

Walking Tour

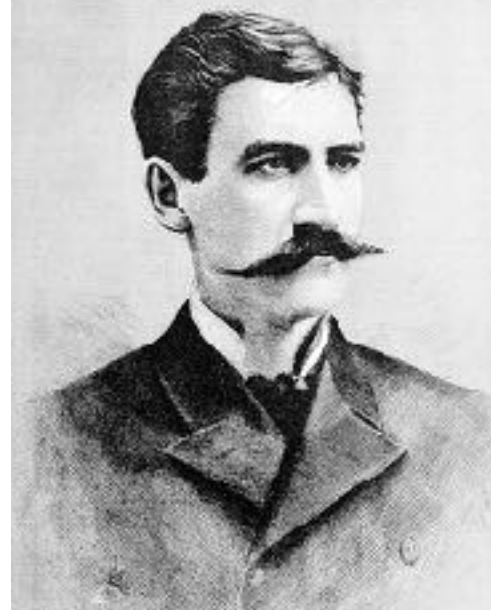
Produced by Bo Crane and Pete Zivkov

This 90 minute, 2 mile walking tour features stories and legacies of the San Francisco peninsula's wealthiest and most prominent 19th century citizens, who through personal success, luck, loss and folly, shaped life in contemporary Menlo Park. You'll learn how their massive wealth and opulent estates developed into our suburban town.

In the decades after [California's Gold Rush](#), San Francisco's wealthiest businessmen, politicians and immigrants purchased large speculative parcels of farmland in San Mateo County. Some of their business ventures failed and some flourished. Many of these tycoons, businessmen and monied investors built lavish country estates and large summer homes near the old mission road, [El Camino Real](#), or the parallel [rail line to San Jose](#). As they faded away and died, their heirs often sold or converted these lands to public or religious uses. Collectively, and over time, these large estates became the cities of Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Atherton.



Leland Stanford



Timothy Hopkins

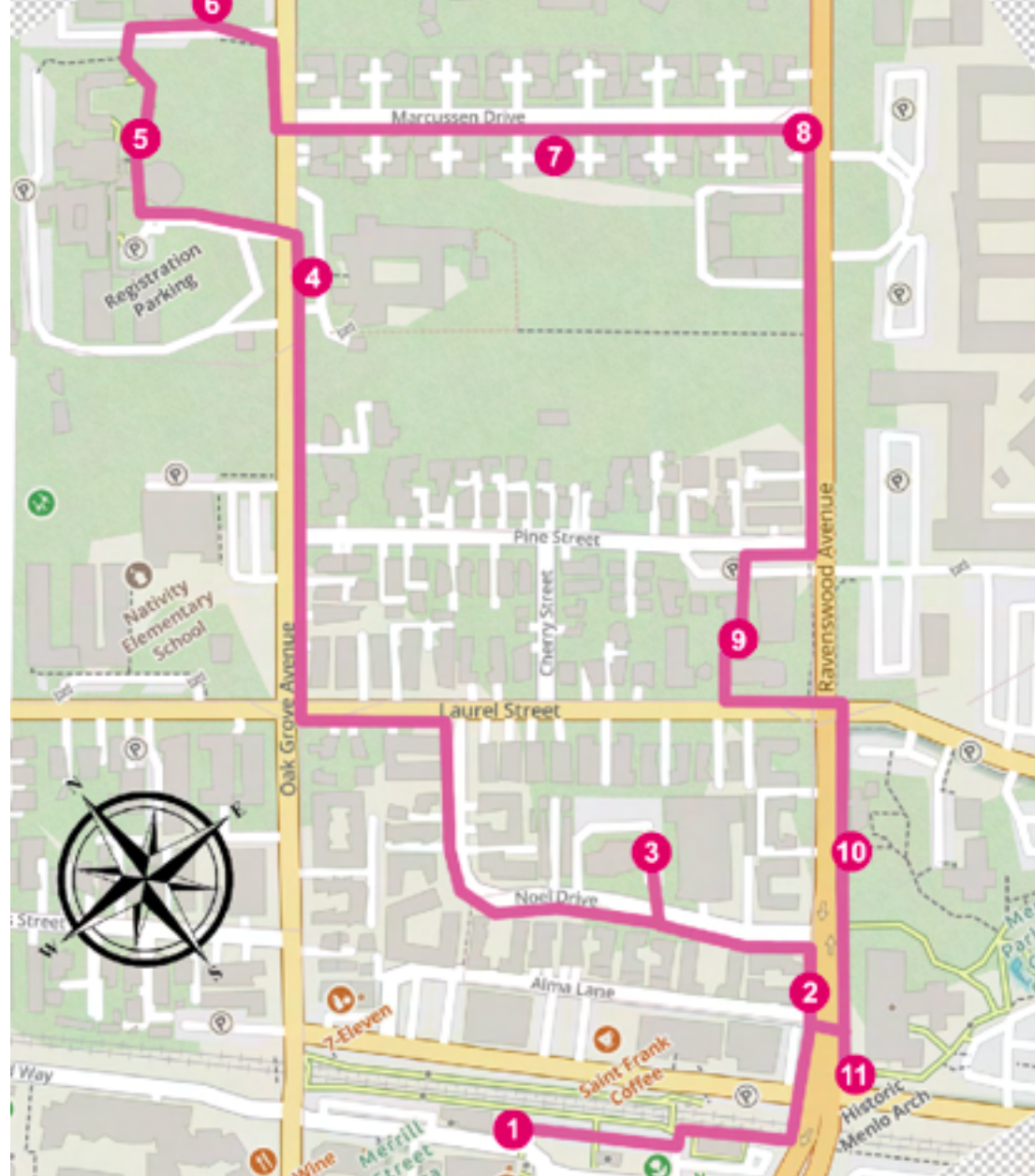
After the Civil War, two of California's [big Four](#) families provide examples of this succession process. Railroad magnate, politician and philanthropist, Leland Stanford and his young protege, Timothy Hopkins, the adopted son of fellow railroad mogul [Mark Hopkins](#), arguably had the greatest impact on Menlo Park with the creation of [Stanford University](#). Let's introduce them immediately, since they'll be mentioned at several stops along our tour route.

The tour is self-paced and is designed for use on a mobile device with a small screen, so rotate, pinch and zoom to enlarge text, photos and maps. Web links are provided for reference information.

The tour starts and ends, at the Menlo Park Railroad Station ([1100 Merrill St](#)) and can be walked in either direction. A map of the intended route is provided below.

Please be extra careful when crossing streets and the railroad tracks.

Walking Tour Map and Directions



Stop 1 - Railroad Station

1100 Merrill Street

Jane and Leland's Station



Menlo Park Train Depot, built in 1867

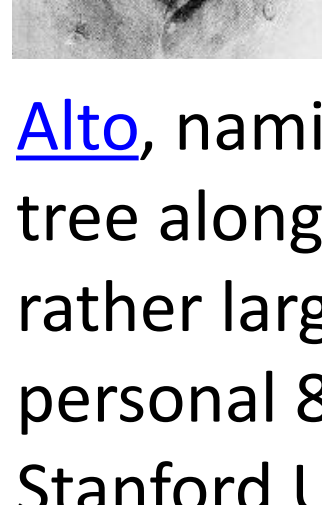
The [San Francisco and San Jose Railroad](#) officially began service on October 17, 1863, when the inaugural trip brought a party of dignitaries, including railroad magnate and former California Governor [Leland Stanford](#), wife [Jane](#) and their friends from San Francisco to Mayfield — now California Ave in Palo Alto. Their 80-minute train trip was a modern marvel compared to a 5-hour horse and buggy ride.

This station depot was built four years later in 1867. In 1876 Leland Stanford purchased a small parcel of the 8,418-acre Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito. It was the first 650 acres of land for his country home and horse farm. Easy railroad access and a pleasant climate attracted other wealthy San Franciscans to build their estates along the new rail line.



Senator Leland Stanford, Jane Lathrop Stanford and Leland Jr. in 1878.

In 1884, while on a trip to Europe and Asia Minor, the Stanfords lost their only child, [Leland Jr.](#) to typhoid fever at age 15. In his memory, they decided to create a university to rival the very best East Coast institutions. In 1885, they decided to create a university on their vast property, with student housing near Mayfield. However, they had one concern: alcohol had to be banned. Known for its rowdy saloons, Mayfield rejected their request. Menlo Park also had similar saloons, so this led the Stanfords to create a new temperance town adjacent to the university.

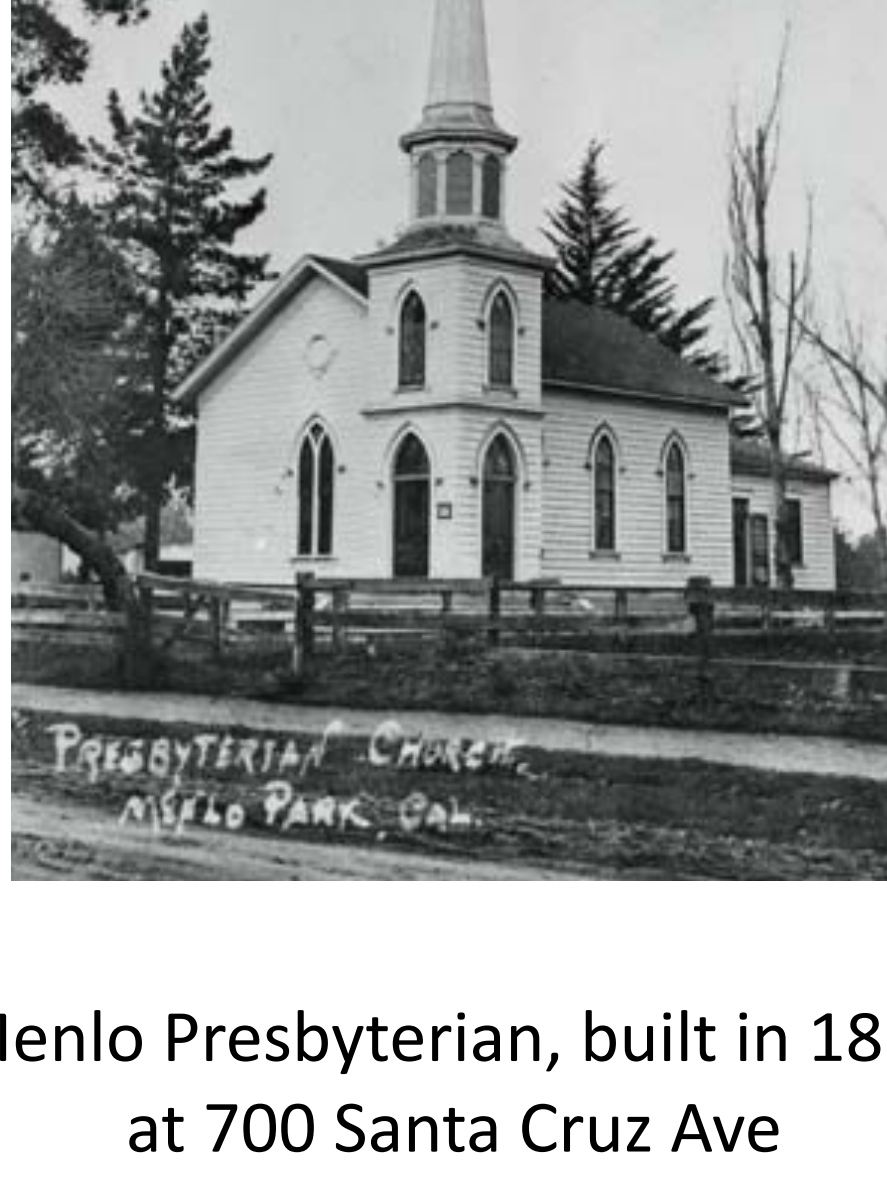


With Leland Stanford's assistance, his young business manager, [Timothy Hopkins](#), purchased a wheat field and mapped it as [Palo Alto](#), naming it after the tall redwood tree along the rail line. Endowed with a rather large fortune and the Stanford's personal 8,180-acre Palo Alto stock farm, Stanford University was officially dedicated on October 1, 1891. The Stanfords arrived by a special train along with 2000 guests to celebrate its grand opening.



The Stanford's country home

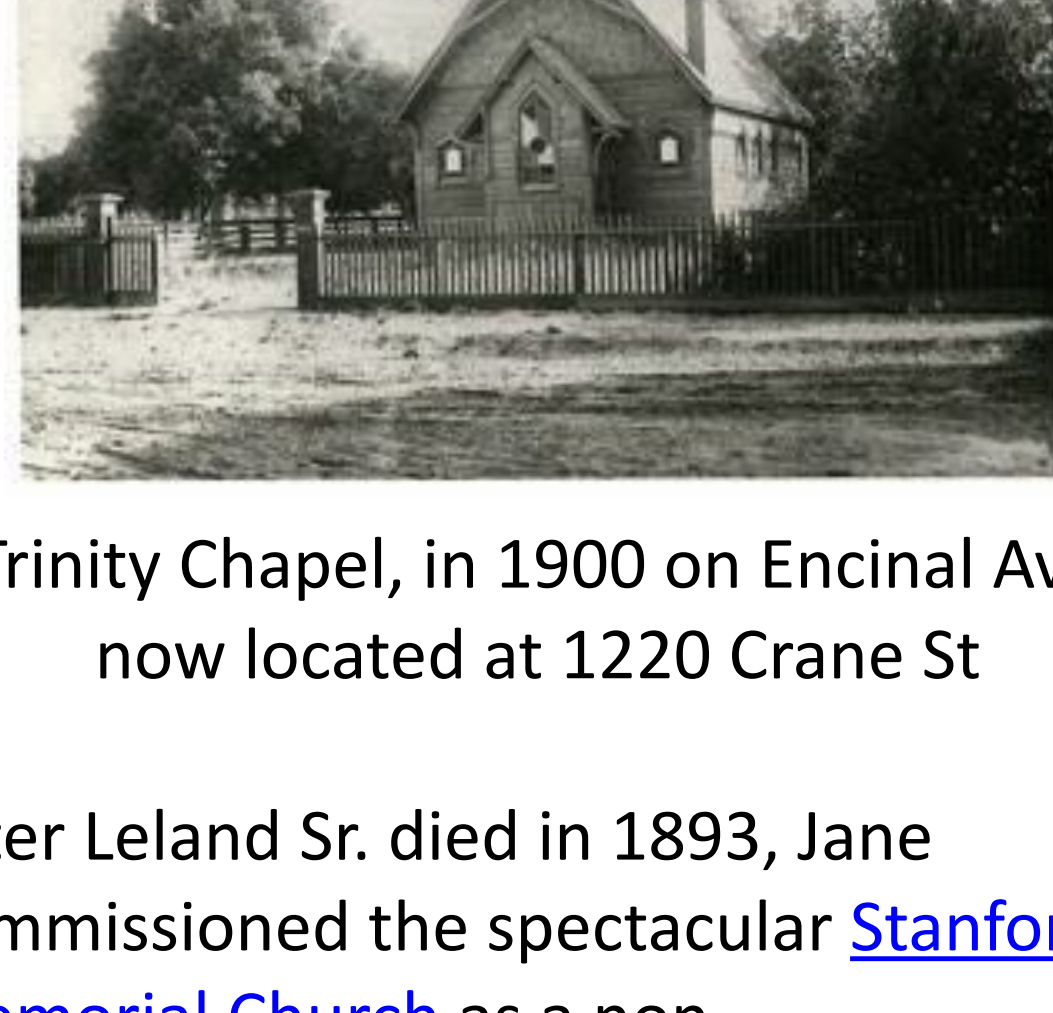
This train station was Jane and Leland's stop as it was located near their country home on "The Farm". As a busy power couple (Leland was elected US Senator in 1885) they often traveled by train to their San Francisco mansion or more distant locations. A separate waiting room was reserved for [Jane Stanford](#). This train depot was a regular part of their lives, and church on Sundays was too.



Menlo Presbyterian, built in 1875
at 700 Santa Cruz Ave

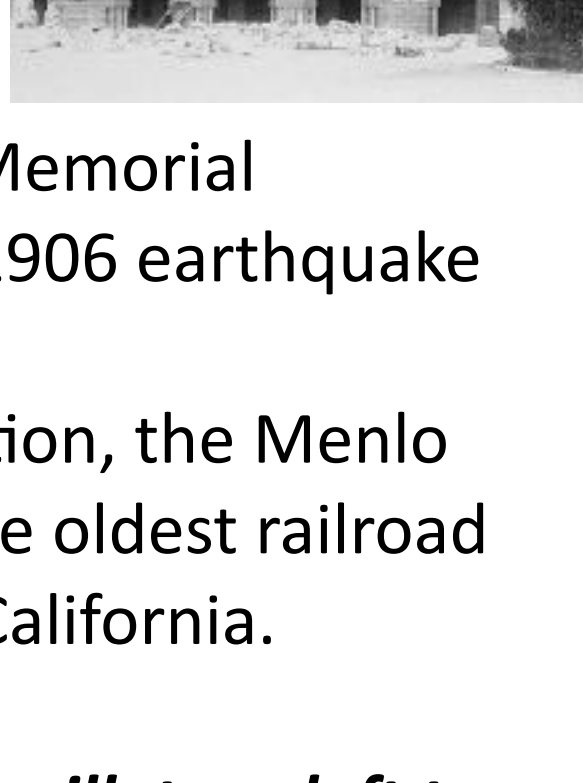
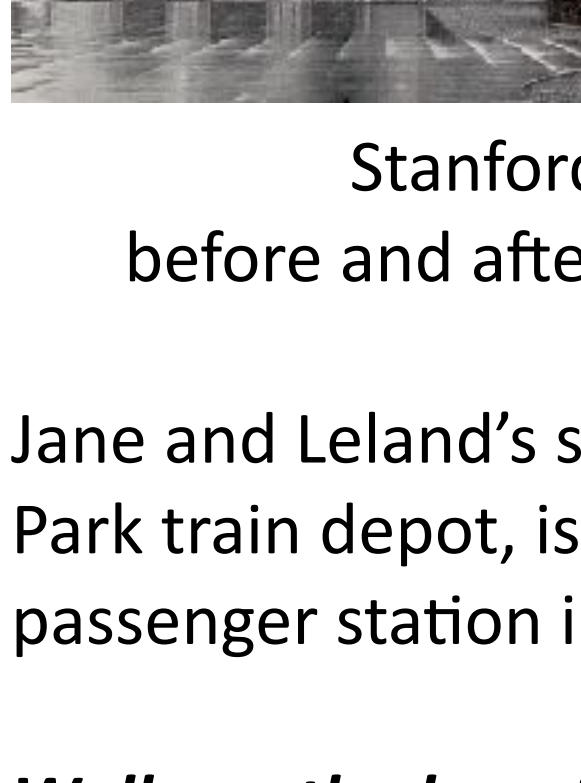


The Stanfords attended and had a strong influence on two local churches that are not on this walking tour. Jane was an active supporter of Menlo [Presbyterian](#) (above), downtown Menlo's first and biggest Protestant church. Leland became a Junior Warden at the more modest Trinity [Episcopal](#) Church (below) when it was built in 1884.



Trinity Chapel, in 1900 on Encinal Ave
now located at 1220 Crane St

After Leland Sr. died in 1893, Jane commissioned the spectacular [Stanford Memorial Church](#) as a non-denominational memorial to her husband. She continued directing the university as a Trustee until her [death by poisoning in 1905](#).



Stanford Memorial
before and after 1906 earthquake

Jane and Leland's station, the Menlo Park train depot, is the oldest railroad passenger station in California.

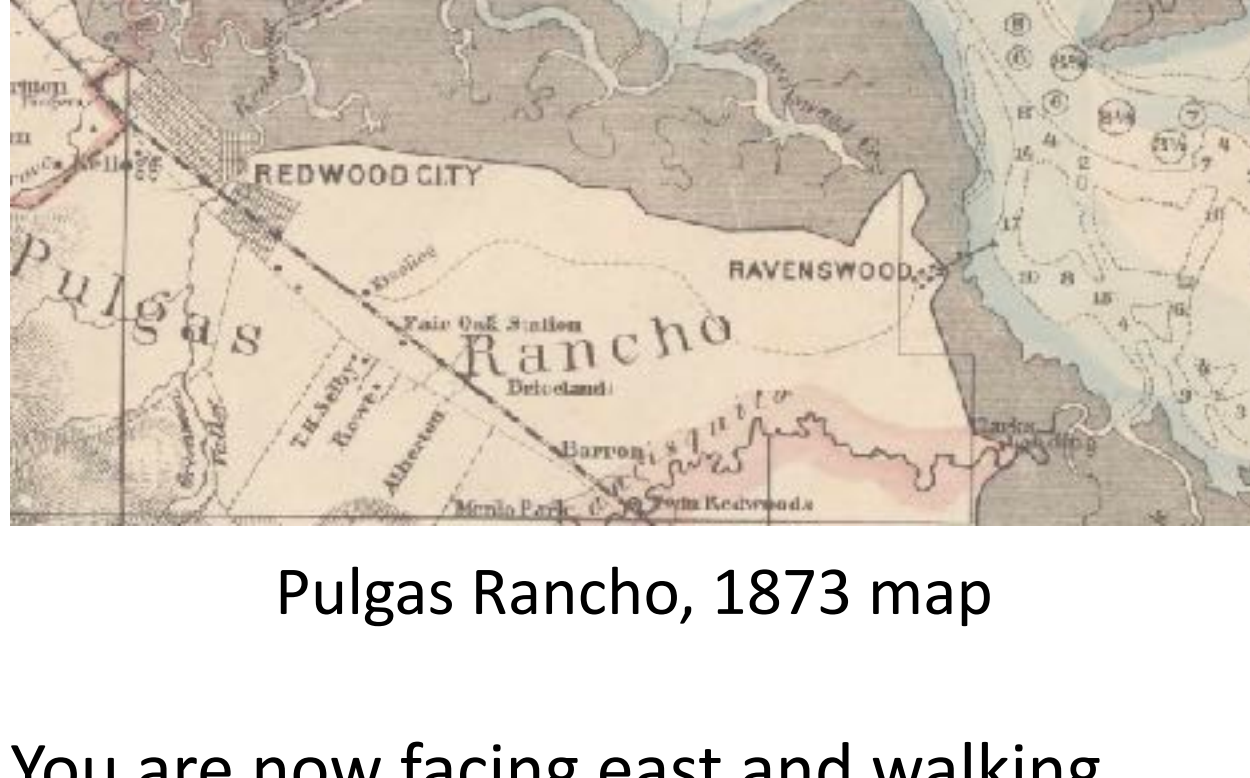
Walk south along Merrill, turn left to safely cross RR tracks at Ravenswood Ave.



Stop 2 - Ravenswood

466 Ravenswood Ave

A Failed Dream to Cross the Bay



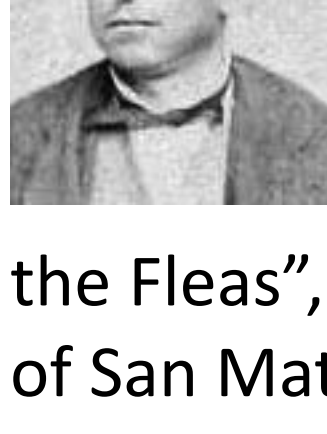
Pulgas Rancho, 1873 map

You are now facing east and walking along Ravenswood Ave toward the San Francisco Bay and the abandoned port of Ravenswood. The large tract of land between Middlefield Rd and the Bay was called Ravenswood. Consider access to the sea and how important it was before the railroad line was established.

Menlo Park lies within an area once occupied by the [Ohlone](#) group of Native Americans who hunted and fished along these bay waters for many generations.

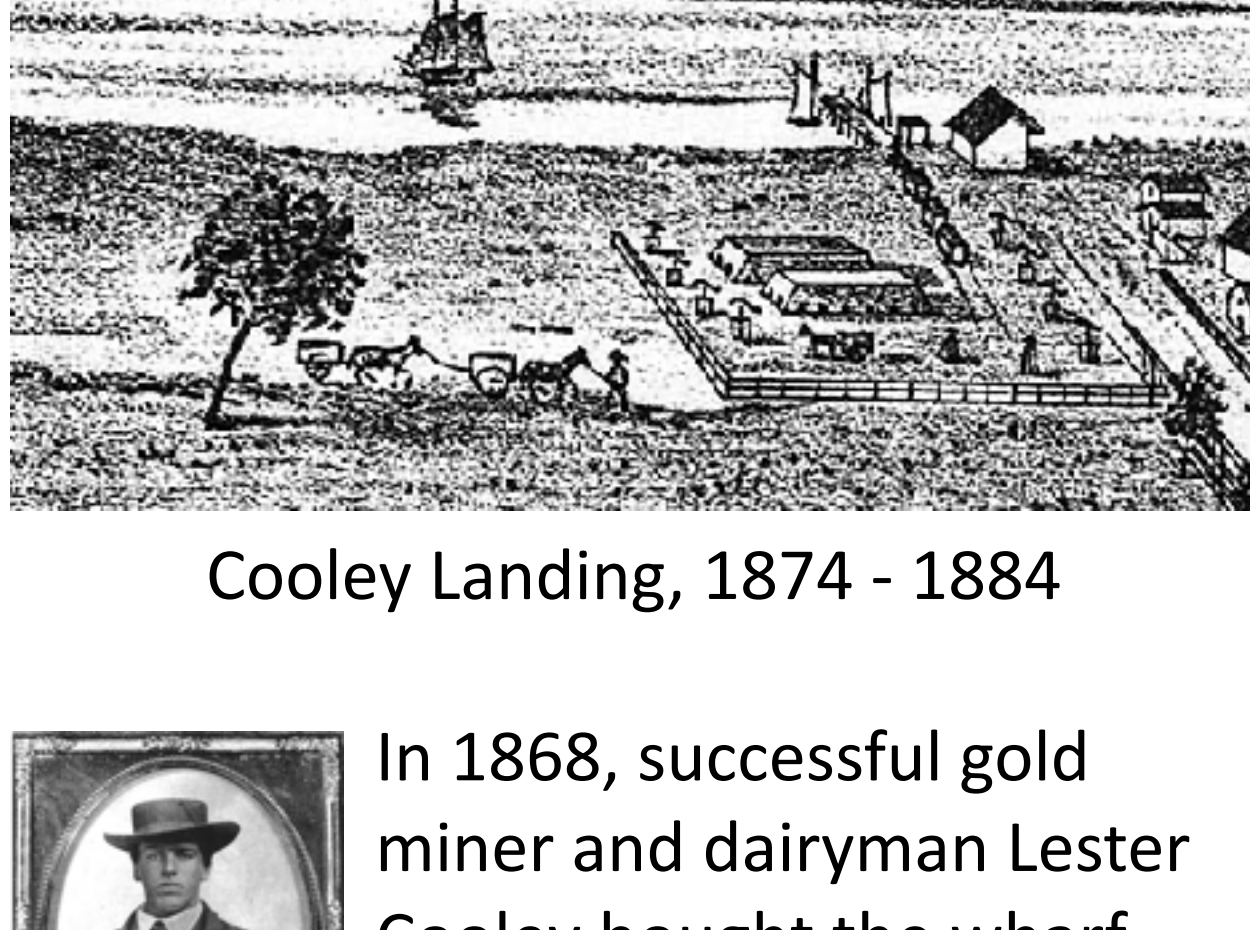
This area was a Spanish colony from the time of the [Portola Expedition](#) in 1769,

to 1821 when it became part of Mexico.

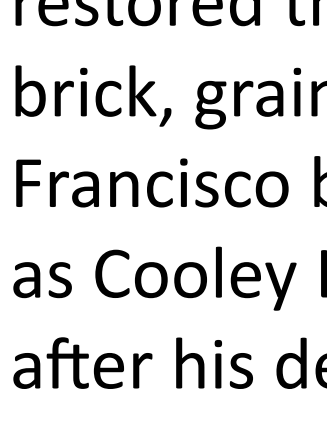


During the Mexican Era (1822-1846), it was part of José Dario Arguello’s enormous [Rancho de las Pulgas](#), meaning “Ranch of the Fleas”, which eventually became part of San Mateo County.

During the 1850s, San Francisco banker Isaiah Woods and his business partners bought a large parcel of land between Middlefield Rd and the Bay and created the town of Ravenswood (see map above). It was supposedly named after Woods and the ravens that congregated in that area. He speculated that Ravenswood would become the last stop on the [Trans-continental Railroad](#) and would become a major shipping center. In the 1860s he built an expensive, deep-water wharf and for a time operated the only active port in the area. Woods’ gamble, and the Port of Ravenswood failed when Alameda became the western terminus of the railroad and Ravenswood became a farming community.



Cooley Landing, 1874 - 1884



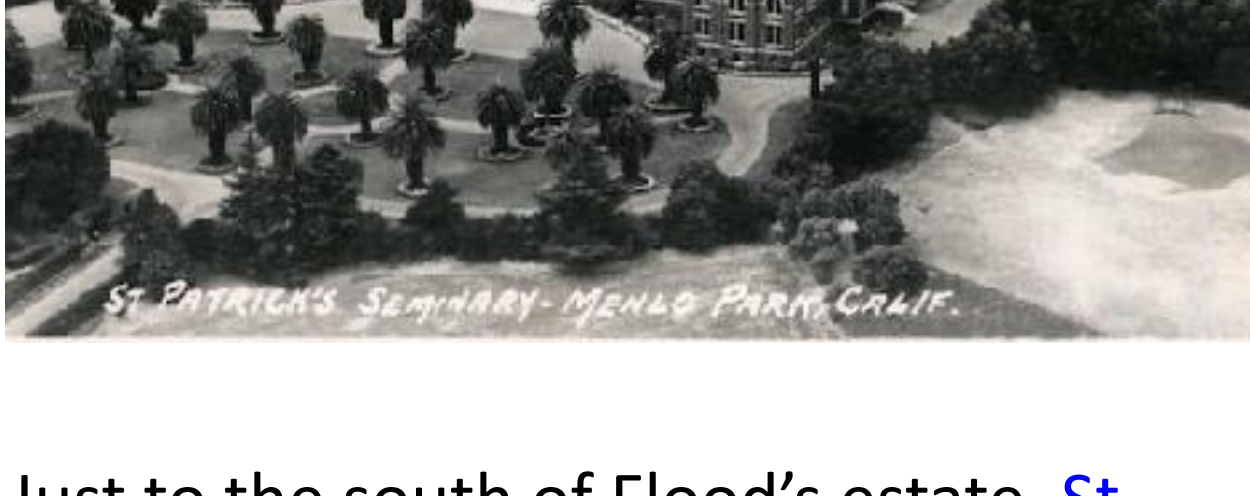
In 1868, successful gold miner and dairyman Lester Cooley bought the wharf and 400 acres of adjoining land. He built a brickworks, restored the pier and used it for shipping brick, grain and dairy products to San Francisco by [schooner](#). It became known as Cooley Landing. The area declined after his death in 1882.



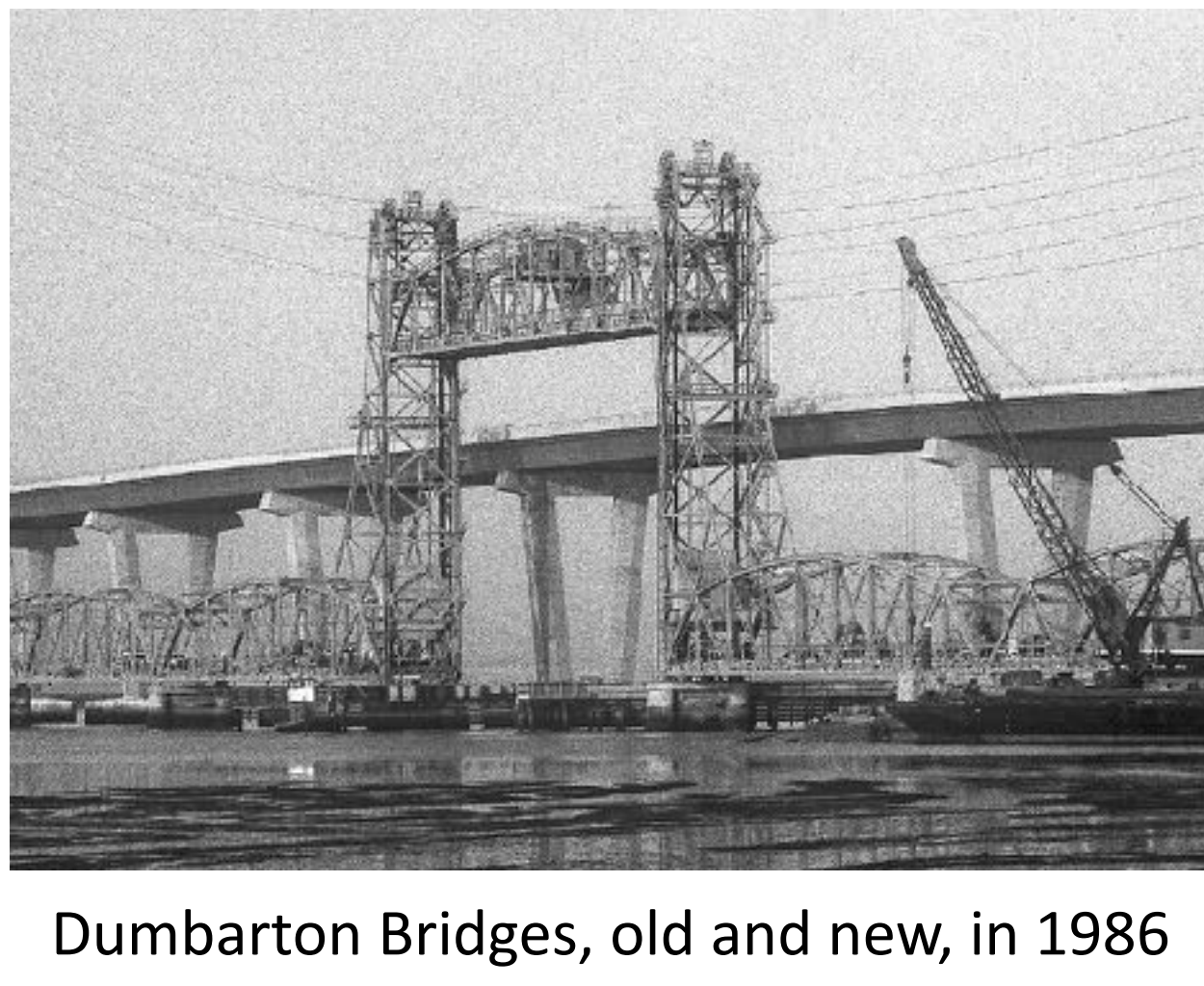
Linden Towers, built in 1878



The original Ravenswood parcel was subdivided and resold over time. By the 1880s a large portion of it became “Silver King” [James C. Flood](#)’s 600-acre estate, known as Linden Towers. After Flood’s death in 1889, both his daughter and son lived in the 40-room, 150-foot-tall mansion, which was one of the largest and most opulent homes of its time. The aging, but magnificent structure, was torn down in 1936 and the property was subdivided becoming [Lindenwood](#), a development of some 400 homes. The estate’s 1908 brick wall and formal entry gates are still visible along Middlefield Road in Atherton.



Just to the south of Flood’s estate, [St Patrick’s Seminary](#) was founded in 1898 on 83 acres donated by Kate Johnson. As a massive and highly revered [Roman Catholic](#) Seminary, it was the only institution of its kind west of the Rocky Mountains at the turn of the 19th century. It is the only university located in Menlo Park.

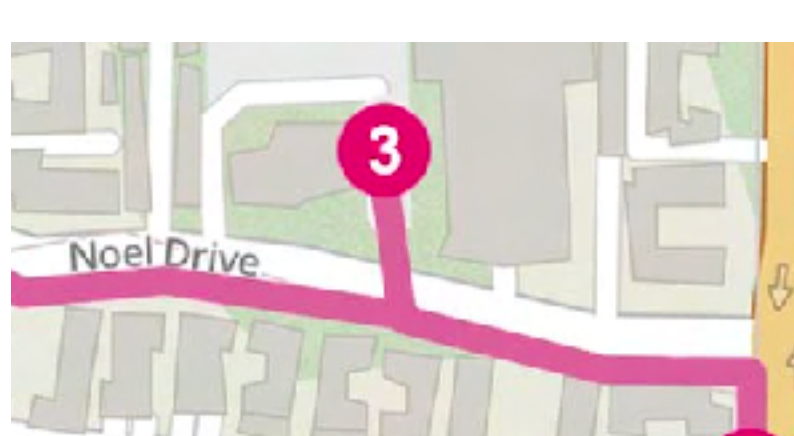


Dumbarton Bridges, old and new, in 1986

A railroad did eventually cross the Bay at Dumbarton Point in the East Bay. Isaiah Wood’s prediction was finally realized in 1910. In 1927, a privately funded automotive drawbridge, known as the [Dumbarton Bridge](#) also spanned the Bay.

The current, six-lane Dumbarton Bridge opened in 1984 and carries 70,000 cars daily.

Continue walking east on Ravenswood Ave, turn left on Noel Drive to Stop 3, Bright Eagle.



Stop 3 - Bright Eagle

1040 Noel Drive

Menlo's "White Elephant"



Bright Eagle, built in 1869

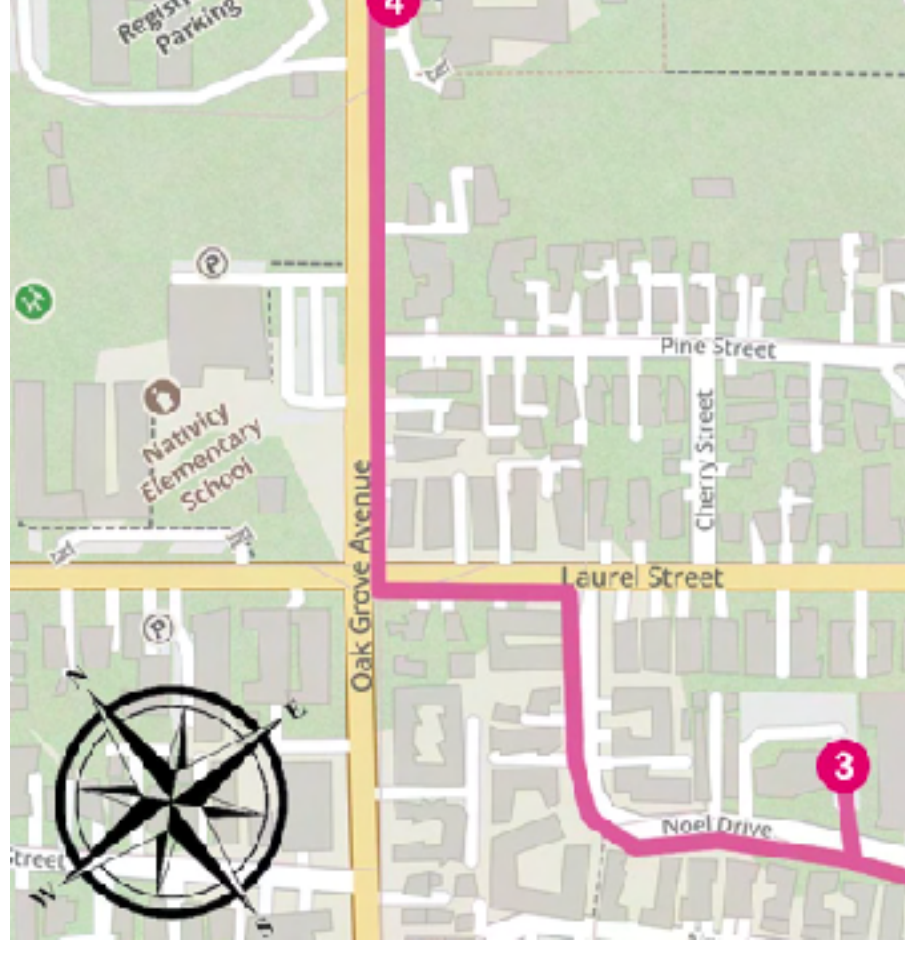
This is Menlo Park's third oldest structure, known as Bright Eagle. Since its construction in 1869, the yellow mansion has gone through about a dozen transformations.



The 290-acre property was sold in 1863, to [Theodor Lemmen Meyer](#), a 30-year-old German emigrant from Hamburg who operated a San Francisco-based mercantile business specializing in Mexican and South American imports. His mansion had 25 rooms, 12 baths, 6 fireplaces and 14-foot ceilings. Since then the house has been:

- A **gambling house** run by a German diplomat.
- The **home of Edgar Mills**, a successful banker and the younger brother of [Darius Ogden Mills](#), an even more successful banker for whom the town of Millbrae is named. Edgar installed Hawaiian mahogany woodwork, the same as that in San Francisco's Palace Hotel, which still remains visible in suite 102.
- The **home of Emma Noel**, who lived here with her widowed mother. Emma installed electricity in the home and repaired damage from the 1906 earthquake.
- **U.S. Army Officers Club** for nearby [Camp Fremont](#). Menlo Park was just a village of about 2000 people when the US Army brought in more than 20,000 soldiers and some 10,000 horses for WWI training.
- The **Laurel Grove Hotel**, where in one of the hotel rooms, a man shot his wife and then himself, leading to stories of her ghost still haunting the mansion. The hotel's name is still preserved by the nearby Laurel Grove Apartments.
- A **military academy** for boys.
- The **Marie Antoinette Inn**, a wedding venue (see photo above). By 1946, Emma sold her property, now reduced to 14 acres, to developers who re-sold it in 1947.
- The **Bright Eagle**, Mary J. Rafferty's antique parlor and tea room. Why she chose the name is unclear. Bright Eagle was the name of an Iroquois Confederation chief. Another possible namesake is a \$10 coin minted from 1907 to 1933.
- An expensive **white elephant**. Rafferty had the mansion up for sale, asking \$110,000 in 1973. The City of Menlo Park declined to buy and move the building to the nearby Civic Center. Just four years later, she was able to sell the property, house included, to Bright Eagle Investments Inc. for \$360,000.
- A **five-million-dollar asset**. In 1986, Lakeview Realty Investment Corp. bought the property. Once considered too expensive to maintain, the mansion was sold in 1990 for \$5.2 million. The Bright Eagle Mansion Administrative Office now operates the building.
- A **multi-purpose office building**. Current businesses are listed on the directory inside. They include an exercise studio, investment companies, medical offices, marriage and family therapists.

Continue north along Noel Dr, turn left onto Laurel St. and then right onto Oak Grove Ave to Stop 4, Corpus Cristi Monastery.



Stop 4 - Corpus Christi Monastery

215 Oak Grove Ave

Nursery to Monastery



Corpus Christi Monastery, built in 1927

By the early 1900s, agriculture was thriving in Menlo Park. Oak Grove Avenue was a dirt road and this parcel was a large nursery planted with a variety of fruit trees, decorative trees, bushes and blooming flowers. The nursery was owned and operated by Irish horticultural wizard, Michael Lynch. He sold his plants and flowers to wealthy families living nearby and provided commercial gardening services to Stanford University for its landscaping. Eventually, he expanded his business even further to sell flowers at the San Francisco Flower Market for distribution as far away as Denver and Salt Lake City.



Lynch's Menlo Park Nursery

In 1927, his 50 year-old daughter, Mary Louise Lynch O'Keefe, conveyed this 12.5-acre parcel to a monastic order of [Dominican nuns](#). The Lynch family's nursery and fifteen greenhouses were razed as a new cornerstone was laid and the monastery's construction began.



The sisters living here today are cloistered, devoting their time to prayer, and only have outside contact with their families. The monastery's public chapel is open daily from 6:30 am to 5:30 pm for prayer. Visitors are also welcome to share in the morning [Eucharist](#) at 8:00 am and [Vespers](#) at 5:00 pm. The large chapel is often divided by privacy screens, which are used during services with the sisters on one side and their personal visitors on the other.



The chapel is open daily and visitors are welcome to go inside.

Cross Oak Grove Ave, follow the signs to Stop 5, Vallombrosa Center. Look for the Old Mansion and large ginkgo tree to the right of the round building.



Stop 5 - Vallombrosa Center

250 Oak Grove Ave

Inspired by Paradise Lost



The Old Mansion,
built during the Civil War Era

[Vallombrosa Center](#) is located on a ten-acre site that was originally the home of Edward Whiting Hopkins, the nephew of [Mark Hopkins](#), (one of the Central Pacific Railroad’s [Big Four](#) along with Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and Collis Huntington).

When his uncle died in 1878, Edward succeeded him as Treasurer of the [Southern Pacific Railroad](#). In 1882, he founded the lucrative Union Ice Company. The Hopkins home, known as the Old Mansion, was built during the Civil War period. It was Edward that named it Vallombrosa. Originally a simple wooden structure, it was later expanded and decorated with its distinctive Italianate touches. The grounds are graced by trees from all over the world. The [gingko tree](#) of Chinese origin, located in front of the Old Mansion, is the largest of its kind in the area.

Vallombrosa means “shady glen,” and refers to a beautiful forested valley near Florence, Italy. It was there in 1036 that [St. John Gualbert](#) established a monastery of [Benedictine](#) monks that survives to this day. English poet, [John Milton](#), may or may not have visited that monastery, but he wrote of the “shady glens of Vallombrosa” in his 1667 epic poem, “[Paradise Lost](#)”.



Vallombrosa was purchased by the [Roman Catholic Archdioceses of San Francisco](#) in 1947 to serve as a retreat house for women. The Center now hosts overnight guests as well as a variety of seminars and programs of a spiritual and educational nature.

The Old Mansion’s front porch, the big ginko tree, the Lourdes Grotto, and the “Garden of the Spiritual Works of Mercy” are all nice places to take a break from walking, to enjoy the shade and reflect in these beautiful surroundings. Perhaps even listen to a portion of [Paradise Lost](#).

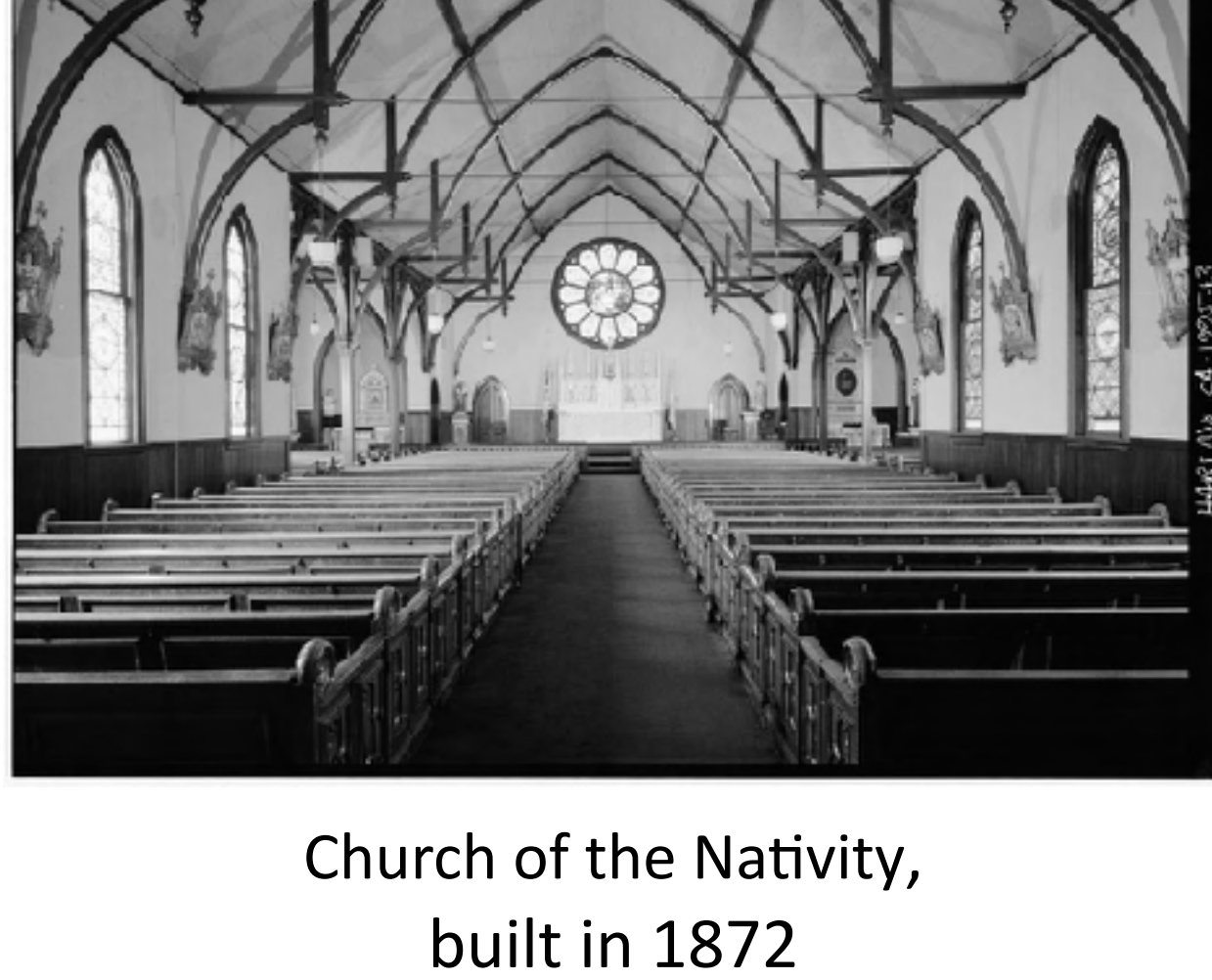
Continue east, through the meditative garden path and the gated doorway, to Stop 6, the front entrance of Church of the Nativity.



Stop 6 - Church of the Nativity

210 Oak Grove Ave

"The roamin' Catholic Church"



Church of the Nativity,
built in 1872

In 1872, as logging in the hills diminished and arriving families settled adjacent to the Bay, [Archbishop Alemany](#) of San Francisco dedicated a chapel on an acre of land at Ringwood and Middlefield roads. This chapel, originally called St. Bridget, was to provide spiritual guidance to the towns in this area, which included Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City, and Palo Alto. Nativity soon grew and was established as a parish in 1877.



The chapel was transported on log rollers from Ringwood Avenue to a location on Santa Cruz Avenue. A year later, in 1878, it was moved once again to its present location. These three moves prompted a local wit to call it "the roamin' Catholic Church".

During the final move, the chapel was enlarged into a church, the present altar and tower were built, and a 1,200-pound bell was forged and installed as a gift of San Francisco industrialist and "Iron King", [Peter Donahue](#). The bell rang for the first time on Christmas day, 1881.



St. Dennis Church, built in 1853

Inside, the six silver candlesticks and the altar crucifix on display had been personally blessed by [Pope Pius IX](#) in Rome. These treasures were originally located at St. Dennis Church, San Mateo County's first church, built in 1853 by [Dennis Martin](#) on his ranch near what is now Stanford University's [Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve](#).

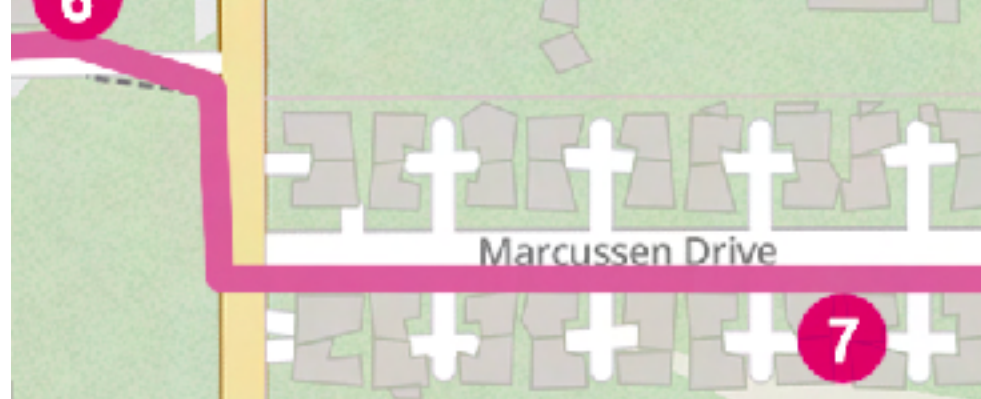


In 1900 the beautiful rose window was donated by the Altar Society and placed over the main altar. The church building was virtually undamaged during the [1906 earthquake](#), but the rectory behind the church suffered heavy damage when a fallen chimney crashed through the roof and trapped several priests on the second floor. They escaped unhurt by climbing down fire department ladders.

[Church of the Nativity](#) was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

Before we leave Oak Grove Ave, let's consider the religious implications of these sites on this street, as oak groves were considered sacred to the [Druids](#). It's quite a coincidence that Menlo Park's Religious Row is on Oak Grove Ave.

Return on Oak Grove heading west, turn left on Marcussen Drive. Walk to Stop 7, 1045 Marcussen Drive.



Stop 7 - Marcussen Drive

1045 Marcussen Drive

Postwar Suburbia



1045 Marcussen Drive, built in 1950

Marcussen Drive is named after Norwegian immigrant, contractor, developer and local property owner Marcus Marcussen, who sailed to California in 1903. By 1915 he was married to Julia Gulbranson and working as a general contractor in San Francisco. In 1918 he registered for the Great War draft. At age 58 and as a father of two daughters, Marcus registered for the WWII draft in 1942 while working for the [Federal Housing Administration](#).

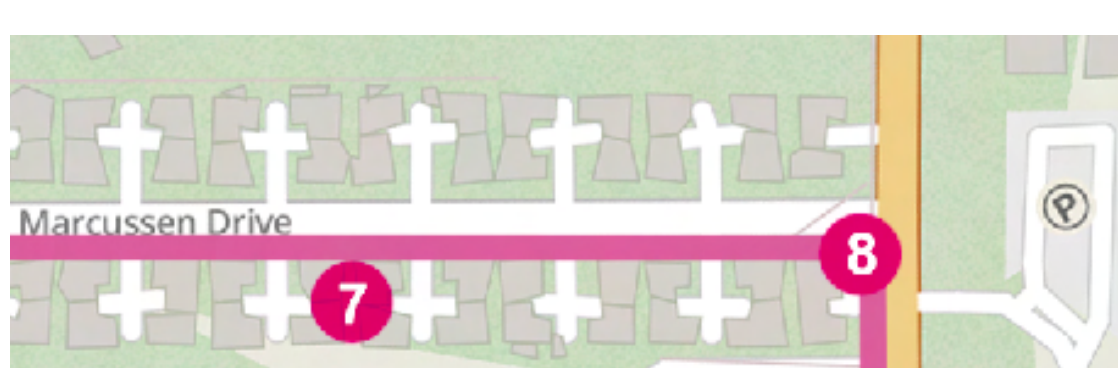


Magazine ad for home appliances

After the war, in 1947, Marcus and Julia purchased this tract and by 1950 were living at 1034 Marcussen Drive. When Julia died two years later, he moved into another house on this street. Over the next decade, Marcus lived at yet a third Marcussen Drive address. Apparently he was building and then living in each of the three homes before they were sold.

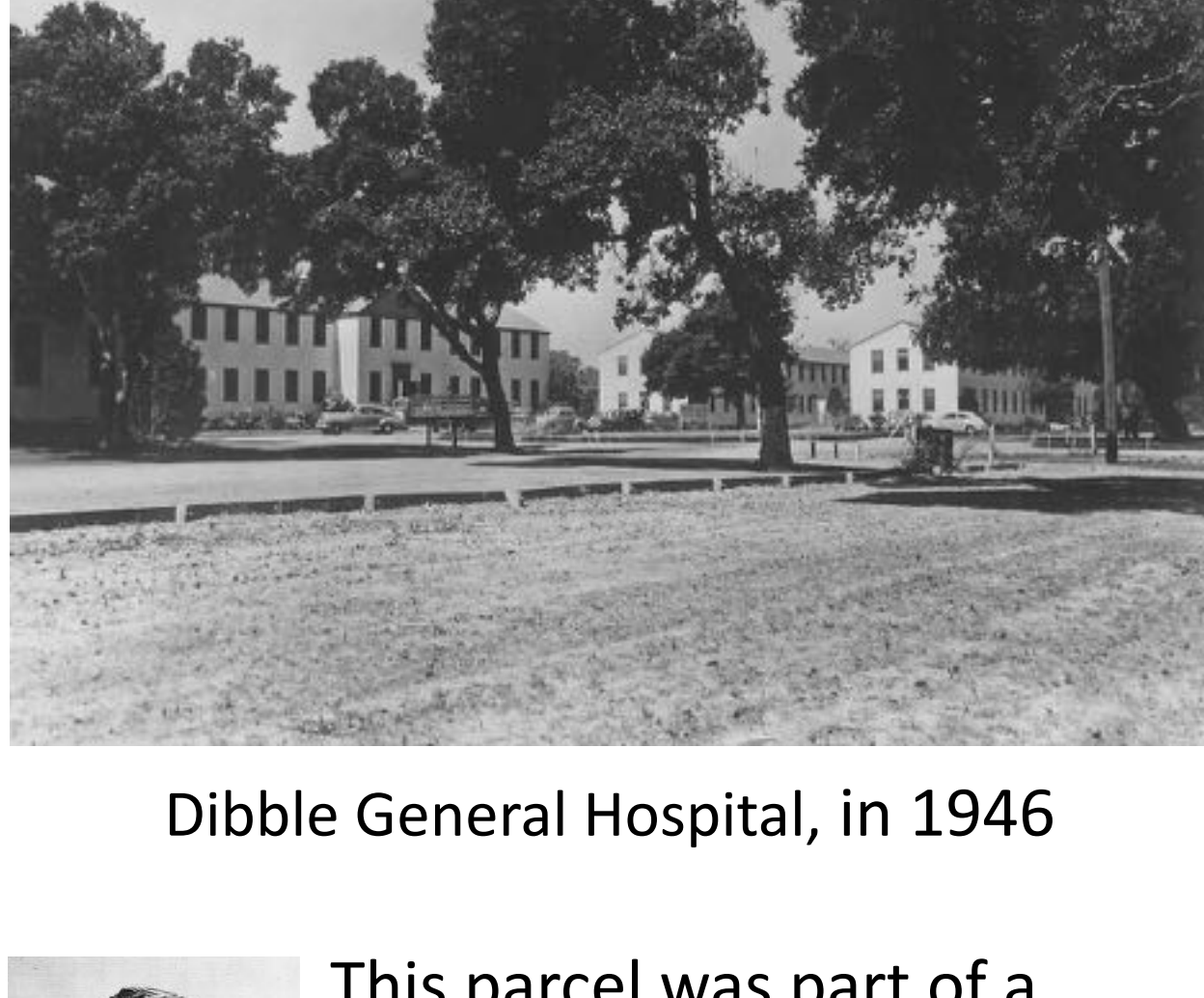
After WWII and into the 1950s, there was an acute shortage of housing in the Bay Area, which resulted in a wave of suburban development and growth on this street and many other areas of Menlo Park. Notice Marcussen's clever lot design and how he optimized the use of shared space between these densely arranged homes.

Continue walking south on Marcussen to Ravenswood Ave and Stop 8, SRI.

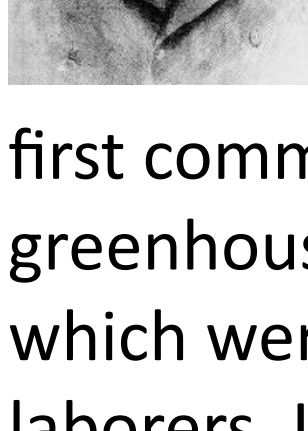


Stop 8 - SRI

333 Ravenswood Ave
The Military Industrial Complex



Dibble General Hospital, in 1946



This parcel was part of a wedding gift in 1888 to [Timothy Hopkins](#) from his adoptive mother, the widow of [Mark Hopkins](#) (Stop 10). Its first commercial use was for acres of greenhouses and decorative flowers which were tended by white and Chinese laborers. In 1893, to avoid mounting newspaper criticism about his labor practices, Hopkins changed the business name from Sherwood Hall Nursery to Sunset Seed and Plant Company.



1897 [Mail order catalog](#)

The Sunset name is not related to [Sunset Magazine](#) which used to be located nearby. After Hopkins died, the land was donated to Stanford University in 1941.

In January of 1943 it was sold to the U.S. Army to build [Dibble General Hospital](#) to treat wounded soldiers and sailors from the War in the Pacific. The hospital was named in honor of Colonel John Dibble who was killed, along with 16 other servicemen, when their transport plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean.

Following the war's end, in 1946, this again became Stanford University property. It included Stanford Village, 17 acres of housing for married students, as well as 60 acres for the [Stanford Research Institute](#) (SRI) an innovative and profitable technology think tank. In 1954, the [U.S. Geologic Survey](#) (USGS) acquired the 17-acre, Stanford Village portion of the land parcel.



Automated banking and check processing at SRI in 1955

In the post-war period, SRI researchers filed thousands of patents and developed many important scientific and technical innovations. In computing for example, SRI was a principal developer of the computer mouse, digital displays, networking, hyperlinks and Apple's eponymous SIRI voice assistant technology.



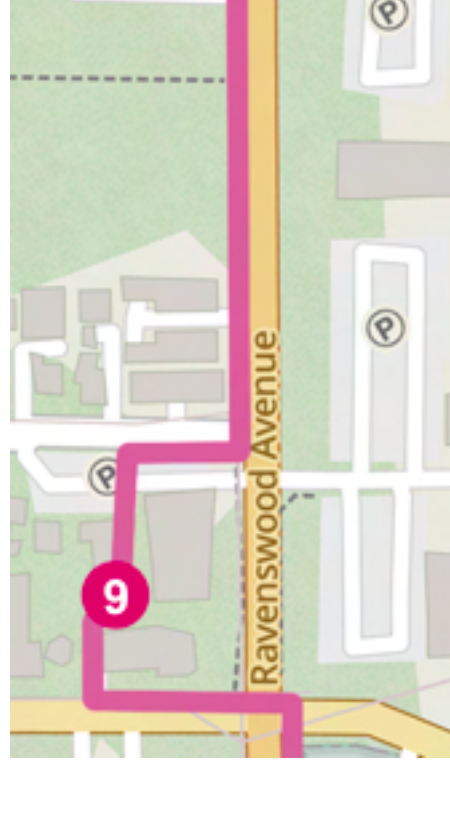
Students protesters being teargassed while blocking the SRI entrance in 1969

Due to Vietnam-era student protests, Stanford University divested itself from SRI in 1970. Renamed [SRI International](#), a non-profit organization, it still adjoins the USGS campus here. However, the USGS is moving to [Moffett Field](#), and this entire land parcel is up for sale and slated for future redevelopment.



As you are walking along Ravenswood Ave, see if you can spot the hidden cross pictured above. It marks the border wall of the Corpus Christi Monastery (Stop 4).

Continue west on Ravenswood Ave, turn right at the first driveway after Pine St. Walk to the middle of the parking lot and turn left into the courtyard at Stop 9, Trinity Episcopal Church.



Stop 9 - Trinity Episcopal Church

330 Ravenswood Ave

The Roving Redwood Chapel



The Redwood Chapel, built in 1884

In 1900 on Encinal Ave (left)

In 1950 at 330 Ravenswood Ave (middle)

In 2015 at 1220 Crane St (right)

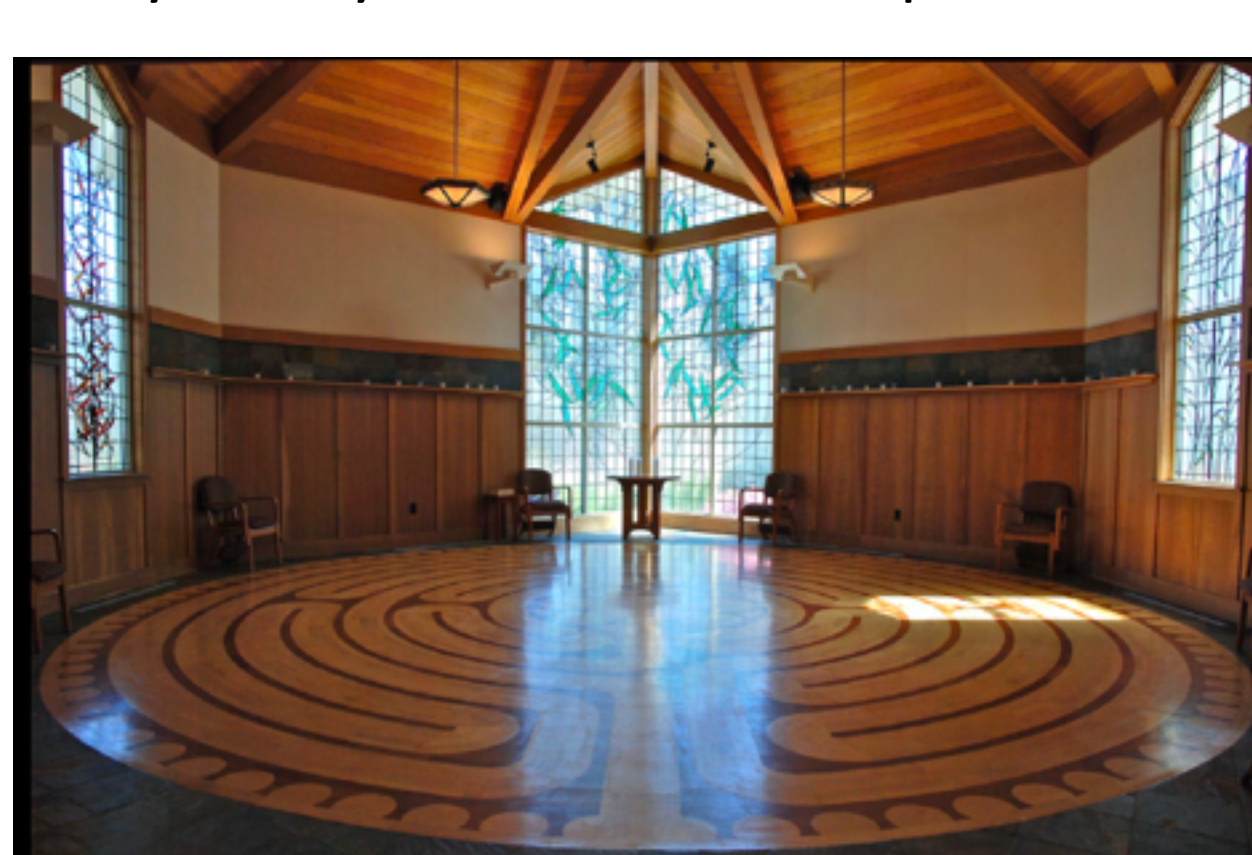
Holy Trinity Church, a small redwood chapel, was built on Encinal Ave in 1884. After [Leland Junior's](#) death, Jane and Leland Stanford preferred attending services at Holy Trinity rather than Menlo's large Presbyterian church on Santa Cruz Ave. On some occasions, both U.S. Senators, Leland Stanford and [Charles Felton](#) attended Holy Trinity when Congress was out of session.

In 1886 Holy Trinity Episcopal Parish was expanded and re-organized to better meet the needs of wealthy San Franciscans summering at their Menlo Park country estates. In 1897 the small redwood chapel was moved from Encinal Ave to 406 Oak Grove Ave and then moved again in 1947 to this location at Pine and Ravenswood.

The post-WWII boom coincided with the development of [Silicon Valley](#) and fueled the growth and expansion of the church. The present church building was constructed here alongside the redwood chapel during the late 1950s.



Holy Trinity exterior and Chapel interior

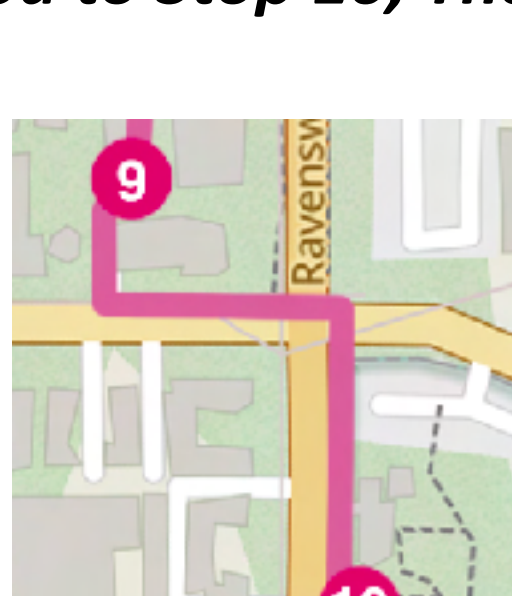


In 1957, the original 1884 redwood chapel building was gifted to the [Russian Orthodox Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church](#). It was moved for a third time, from here to 1220 Crane Street, where it stands today.



Before leaving the property, be sure to look at Montgomery House. Built in 1914, the house features a large porch and a row of classic white columns. It was named in memory of Reverend Hugh E. Montgomery (who was pastor from 1913 to 1922) and is presently used as the church office.

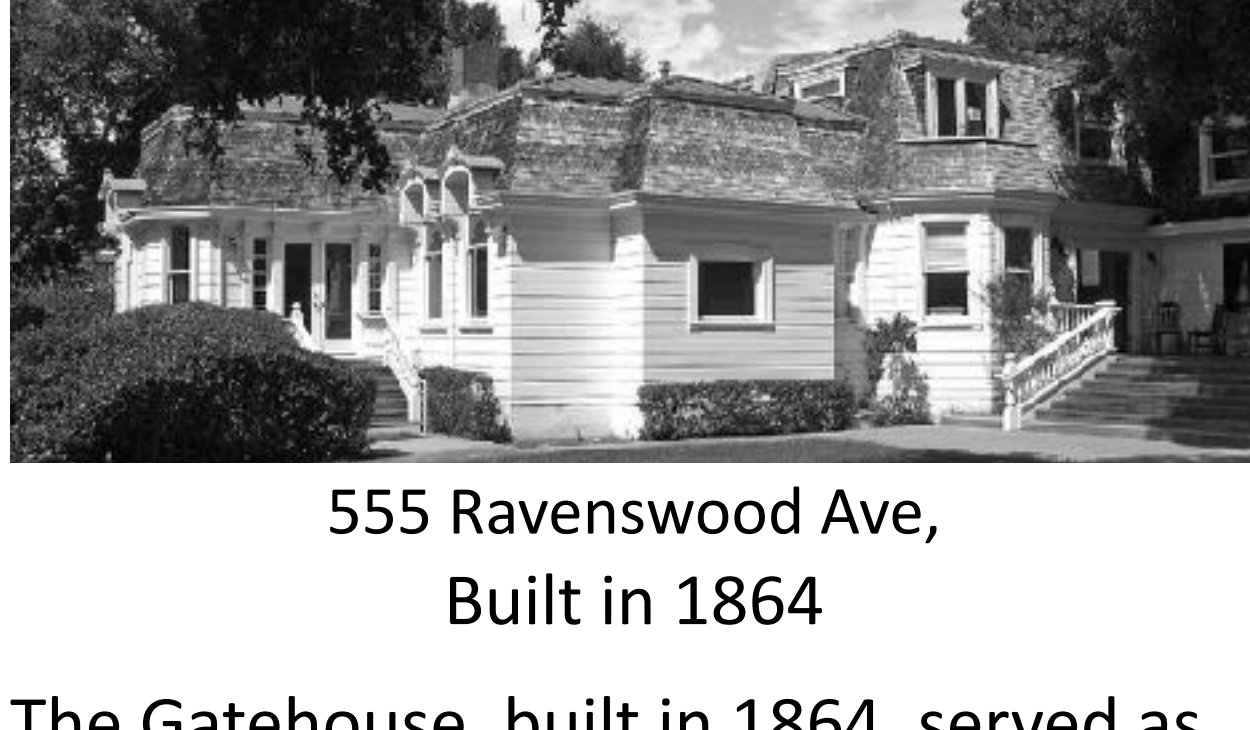
Return to, and continue west on Ravenswood to Stop 10, The Gatehouse.



Stop 10 - The Gatehouse

555 Ravenswood Ave

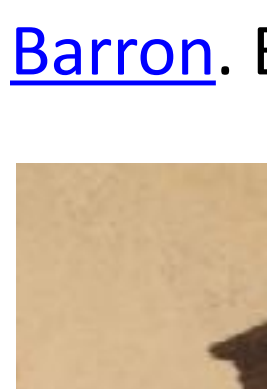
Gatehouse to Former Mansions



555 Ravenswood Ave,

Built in 1864

The Gatehouse, built in 1864, served as an entrance to several large estates at this site. The Gatehouse (also known as the Gate Lodge) is Menlo Park's oldest existing building.

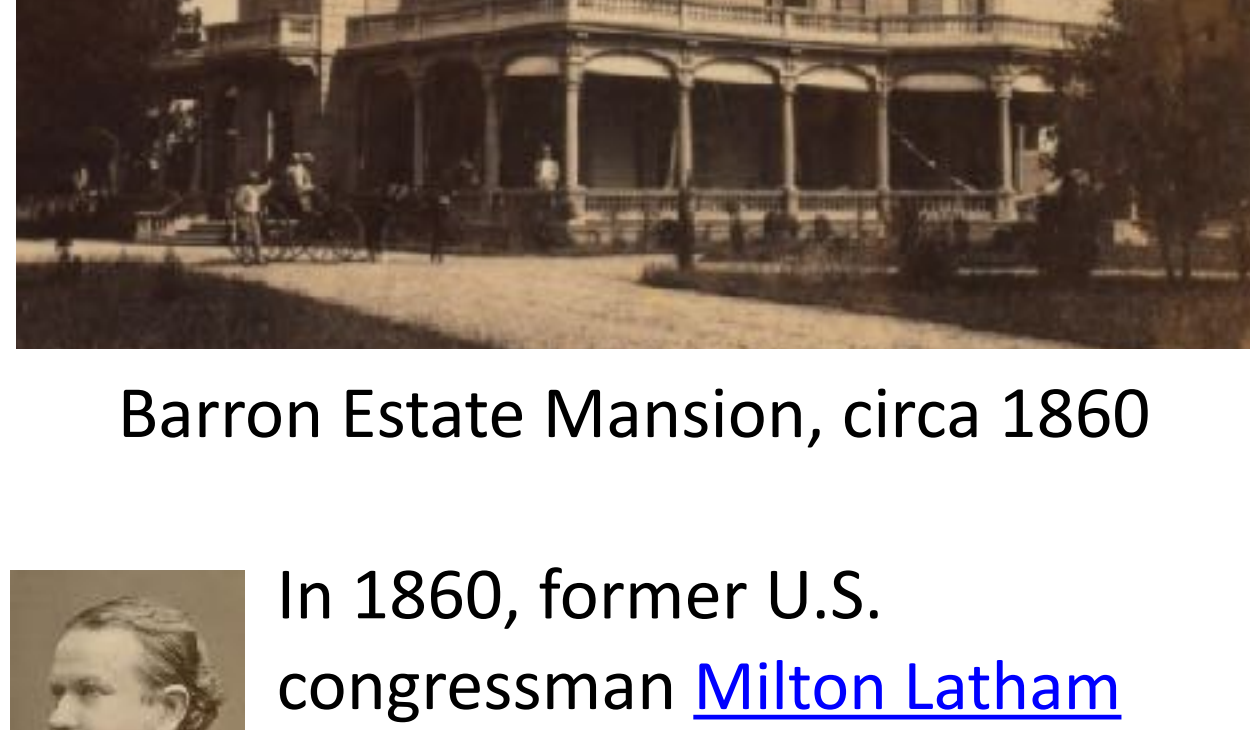


Initially, the Gatehouse served the 280-acre **Barron Estate**,

which featured a 40-room

mansion built by [William E.](#)

[Barron](#). Barron died at age 49 in 1871.



Barron Estate Mansion, circa 1860



In 1860, former U.S.

congressman [Milton Latham](#)

became Governor of California.

He'd been elected over a

Northern Democrat and Leland Stanford, a Republican. Five days into term, he resigned his Sacramento office to seek a vacant U.S. Senate seat. The state legislature approved, and he took office once more in Washington D.C. Latham was a political star and the youngest serving senator at that time.

Latham's wife, Sophie, died in 1867.

After three years as a widower, at age 43 and now a banker with a lavish estate in San Francisco, he married 24-year-old Mary McMullen. Latham bought the former Barron Estate for \$75,000 as a gift to his new wife and immediately began renovating it. Eager to move in, he had the house filled with oil stoves and hot fireplaces to dry the new paint more quickly. Unfortunately, the house caught fire and burned to the ground. He then set about rebuilding it, naming his lavish new mansion **Thurlow Lodge**.



Thurlow Lodge in 1874



Latham died in 1882 at age

54, triggering the sale of his

Menlo Park estate, which

was purchased in 1883 by

[Mary Sherwood Hopkins](#), the

widow of Mark Hopkins, then one of the richest women in the United States. She renamed the estate **Sherwood Hall** and

in 1888 gave it as a wedding gift to her

adopted son, [Timothy Hopkins](#), following

his marriage to her niece, Mary Kellogg

Crittenden.



By 1885, at age 26, Timothy

had been appointed to the

Stanford University's first

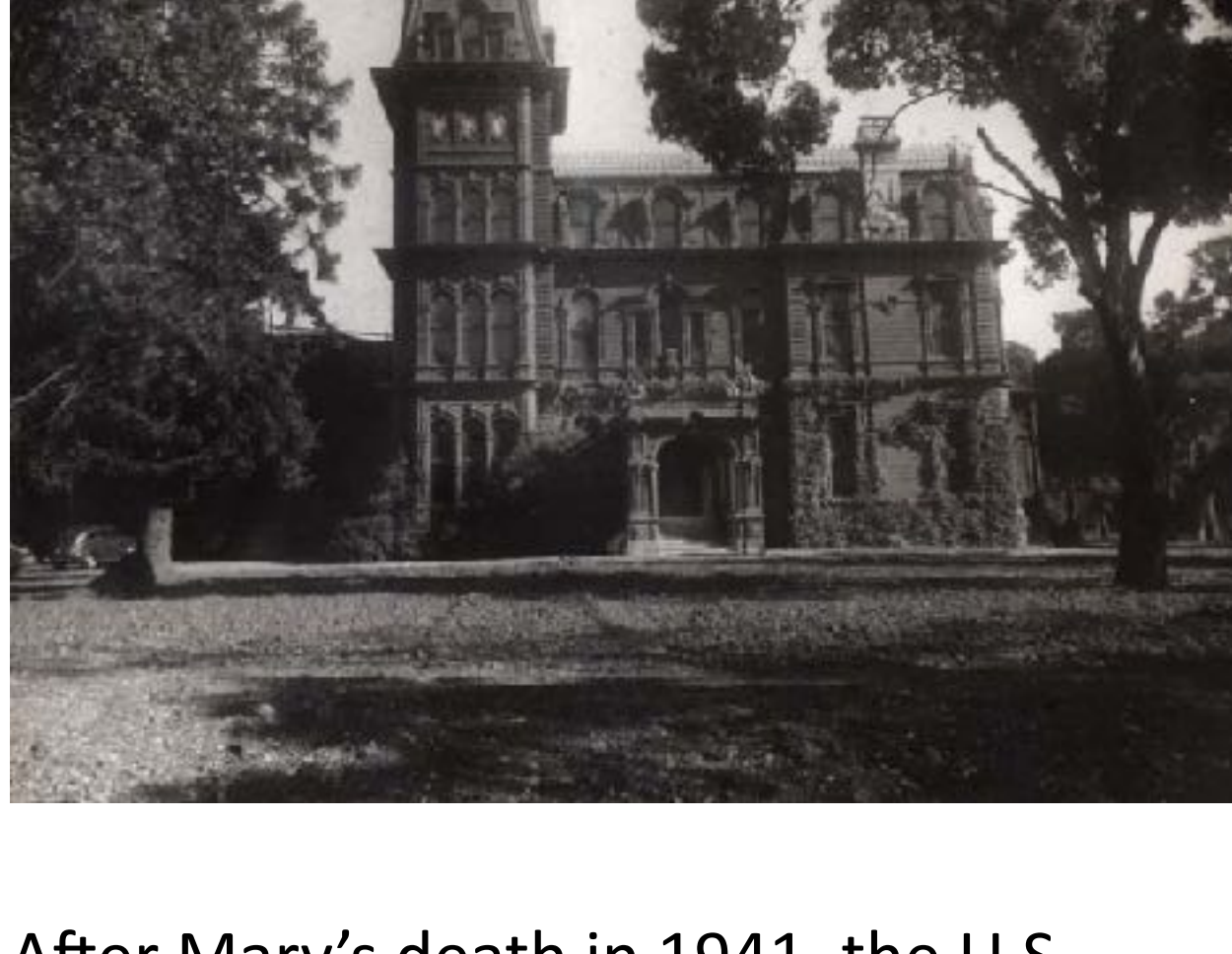
Board of Trustees and played

fundamental roles in the

creation and development of the new

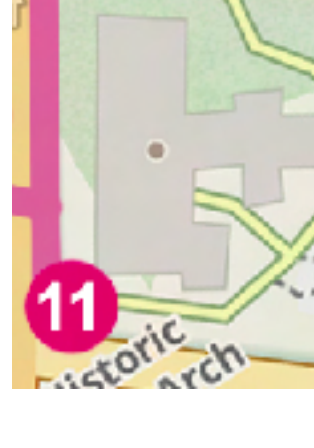
university and the town of Palo Alto.

During the [1906 earthquake](#), ruptured gas lines at Sherwood Hall rendered the main house unsafe. Timothy and Mary moved permanently into the adjacent Gatehouse and lived here the rest of their lives. He served as a University Trustee for 51 years until his death in 1936.



After Mary's death in 1941, the U.S. Government purchased the grounds for the construction of [Dibble General Hospital](#) (Stop 8) at the onset of WWII. Sherwood Hall was demolished. The City of Menlo Park purchased an unused portion of the Hopkins land in 1968 for a new Civic Center. In 1996, the Gatehouse was renovated by the City of Menlo Park with financial assistance from the [Palo Alto Junior League](#), which remains the building's sole tenant.

Continue west along Ravenswood Ave past the Menlo Park Library to Alma St and Stop 11, The Menlo Park Gates.



Stop 11 - Menlo Park Gates

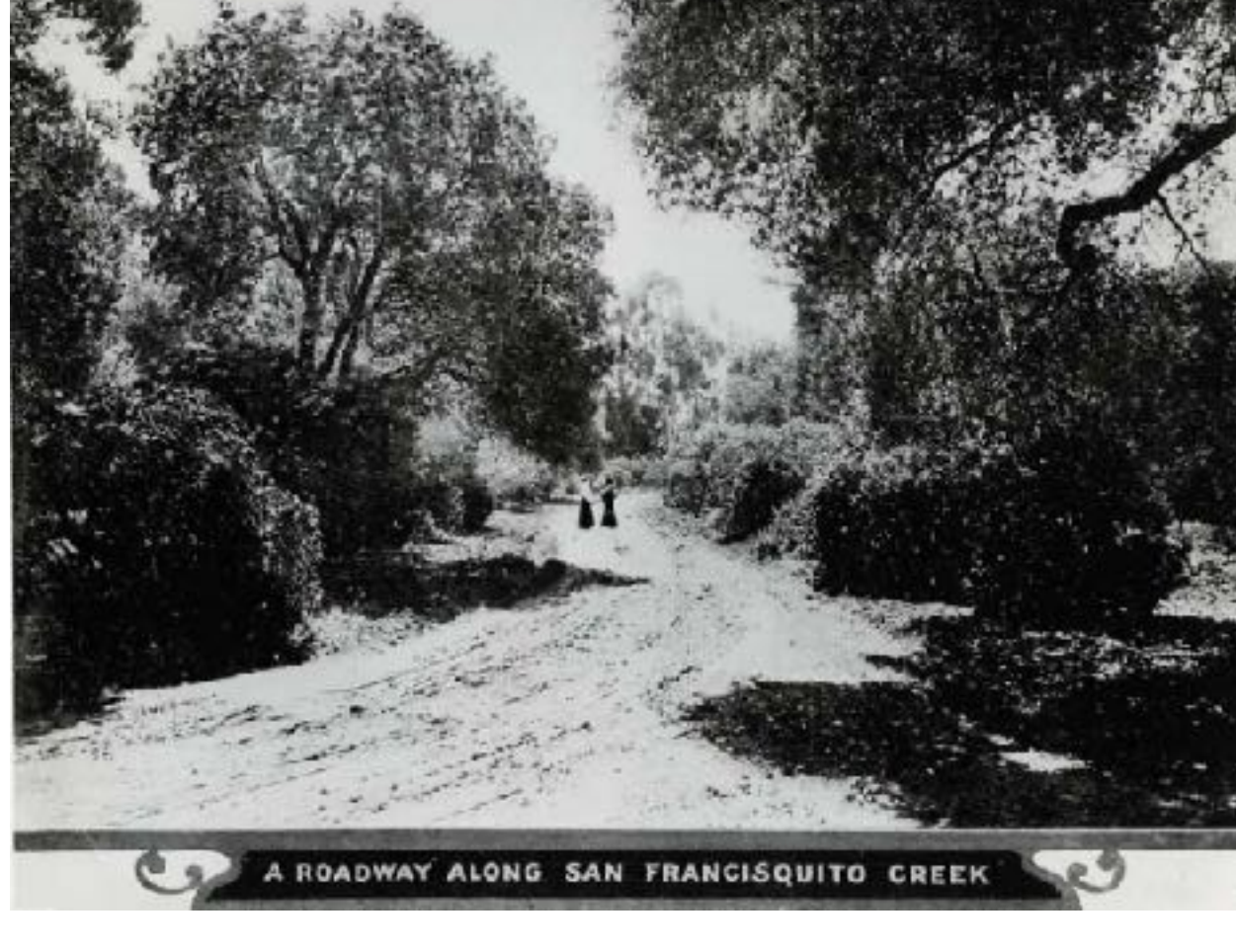
555 Ravenswood Ave

How Menlo Got Its Name



The Menlo Park Gateway, Built in 1854

Around 1853, after a disastrous fire had burnt down [Denis Oliver's](#) successful paint business in San Francisco, he and his brother-in-law, Daniel McGlynn, journeyed south of San Francisco seeking land for real estate investment opportunities. Denis was an Irish immigrant who had arrived in New York City where he met and married Bridget McGlynn, also an Irish immigrant. Her younger brother, Daniel, was born in New York City.



Close to San Francisquito Creek, which marked the county line, the brothers-in-law found and acquired property along the dusty stagecoach road. A railway had been surveyed to run parallel to the then lightly-traveled road connecting to San Jose. To mark the entrance to their new ranch, they had a large gateway constructed with a redwood archway on which Denis had painted MENLO PARK, in honor of [Menlough](#), a delightful village near his hometown of [Galway](#), Ireland. Above the gate they painted “August 1854.” The gate was finished the following January.

Funding and construction of [the railroad](#) was delayed until San Francisco industrialist and “Iron King” [Peter Donahue](#) got involved and Peninsula voters in all three counties voted to approve the public purchase of railroad company stock in 1861. The expensive railroad project was plagued with added controversy when laborers from San Francisco’s Chinatown were employed to reduce its construction costs.



Locomotive #11 of the SF&SJ Railroad

After just about a year of ownership, Denis and Daniel had given up and let their ranch revert to the mortgage lender. The two men went their separate business ways, returning to San Francisco, though Denis continued to own other property in the Menlo Park area. The railroad finally arrived in 1863. The faded MENLO PARK lettering was still visible across what is now [El Camino Real](#), near the current Guild Theater, facing the tracks. Menlo Park became the name of the railroad work camp while the rail bridge over the creek was being built. The name was kept for the new rail depot and later given to the town that grew around it.



On the early morning of July 7th 1922, the wooden Menlo Park gateway was struck by “two automobiles, filled with singing passengers,” collapsing the then 68-year-old structure into a heap of splinters.

In the mid-2010s, individual members of the [Menlo Park Historical Association](#) (MPHA) formed the Menlo Gates Committee to faithfully reconstruct the iconic structure. The gateway is now termed “Gates” because the tall, wagon-wide gate is flanked by two pedestrian gates, one for each Irish partner of the original ranch. The Committee decided to build the Gates with redwood, as had been originally done, and to give the wood surface an aged look to replicate how an 1854 gate might appear after 165 years. The replica gate you see here was dedicated on St. Patrick’s Day, 2019.

Cross Ravenswood, turn left to cross the RR tracks and return to Stop 1, the Train Station.



Thank you for taking this tour!

Please [rate and provide feedback.](#)



The Menlo Park Historical Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of Menlo Park and surrounding areas.

Join us on [FaceBook](#)

www.mphistory.org

**800 Alma Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025-3445
650-330-2522**

Copyright 2023
Menlo Park Historical Association.
All rights reserved.