santocono, Robert C. Schmidt, Bernard J. Tanklage, A. J. Harwood and John Babcock.

The nine directors who signed the original documents acted in a temporary status until a board of nine directors, three for each period of one year, two years and three years were elected by the general membership in April of 1957, all in accordance with the by-laws. Thus, the Palomar Property Owners Association was born in 1956 to continue its flexible and maturing growth to meet the ever-changing demands over the last 50 years.

Activities of the Palomar Property Owners Association

The newly formed Palomar Property Owners immediately became involved in many of the issues facing the expanding community:

- 1) The water system supplying the area was originally installed with the sale of lots and was minimal at best. The water was obtained from San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy line along Edgewood and pumped to the top of the hill and stored in small wooden tanks. A water district was formed, owned by the homeowners and operated by the County of San Mateo. The struggle to expand the system and meet the demands, including fire protection and attempting to transfer the system to a water company, continued until an agreement was signed in April 1995 with Cal Water.
- 2) Fire protection was another major concern as response to Palomar Park came from the California Division of Forestry with equipment located on Tower Road in Belmont; there was no highway 280 at that time. The response time was excessive, leading to the establishment of Palomar Emergency Service (PES) in March 1972. PES passed through several stages of development with the eventual establishment of a volunteer fire department. The department worked in conjunction with the California Division of Forestry and the Palomar Property Owners built a temporary firehouse located on the hill. In the late 1990's, the Board of Supervisors approved construction of a firehouse on County-owned property at the end of Edmonds Road. With the goal of a permanent, community-based site for the Palomar Park California Fire Department waning, the department disbanded in July 2000.
- 3) Roads also presented a major problem within the area and the PPO Board had a continual dialog with San Mateo County concerning the maintenance and upgrading of the roads. As of today, the County has accepted only South Palomar Drive and Palomar Drive from the junction of Scenic, Clifford and Palomar up the hill to midway between Loma Court and the Montalvo-Loma Road junction. All other roads are either: a) privately owned, privately maintained or b) publicly held, privately maintained. Other road issues the PPO Board participated in were: traffic control at the intersection of Edgewood Road at Scenic, and at the intersection of Edgewood Road at West Cordilleras Road. Unresolved road issues also exist at connections to San Carlos at the end of Palomar Drive and at the end of Loma Road, both of which are gated and locked.
- 4) In the early 1970's, the operation of a blue rock quarry located north of Edgewood Road and east of what is now known as Crestview Road was creating a lot of noise and dust and was encroaching into the outer Palomar Park area. Activities of the homeowners resulted in San Mateo County issuing a closing order in the mid 70's, which the quarry operator immediately circumvented by annexing his property into San Carlos. Again, pressure from the homeowners brought about a second closure preventing any further activities after February 1979. The quarry consumed the Morton property at the

upper end of Palomar Drive and created a steep bank between Palomar Park and San Carlos. The old quarry base is now covered with housing off of Crestview Drive.

5) A housing design review requirement was developed by the homeowners and approved by the Board of Supervisors including the establishment of a Design Review Board in mid-1990.



Leon Glahn – Handing out informational flyers regarding the Belle Roche subdivision

6) A major effort was expended in working with San Mateo County and the developer of the Belle Roche Estates. This also included the construction of a 78,000-gallon water tank to increase the water supply in Palomar Park. Six individuals from the hill formed the Belle Roche Committee (Leon Glahn, Ted Clay, Rich Landi, Steve Leyda, Daniel Petelin and Greg Snider) and were instrumental in limiting the number of homes from 30 to 16. In addition, a scenic easement was established protecting 20 acres of open space, redwoods, oaks, laurel trees and a small creek from development. Numerous planning meetings and Board of Supervisor hearings were held at the County Government Center. At one hearing, over 160 Palomar Park residents rallied to preserve the last tract of undeveloped property.

7) Members of Palomar Property Owners also spent many hours working with the County and developer on the proposed development of the Edgewood Canyon Estates. The area has access from Edgewood Road and from Hermosa Road in upper Palomar Park. The development as yet, has not gone forward.

8) The Palomar Property Owners became involved in the issues concerning the use of the property now known as the Edgewood Preserve, especially during the proposal stage to develop an 18-hole golf course in that area.

9) Several other items that have the continual attention of the PPO Board are: a) liaison and contact with the County Board of Supervisors, b) emergency response planning to respond to any catastrophic event, c) septic systems. Since a major portion of the area is on septic systems, this is an item of continual review.

10) A couple of recent items requiring the attention of the PPO Board are: a) the "Sphere of Influence" the City of San Carlos imposed upon Palomar Park, and b) the option for landowners to use either the city mailing address "Palomar Park, California" or "Redwood City, California".

History of Fire Protection in Palomar Park



Palomar Park Volunteer Firemen return to their station on 178 South Palomar

In the early years of Palomar Park, if there was a fire in the neighborhood it was the residents who mobilized and fought fire emergencies. The nearest fire department was in Belmont - almost ten miles away with response times averaging 20 to 30 minutes.

The Palomar Property Owners Board of Directors recognized the special fire and emergency needs of Palomar Park in the early 1970's. Under the leadership of Board President George Kirk, Palomar Emergency Services (PES) was formed on March 1, 1972.

The original group consisted of 55 men and women residents. PES members were trained in basic firefighting, first aid and emergency rescue service. The PPO Board appointed Bill Bomont, who resided at 1135 Palomar Drive, as the first Fire Chief of PES. The initial year was very successful, but in order to be more effective in controlling grass and brush fires PES looked into purchasing a fire truck. On May 22, 1973, Palomar Property Owners purchased a 1958 International B Fire Engine. This enhanced the capability of the group in extinguishing grass and brush fires prior to the arrival of County Fire/California Department of Forestry (CDF).

On April 25, 1974, Assistant Chief George Kirk was appointed Fire Chief by the PPO Board. Although PES had the capability to attack brush and grass fires with their B Engine, they were not well equipped to fight structure fires. PES located a surplus 1949 White Van Pelt structure Engine owned by the City of Burlingame, and PPO purchased the fire engine in July of 1974. In January 1975, the fire department was renamed Palomar Park California Volunteer Fire Department (PPVFD).

In 1976, PPVFD's survival, along with other volunteer departments in San Mateo County, was endangered by a jump in insurance costs. The County of San Mateo along with CDF proposed a fire protection system agreement to fund insurance and major equipment purchases including fire apparatus for the volunteer departments. PPVFD members signed the San Mateo County agreement on August 19, 1976.

On June 16, 1977, PPVFD members elected John Mustard as the new Fire Chief and the PPO Board of Directors ratified the appointment. He assumed the duty of Chief on July 1, 1977. Roger Flores and George Kirk were elected to the position of Assistant Chiefs. Under the leadership of Chief Mustard the fire department continued to improve its training and operation and responded regularly to incidents in the Palomar Park area as well as structure fires in Emerald Lake and surrounding areas.

In 1980, a rescue truck was received from the County to replace the older 1958 B Engine. The rescue truck was ideal for responding to medical aid and vehicle accidents.

In September 1983, Chief Mustard resigned due to relocating to Washington State. Rich Landi, who joined the fire department in July of 1977, was elected Chief in October of 1983. Shortly after assuming command in 1983, CDF/County Fire offered PPVFD an updated structure engine with the provision that the engine would be housed in an enclosed structure. Since no other suitable site could be found, Chief Landi and his wife offered a site on their property for construction of the Palomar Park California Volunteer Fire Station. PPO agreed to provide some funds and members of PPVFD agreed to build it. It was completed in 1984 and significantly improved the operation of the department - all the trucks and the equipment were in one place and the firefighters could meet and conduct training sessions at the new facility. They intended to use this location as a temporary station for five years until a proposed permanent volunteer station was built by San Mateo County Fire at the Clifford School circle site.

With the addition of the newly acquired County Engine, the PPVFD's primary response area was expanded outside of Palomar Park to include the Edgewood Road corridor, Emerald Lake area and a portion of north and southbound Interstate 280.

In the early 90's the fire department's membership evolved into a highly trained force of 20 members including 14 Emergency Medical Technicians and 3 paramedics. The one factor that still needed to be solved was locating a permanent location for the fire department. In June of 1998, Rich and Joann Landi gave PPO until June 1999 to develop a plan to secure a permanent site for the fire department.

On June 25, 2000, a letter was sent to all Palomar Park residents advising them that there was no progress in securing a site or a plan to find a permanent home for the fire department. Residents were notified that PPVFD would be losing its home and there would no longer be resources located in Palomar Park for fire suppression, medical emergencies, etc.

On July 31, 2000, the PPVFD Station closed and the fire department was disbanded.

History of Palomar Park Garden Club



Peggy Newman – admiring the new Palomar Park directional signs

In 1948, the Palomar Park Garden Club was organized by 23 charter members - all of whom were early residents of Palomar Park. Its purpose was to study all phases of horticulture and floriculture, the promotion of civic beautification and the conservation of wildlife.

The Garden Club has been involved in many projects. One of the first projects was the construction and maintenance of our directional road signs, indicating roads with the names of the residents and where they lived. These name signs remain to this day and new signs are continually added as new residents move to our area.

The Garden Club constructed the large directional sign for Palomar Park on Scenic and Edgewood Road in the early 1950's. Then, in the late 1960's, the Garden Club erected the large "map sign" at Scenic and Clifford, showing the names of all our streets in the area and the directions as to where they are located.

Also, during the 60's, the Garden Club members constructed redwood mailboxes to replace the old metal ones along our roads. Some 30 years later, in 1994, all of the mailboxes were repaired, re-roofed, and refinished to their original beauty.

In the early 1970's, children in Palomar Park formed a Junior Garden Club and entered their displays in the Redwood City Flower and Art Shows.

In addition to many other activities, the Garden Club participated in the early days of recycling in Palomar Park. In those days, we sorted bottles, newspapers, and aluminum cans, and hauled them away to the recycling center.

The Garden Club supported the Volunteer Fire Department, which was established in 1972. Of the original group of volunteers, 13 were ladies in the Garden Club. These women learned to drive the first fire truck and were trained to put out any fires that occurred if all the men were at work.

The Garden Club put out three cookbooks. The first publication in 1952 was called *The Palomar Park Garden Club Cookbook*. In 1968, a second cookbook entitled *The Hill's Cooks* was published, and a third cookbook appeared in 1991 titled *Favorites from the Hill*.

The Garden Club continues today to carry on the original purpose of the club and is involved in many on-going projects to make Palomar Park a special place to live.