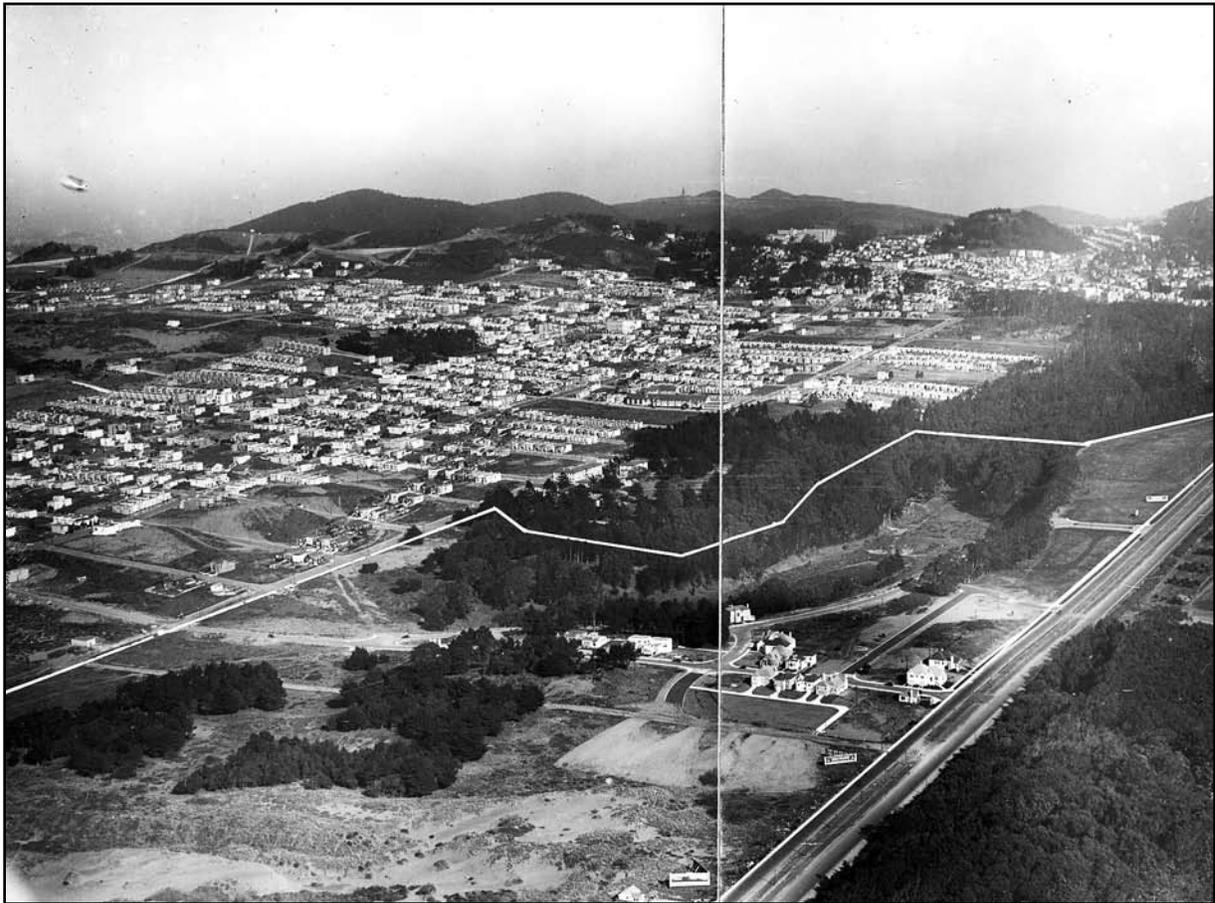


San Francisco's Parkside District: 1905 - 1957

A historical context statement by Richard Brandi and Woody LaBounty
of the Western Neighborhoods Project

Produced for the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development
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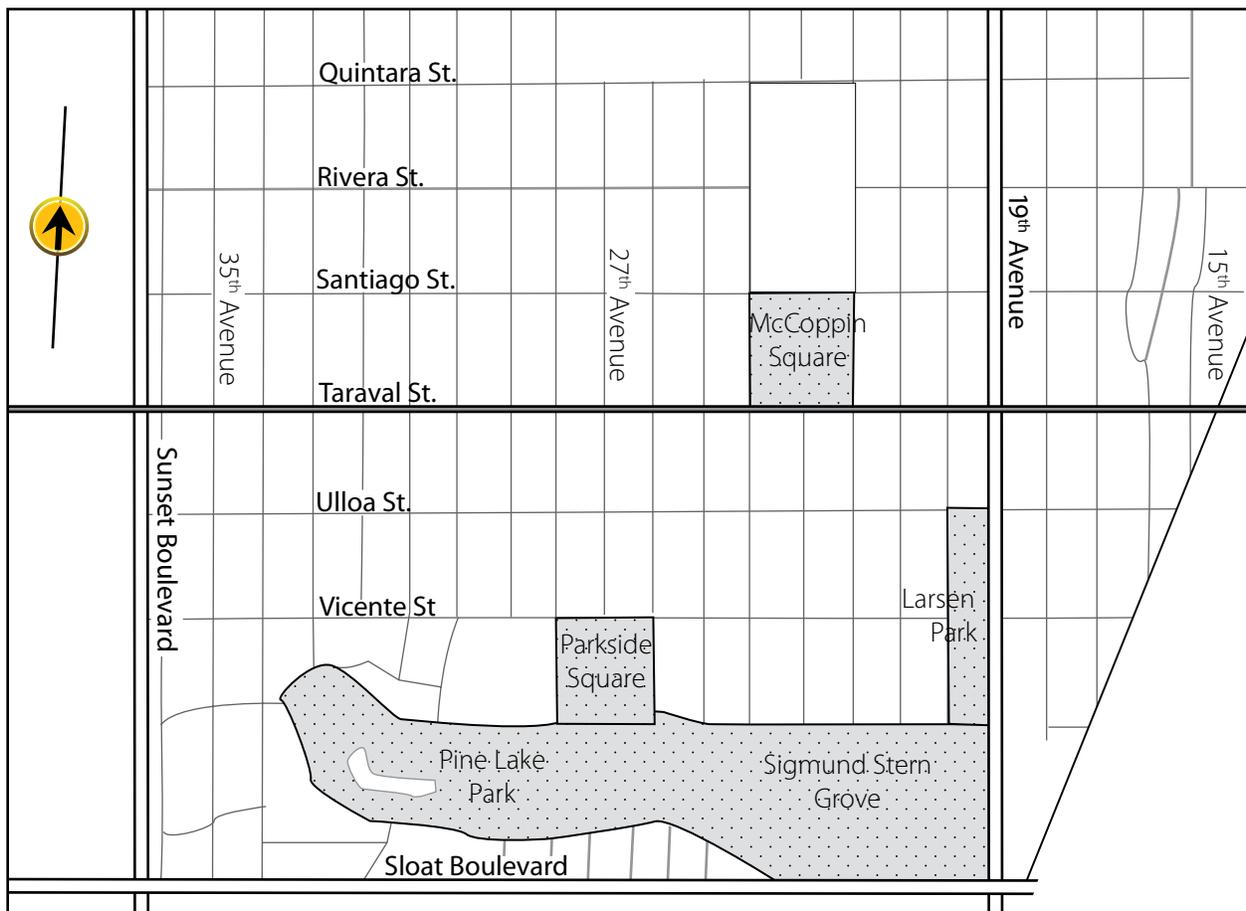
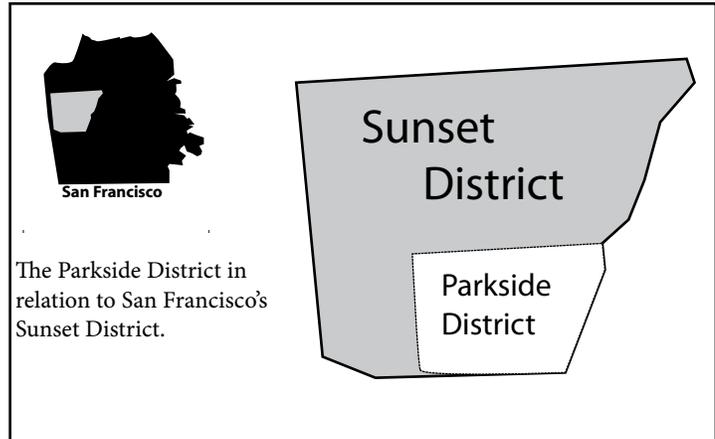


Parkside District and Stern Grove/Pine Lake Park, looking east to Twin Peaks in 1928. Courtesy of Society of California Pioneers.

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Parkside District of San Francisco



The diagonal southeast boundary of the Parkside District abuts the former Rancho San Miguel property, which developed separately as the West Portal neighborhood.

Introduction

Over 100 years old, the Parkside District is still considered one of San Francisco's newer neighborhoods. Part of the greater Sunset District, the Parkside nonetheless has always had a distinct identity created by strong civic groups that nurtured a residential community that felt almost suburban in a big city.

The early residents of the Parkside confronted a land without streetlights or sidewalks, with more rabbits than people. Remote and without political clout, Parksidians learned to band together and speak loudly for streetcar and sewer lines, fire stations, parks, libraries, and schools. They held festivals, dinners, costume balls, and children's fairs to celebrate their community and built one of San Francisco's strongest and most admired neighborhoods out of what was formerly an expanse of dune and scrub.

Craftsman- and Shingle-style architecture typified the first Parkside dwellings, before almost-identical houses filled in the district in the 1920s and 1930s. These familiar stucco buildings, the Sunset District's predominant architectural style, were constructed by ambitious merchant-builders who brought assembly-line manufacturing to house building. Many of the Parkside's "cookie-cutter" houses, well-maintained in a district with one of San Francisco's highest home-ownership levels, can surprise the observer with intriguing decorative elements.

Like many parts of San Francisco, the Parkside is under development pressure as real estate prices rise and land use decisions for a growing city with limited space become more difficult. This historical context statement is designed as a resource for anyone interested in knowing the Parkside District better, and to help make any decision about property and development in this unique San Francisco neighborhood an informed one.



2476-20th Avenue. Built by the Parkside Realty Company in 1922. September 2007 photo.



Taraval Police Station, 2345-24th Avenue. Renovated in 1996. September 2007 photo.

Methodology



Parkside History Day at the Dianne Feinstein Elementary School, June 15, 2007.

The authors conducted primary research at the San Francisco Public Library, Society of California Pioneers Library in San Francisco, California State Library in Sacramento, and Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. Information from microfilmed newspapers, historic Sanborn maps from 1915 and 1928, and City Directories from 1905 to 1930 was gathered and analyzed. The ownership of selected properties found in early block books and in records at the San Francisco Assessor's Office was also tracked.

US Census records from 1900, 1910, 1920, and 2000 provided information on population demographics.

The scrapbooks of the Parkside District Improvement Club offered invaluable information on early life in the Parkside, especially the history of that important organization. The original scrapbooks can be found in the San Francisco History Center at the San Francisco Main Library and excellent bound copies are held at the Parkside branch of the San Francisco Library.

Internet searches of library holdings, digitized newspapers, and academic papers were also conducted, along with the analysis of historical photographs from libraries, businesses, and private collectors. We thank Greg Gaar in particular for sharing his impressive holdings.

The Western Neighborhoods Project held a public forum on June 15, 2007 at the Dianne Feinstein Elementary School at the Parkside Campus, where photographs, property/deed records, and ephemera from the community were scanned for evaluation and analysis.

Interviews with current and former Parkside residents were conducted, along with consultation with neighborhood historians. The authors thank the following for their draft reviews and insight: Inge Horton, Nancy Wuerfel, and Mark Duffet of the community group *SPEAK*; former Parkside resident, architect and Assistant Professor of the Design Program at University of California, Davis, Mark Keesler; and particularly author and Sunset District authority Lorri Ungaretti for her suggestions and editing. An invaluable professional peer review was conducted by architectural historian Christopher VerPlanck.

While a distinct neighborhood, the Parkside District's development and history has generally aligned with the Sunset District. This document addresses some influential businesses, people, and events that were near, if not within, the Parkside's boundaries.

Part 1

Name of Context: Parkside District 1905-1957

Theme: Streetcar Suburbs/Automobile Suburbs

Time Period: 1905–1957

Geographic Limits: Parkside District section of San Francisco's Sunset District

Theme

Now part of a major American city, the Parkside District's initial remoteness from developed San Francisco meant it demonstrated, with some important exceptions, a pattern of suburbanization that occurred in the United States from 1900 to 1960. *The National Park Service Bulletin: Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*¹ identifies four major eras of transportation technologies that influenced residential suburbs nationally:

1. Horsecar and Railroad Suburbs, 1830 to 1890
2. Streetcar Suburbs, 1888 to 1928
3. Early Automobile Suburbs, 1908 to 1945
4. Post-World War II and Early Freeway Suburbs, 1945 to 1960

The Parkside District was primarily developed after the horsecar and railroad eras and before World War II and mirrors the patterns associated with historic residential suburbs of the streetcar and early automobile periods.

Horsecar and Railroad Suburbs, 1830 to 1890

By the mid-1860s, horsecar systems and railroad commuting operated in many East Coast cities. Horse-drawn cars increased the commute distance from two to three miles, while railroad suburbs offered the upper and upper-middle classes an escape from the city altogether.²

Development of the Parkside and the area west of Twin Peaks lagged behind that of the city. No horsecars and few railroad lines operated west of Twin Peaks. The building of a railroad to San Jose in 1862 stimulated the growth of a string of suburban towns from Burlingame to Atherton; but the line was too far east (along the alignment of Interstate 280) to provide access to the Parkside.

The invention of the cable car in San Francisco in 1873 made it possible to surmount San Francisco's hills. It was also faster than the horsecar (9 miles per hour vs. 4 to 6 miles per hour) and more economical.³ The cable car stimulated residential development in the Western Addition, Noe Valley, Hayes Valley, and the Mission but no cable car line operated near the Parkside.

1 <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/part1.htm> accessed September 4, 2007.

2 <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/part1.htm> accessed September 4, 2007.

3 George W. Hilton, *The Cable Car in America: A New Treatise upon Cable or Rope Traction as Applied to the Working of Street and Other Railways*. Berkeley: Howell North Books, 1971, page 31.



Taraval Street, looking towards 19th Avenue, 1959. Courtesy of J.E. Tillmany.

Streetcar Suburbs, 1888 to 1928

The introduction of the first electric-powered streetcar in Richmond, Virginia, in 1887 ushered in a new period of suburbanization. Faster and cheaper, it quickly replaced horse-drawn cars and cable cars nationwide.⁴ In many cities, low fares encouraged households to move further out from the city center where the cost of land and new housing was cheaper. Neighborhood businesses such as grocery stores, bakeries, and drugstores, soon followed the new dwellings along the streetcar routes.

The streetcar was the impetus to the founding and the growth of the Parkside District. The establishment and improvement of public transportation to create better access to downtown increased development and population in the neighborhood. The route of the main streetcar line, Taraval Street, became the business core for the Parkside during the 1920s, and it remains the main commercial street to the present day.

Although buses replaced most streetcar lines in San Francisco, as they did in many U.S. cities during the late 1940s and 1950s, the presence of the Twin Peaks and Sunset Tunnels ensured the retention of streetcars on municipally-run lines that used these tunnels.⁵ Streetcar ridership nationwide dropped precipitously after World War II, due to the increase in automobile ownership and decentralization of industry to locations outside the central city.

Early Automobile Suburbs: 1908 to 1945

The introduction of the Model-T automobile by Henry Ford in 1908 spurred the third stage of suburbanization, this time based on the automobile. Between 1910 and 1930, automobile registrations in the United States increased from 458,000 to nearly 22 million. The rise of automobile ownership stimulated an intense period of suburban expansion between 1918 and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929.⁶

The automobile made it much easier to live in the Parkside District, particularly when city engineer Michael O'Shaughnessy began building in 1915 a system of what he called "scenic" roads in San Francisco. This coincided with an era of highway building, when more than 420,000 miles of roads were built in the United States.⁷ During the 1920s and 1930s, new or improved thoroughfares leading to or through the Parkside District included 19th Avenue, Sloat Boulevard, the Great Highway, Portola Drive, Twin Peaks Boulevard, Junipero Serra Boulevard, and Sunset Boulevard.

4 San Francisco lagged in adaptation to electric streetcars because of its transportation companies' large investment in cable technologies and public objections to unsightly overhead wires that electric cars employed.

5 There were various proposals to convert the tunnels for bus or automobile use: "...all the streetcar lines might have been scrapped if the Twin Peaks Tunnel and the N-line's Sunset Tunnel had been wide enough for buses." <http://www.streetcar.org/mim/spotlight/yesterday/castro/index.html>, accessed September 6, 2007.

6 "Trends In Urban And Metropolitan Transportation," *The National Park Service Bulletin: Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*.

7 Ibid.

Post-World War II and Early Freeway Suburbs: 1945 to 1960

After 15 years of economic depression and war, the country was ripe for a housing boom. Many of the 15 million servicemen and women released from duty quickly married and started families. This exacerbated what had already been a nationwide housing shortage caused by the hordes of workers who moved into the cities during the war. San Francisco and the Bay Area were especially hard hit.⁸ For the Parkside, and the Sunset in general, this meant that any remaining home sites were eagerly seized,⁹ regardless of the foggy weather and smaller plots compared to the East Bay and South Bay suburbs.¹⁰

While the interstate highway system exerted considerable influence on patterns of suburbanization in the nation and the Bay Area in the 1950s, freeways did not significantly influence the development in the Parkside. Although plans were made to cross San Francisco with a network of freeways, including the “Western Freeway” along Junipero Serra Boulevard through the eastern edge of the Parkside, the late 1950s “freeway revolt” with protests by civic groups—including Parkside organizations—killed it.¹¹

Time Period

This context statement examines the Parkside District between 1905 and 1957—from the Parkside’s founding to fifty years prior to this document’s publication. Resources more than fifty years old are considered potentially historic, and possibly eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historic Resources, or as a San Francisco City Landmark.

Geographic Limits

The Parkside District lies in the southwestern quadrant of San Francisco, a sub-section of the better-known Sunset District. The boundaries of the Parkside consist of Quintara Street on the north, Sloat Boulevard on the south, 36th Avenue/Sunset Boulevard on the west and a diagonal eastern boundary line that abuts on the former Rancho San Miguel property, running from 12th Avenue on the north to 19th Avenue and Sloat on the south.¹² The houses,



Taraval and 21st Avenue, looking west in 1946 and below in 2007.



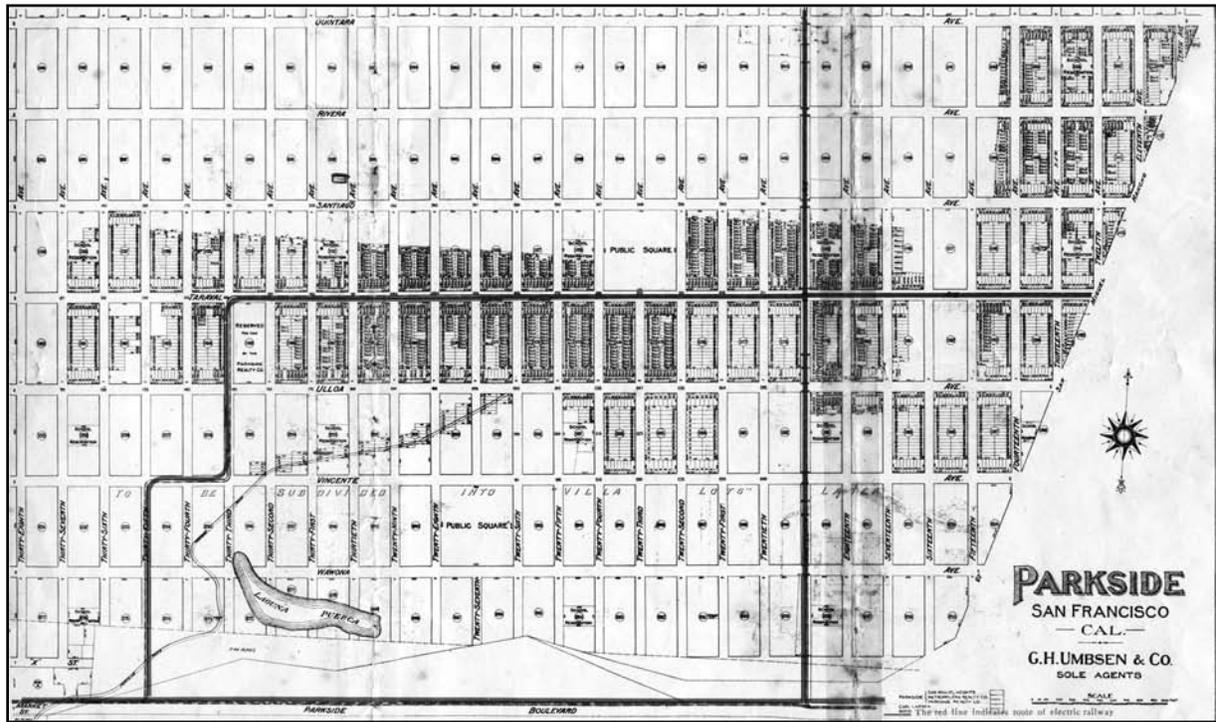
8 The civilian population of the Bay Area increased by over half a million, or 25.9 percent between 1940 and 1945. Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*, University of California Press, 1993, page 33.

9 In 1944, only two-thirds of the lots in the Sunset were occupied by houses, *Memorandum Report Rezoning of the Sunset District*, San Francisco Planning Department, April 20, 1944.

10 Ibid. The average lot area was 2,665 square feet in the Sunset compared to 4,000 square foot *minimums* in the East and South Bay.

11 Richard Brandi, *San Francisco’s West Portal Neighborhoods*, Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005, page 127.

12 Before 1909, the alphabetical street names in the Sunset and Parkside District were known only by initial letters (U Street, V Street, etc.) The Parkside Realty Company petitioned to create full names for the streets, keeping the initial letter to avoid confusion. One exception to this rule is Lincoln Way, which was originally known as H Street. In this report we will use the initial letter street name when examining pre-1909 events. More information on the street name change can be found at <http://www.outsidelands.org/street-names.php>.



Parkside real estate map issued by G.H. Umbesen and Co., circa 1910. Darker lines represent the projected electric railway lines. Today's Sigmund Stern Grove and Pine Lake Park are noted to be "subdivided into Villa Lots later." The company never developed the deep forested gully, which became city parkland in the 1930s.

businesses, and people within these original boundaries are the focus of this context statement, although it will address other definitions of the Parkside's geographic limits.

Civic groups and developers have in various eras claimed the Parkside's boundaries to continue as far west as Ocean Beach. Long-time residents often disagree on where they "feel" the Parkside starts and ends, but all concur that its heart is the commercial corridor on Taraval Street from 19th Avenue to 24th Avenue.¹³

Although planned and developed as an individual neighborhood, the Parkside is now generally considered part of the Sunset District.¹⁴ The name "Sunset" once defined just the area centered around Ninth Avenue and Irving Street, but its use spread to encompass most of the southwest quadrant of the city as development replaced open sand dunes and knitted distinct neighborhoods together. To most San Franciscans, all of the land south of Golden Gate Park, north of Sloat Boulevard, and west of the Golden Gate Heights ridge line is synonymous with the Sunset District.

The Parkside consists of 795 acres and is home to 22,899 people. As of 2000, demographically, the Parkside is 54% Asian, 41% white, 4% Hispanic and 1% African-American. Two-thirds of the residents live in owner-occupied dwellings and one-third are renters.¹⁵ The neighborhood has a large proportion of open space, with Stern Grove and Pine Lake Park on its southern edge, and three spacious city parks: McCoppin Square, Parkside Square, and Larsen Park.

The buildings in this mostly residential area generally extend the full width of their lots. While building heights range from one to four stories, and uses include commercial, residential, and combinations of both, the vast majority of structures are one-story residences over garages. With the exception of a handful of buildings, development in the Parkside didn't begin until 1905.¹⁶ New structures continue to replace older ones today, but the Parkside was almost entirely developed by 1960, and the majority of the extant building stock dates from 1915 to 1940.

13 At its first meeting in 1908, the Parkside District Improvement Club set the district's boundaries as S (Santiago) Street on the north, Sloat Boulevard on the south, 12th Avenue on the east, and 47th Avenue on the west. (*Sunset Journal*, January 1910). In later decades, as development filled in the sand dunes to the north, the club moved its jurisdiction accordingly. The SF Prospector (<http://www.SFgov.org>) defines the Parkside District as lying between 19th Avenue, Ortega Avenue, 36th Avenue, and Sigmund Stern Grove/Pine Lake.

14 The San Francisco Board of Realty designates the Parkside as a district and 18 businesses in the 2007 AT&T White Pages use "Parkside" in their name.

15 Based on the 2000 Census, from SF Prospector (<http://www.SFgov.org>), accessed October 9, 2007.

16 The Trocadero, addressed in the "Notable Buildings" section, is the only known extant structure predating 1905.

Part 2

Synthesis of Information

Parkside Historical Overview and Context

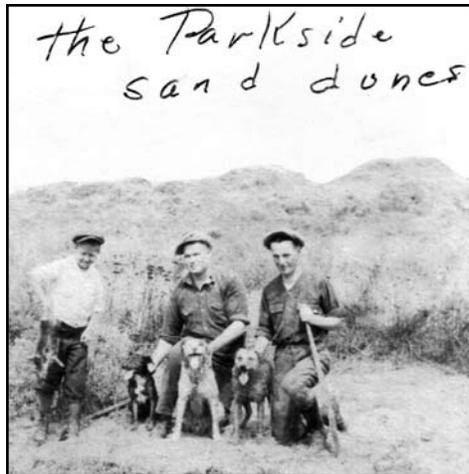
Natural History

Sand is the great natural feature of much of San Francisco including the Sunset and Parkside Districts. Formed by the action of the Pacific Ocean, the sand dunes are as deep as 100 feet in places.¹⁷ Harold Gilliam's description:

This city is literally founded on sand, and the peaks are isolated outcrops of bedrock protruding above the rolling dunes. The eighteenth century explorers noted that the area consisted principally of dunes, and the first Forty-Niners often were disgusted to find their tents and shanties half buried in the drifts. The perennial sea winds, roaring across the tip of the peninsula for eons, had brought with it two elements created by the ocean—the flowing fogs and the drifting sand.¹⁸



Parkside brush and sand dunes, 1910s.
Courtesy of Ada and Chas. Williams.



Rabbit hunting party, circa 1910.
Courtesy of Ada and Chas. Williams.

Most of the land in the Parkside and greater Sunset area was covered in loose blowing sand dunes. Creeks running down from Golden Gate Heights were blocked by the sand dunes and a series of tidal and freshwater ponds and lakes were created. The most significant were Lake Merced and Laguna Puerca (now Pine Lake¹⁹), but many smaller bodies were scattered about the area. The seasonal freshwater ponds supported wildlife and plants. In spite of strong winds, salt spray, and poor soils, a number of grasses, herbaceous species, and a few shrubs survived on the dunes.

The most successful flora was dune grass (*Leymus mollis*), but salt rush (*Juncos Lesueurii*), Pacific wild rye (*Leymus pacificus*), and sand-dune blue grass (*Poa douglasii*) were also common. Low-growing species, like sand verbena (*Abronia latifolia*), California salt bush (*Atriplex californica*), beach strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*), and sea plantain (*Plantago maritima*) also helped to stabilize dunes. Yellow bush lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*) and chamisso beach lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*) were the most conspicuous shrubby plants, the latter being most common where sand gave way to dirt. Coastal sagewort (*Artemisia pycnocephala*) and coyotebrush were also found, but trees were absent because their roots could not anchor them in the loose sands.²⁰

¹⁷ Harold Gilliam and Michael Bry, *The Natural World of San Francisco*, Garden City: Double Day & Co., 1966, page 34.

¹⁸ Gilliam *op cit.*, page 33.

¹⁹ (Pine Lake). In Spanish, “puerca” literally means “pig” but is used as an adjective for “dirty” or “filthy.” “Mud Lake” and “Pig Lake” were other names used by locals.

²⁰ Terence Young, *Building San Francisco Parks, 1850-1930*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004, page 59.

Although the Sunset was referred to as the “Great Sand Waste” on early maps, recent observers see the area as having supported a rich, diverse habitat.²¹

Native Americans

Native Americans probably did not hunt or gather in the area now known as the Parkside, although they may have at nearby Lake Merced.²² About 1,400 Costanoans (the preferred name today is Ohlone) occupied the northern San Francisco peninsula. They led semi-sedentary lives hunting and gathering acorns, shellfish, and eligible plants and animals. Deer and elk are known to have grazed around Lake Merced, and presumably the Ohlone hunted them, but it is not known if deer wandered as far north as Pine Lake or the Parkside area. (Deer were introduced much later in what is now known as Sigmund Stern Grove as part of a deer park in the early 1900s.²³) There are no known above-ground resources from the Ohlone period in the Parkside.

Spanish-Mexican Periods 1775-1847

The Parkside, and indeed the entire Sunset area of San Francisco, was largely ignored by the Spanish and Mexicans. There is no mention of the Spanish using the area for grazing cattle or growing crops, although one source says cattle from the Presidio grazed at Lake Merced in 1798.²⁴

The Parkside and Sunset areas were not part of the several “ranchos” or Mexican lands grants awarded to Mexican citizens during the 1830s and 1840s. Instead, the Parkside and Sunset areas were called “pueblo” lands on early maps, referring to lands under the jurisdiction of the pueblo or town, as distinct from lands controlled by the Spanish missions or military. Ranchos did border the Parkside.

South of the Parkside lay the 2,000-acre Laguna de la Merced Rancho,²⁵ named after Lake Merced.²⁶ It was granted to Jose Antonio Galindo in 1835 but he sold it two years later to Don Francisco de Haro. De Haro’s sons lived on the rancho and raised 400 head of cattle and some crops. Apparently, it was not very valuable, being described as “almost worthless” in 1867.²⁷

21 Greg Gaar and Ryder W. Miller, *San Francisco: A Natural History*, Arcadia Publishing, 2006, page 13.

22 Laurence H. Shoup and Suzanne Baker, “Cultural Resource Overview Lake Merced Transport,” San Francisco Water Management Program, January 1981, page 11.

23 Deer park remembered by George Greene in “Old Trocadero Rancho Made Playground,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 5, 1932, page 7.

24 Shoup, page 15.

25 De Haro came to California in 1821, was comandante of the Presidio and the first alcalde of Yerba Buena. He died intestate on January 1, 1849, leaving seven heirs who proceeded to sell their fractional holdings, leading to confused titles and law suits. Jean Kortum, “The West Side of Twin Peaks.” Unpublished manuscript, dated 1994, page 19. Collection of Richard Brandi.

26 Shoup, page 14.

27 Shoup quoting J.W. Dwinelle, *The Colonial History of the City of San Francisco*, Ross Valley Book Co: Kentfield, CA., 1978.

To the east of the Parkside was the 4,443-acre Rancho San Miguel, which extended from today's Forest Side Street in West Portal northeasterly to Mount Sutro, southeasterly to San Jose Avenue and southwesterly to Daly City.²⁸ Rancho San Miguel was granted to Jose Noe in 1845. A large portion of the rancho east of Twin Peaks was sold during the 1860s and 1870s, and the remnant of the rancho, reduced to about 1,200 acres on the west side of Twin Peaks, was bought by Adolph Sutro in 1880. It remained undeveloped until 1912 when the land was sold to become the neighborhoods of Forest Hill, St. Francis Wood, and West Portal.²⁹

American Period and the "Outside Lands" 1847 - 1904

The United States annexed California from the Mexican government in 1847. The discovery of gold in California in 1848, and the subsequent Gold Rush of 1849, propelled San Francisco from a remote outpost into a great mercantile center. San Francisco Bay offered a safe anchorage for sailing ships, and the city grew rapidly in a concentrated area around the northeast waterfront.³⁰ During this time, the Parkside and Sunset areas, lying on the western edge of the San Francisco peninsula, remained backwaters, being mostly inaccessible due to a ridge of hills formed by Mount Sutro, Twin Peaks, and Mount Davidson.

Land Ownership

At the beginning of the American Period, the majority of western San Francisco was called the "Outside Lands" because it was literally outside the jurisdiction of the city of San Francisco. This area encompasses today's Golden Gate Park, most of the Richmond District, and the Sunset/Parkside Districts.

Ownership of these former Spanish/Mexican pueblo lands was disputed between the City of San Francisco and the federal government until May 1865, when the U.S. Circuit Court ruled in San Francisco's favor. During the years of litigation, "settlers" had moved onto the land hoping they would be granted free homesteads if the federal government won the case. After the court ruled for San Francisco, a few influential squatters induced Congress to pass a bill effectively reversing the court's decision. This law, passed in March 1866, directed that Outside Lands property be conveyed to parties in actual possession of the land (i.e., the squatters), excepting parcels needed for federal or municipal purposes. This appeared to be a godsend for the squatters and a blow to the city, which received much of its revenue from selling lots. Mayor Frank McCoppin orchestrated a complex deal with the squatters. He offered clear title without further delay if the squatters donated 10% of their land and paid a tax to create several parks. This arrangement, approved in 1869, set aside

28 Mae Silver, *Rancho San Miguel*, San Francisco: Ord Street Press, 2001.

29 Richard Brandi, *San Francisco's West Portal Neighborhoods*, Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

30 William Issel and Robert W. Cherny. *San Francisco 1865-1932: Power Politics and Urban Development*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

the land for Golden Gate Park and several neighborhood parks including the Parkside's future McCoppin and Parkside Squares.³¹

During the course of the negotiations, the City commissioned George C. Potter and William T. Humphrey to plat the former Outside Lands, a project that was completed on May 18, 1868. They mapped the Richmond and Sunset Districts in the now familiar rectilinear grid pattern of blocks and streets.³² The platted streets existed only on paper for decades, and some were not graded and/or paved until the 1940s. In the meantime, many lots were bought and sold to hundreds of individuals with a few investors holding large sections. These purchases were speculative, since lack of transportation kept most of the land uninhabited and undeveloped for decades.

Early Land Use — Recreation and Agriculture

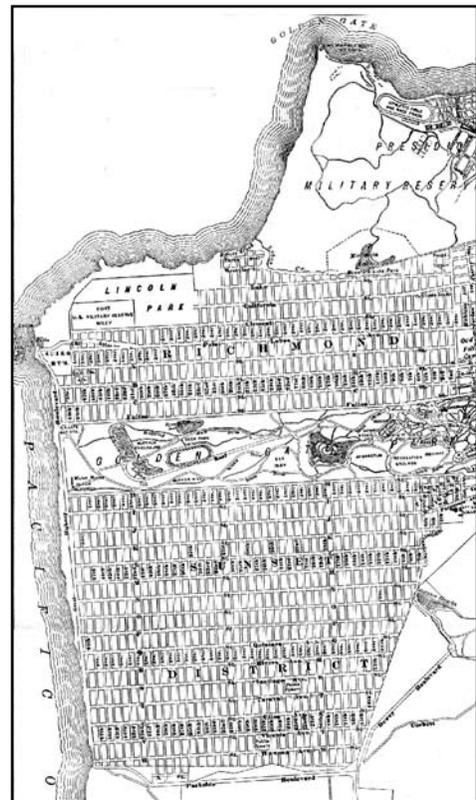
The Parkside and Sunset were sparsely settled throughout the 19th century. Although unclear land titles were part of the problem, settlement was also hampered by the distance from downtown San Francisco, the ridge of hills, lack of roads, and the inhospitable weather. Much of the Sunset District was referred to as the “Great Sand Waste” and labeled on maps as being “unfit for cultivation.”³³ San Francisco's growing population in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s opted for the Victorian houses and flats being built by hundreds in the Western Addition and Mission Districts as public transportation was extended to those areas.³⁴

Roadhouses and a Racetrack

Some of the first businesses and buildings in the former Outside Lands were roadhouses. Strategically spaced on a circuit of roads that brought day-trippers to the beaches, roadhouses provided liquor, meals, cigars, and occasionally entertainment to the travelers.

The best-known roadhouse was the Cliff House, built in the Richmond District in 1863 on the northwestern edge of the peninsula, with magnificent views of the Pacific Ocean and Seal Rocks. Although its reputation rose and fell in its early years, the Cliff House had a high-class profile compared to most of its rivals. Roadhouses generally went through many owners and operators, and into the 20th century, they were periodically raided and shut down for gambling or liquor law violations.³⁵

The Ocean Road, situated between Lake Merced and the future Parkside District, had a number of roadhouses in its vicinity. One of the earliest, the Lake House, achieved some notoriety as



The Sunset and Parkside districts' gridded streets, shown in a 1911 map.

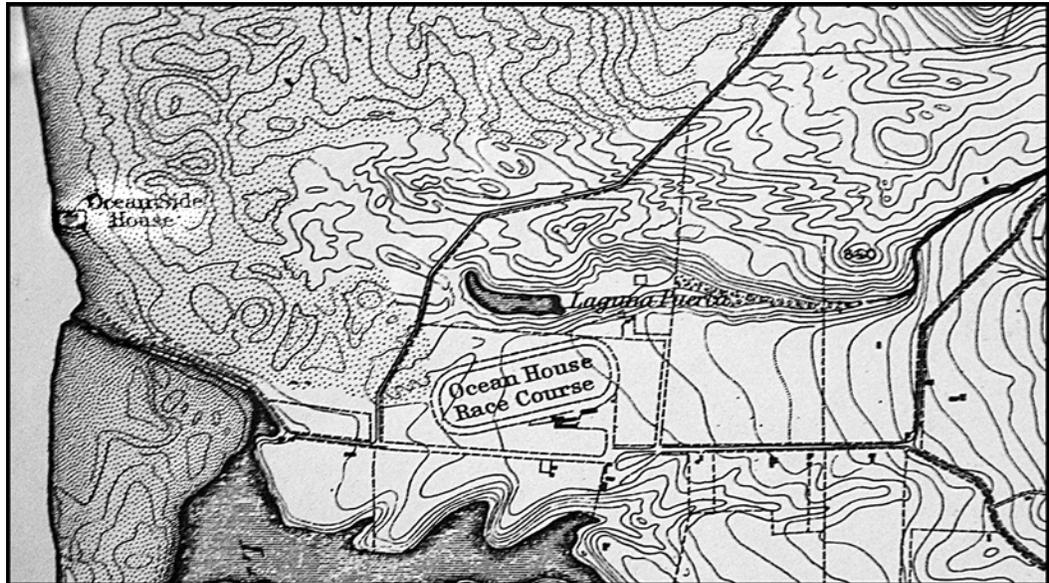
31 Young, pages 59-65.

32 Vincent D. Ring, “Tunnels and Residential Growth in San Francisco, 1910-1938,” Masters Thesis, University of San Francisco, 1971, pages 41, 42.

33 Kortum, page 10.

34 Peter Booth Wiley, *National Trust Guide San Francisco*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000, page 38.

35 “Beach Resorts Are Closed by Police Board,” *San Francisco Examiner*, November 26, 1918. A similar crackdown on “resorts” and roadhouses occurred in July 1912, and in 1917 the *Examiner* began a series of undercover exposés: “Detectives Find Loose Life in Beach Resorts,” *San Francisco Examiner*, January 26, 1917.



Above: 1869 U.S. Coast Survey Map, detail. The Ocean Road and San Miguel Road meet lower right before continuing west, with roadhouses straddling each side. The Central Ocean Road runs diagonally northeast through the future Parkside.

Below: The Ocean House stood next to a racetrack and along the old Ocean Road in the 1860s.



a meeting place for the famous duel between U.S. Senator David Broderick and California Supreme Court Justice David Terry in 1859.³⁶

In 1865, Cornelius Staggs built a racetrack to accompany his roadhouse just north of the Ocean Road. The racetrack could hold 7,000 people and hosted some of the major races of the era until competition from other tracks closed it in 1873. Staggs' roadhouse was called "Ocean House" and in some sources "Oceanview House." Staggs later ran the Ingleside Inn at the corner of Junipero Serra and Ocean Avenue, until he was murdered during a robbery in 1895.

Where the Ocean Road met the Great Highway stood the Oceanside House, which shows up in advertisements as early as 1857 and appears on an 1869 Coast Survey map. Benjamin Sherman Brooks built and operated the Oceanside House until the 1870s, when business declined and Brooks' mounting debts bankrupted him. For most of the 1880s the roadhouse was boarded up, the object of vandalism and neglect. In the early 1890s, investment banker Clifton Mayne purchased the building as his home and spent \$35,000 restoring it. Mayne moved out after a few years and the building reverted to use as a fairly unsuccessful roadhouse under Gertrude Rayfield. By 1899, the building was closed up and unused once again.³⁷

Between 1901 and 1919, the building was used as a residence and spiritual retreat by Alexander and Ida Russell. In 1919, Russell sold his home to restaurateur John Tait and a roadhouse returned. The elegant and colorful furnishings the Russells left behind created a lively setting for Tait's-at-the-Beach. Throughout the 1920s, Tait's unique atmosphere made it "THE place to go for socialites and celebrities and those who enjoyed mingling with same."³⁸ Business declined after the stock market crash in 1929, and Tait's closed in 1931. In 1940, a fire destroyed the building.³⁹

A few blocks north of the old Oceanside House on the Great Highway, Robert's-at-the-Beach operated between Rivera and Santiago Streets. First listed in city directories in 1901-02, Roberts-at-the-Beach was run by Dominic "Shorty" Roberts and later by his eldest son, Richard, also known as Shorty. It survived Prohibition, "though no one was remembered to have gone thirsty."⁴⁰ Roberts' closed in 1966 and for a short time the building was a concert and dance hall catering to teenagers.⁴¹

Inside the Parkside proper, only two establishments operated that can be defined as roadhouses. The Trocadero, in



The Oceanside House building in the 1920s as "Tait's-at-the-Beach."

36 Arthur Quinn, *The Rivals William Gwin, David Broderick, and the Birth of California*, New York, 1994.

37 More information on the Oceanside House and the Russells can be found in Brian and Hidemi Riggs, *House of Silent Light: The Dawn of Zen in Gilded Age America*. Unpublished manuscript, dated 2004.

38 Millie Robbins, "Tait's Was One of a Kind," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 8, 1968.

39 "Fire Razes Tait's, S.F. Landmark," *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, December 2, 1940, page 3.

40 Kortum, page 35.

41 "A Dance Hall for Teens Worries Beach Area," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 29, 1966.



The Trocadero, which acted as both a roadhouse and residence for the Greene family, is shown during renovation in 1930s. The building is extant today in Stern Grove.

what became Stern Grove, is described in the “Notable Buildings” section of this statement.

Hiram Cook, who had managed the Trocadero for the Greene family, opened his own Family Grill in 1910. Shown on the 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance map as “Hiram Cook’s Road House” with an address of 22nd Avenue and Vicente Street, it contained a bar, dance hall, and dining room. The 1914-1915 city directory calls it a “family grill” with an address on 19th Avenue between Vicente and Wawona.

Traveling to the roadhouses or racetrack near the Parkside was limited to two dirt roads in the 1800s, the Central Ocean Road and San Miguel Road. The former started around today’s Parnassus Avenue, ran west through the Inner Sunset, turned south along 20th Avenue, and then curved southwest around Pine Lake. This road is mentioned in 1888 as “usually covered in sand.”⁴²

The other road through the Parkside was the San Miguel Road. Starting at 17th and Castro Streets, it followed today’s Corbett Street and then Portola Drive to the intersection of today’s Junipero Serra Boulevard and Ocean Avenue. The Ocean Road started at this point and continued due west to the beach, closely following the present-day Ocean Avenue.

Agriculture/Other Businesses

The Greenes

Of all the early squatters, the Greene family arguably had the most long-lasting impact on the area. They once claimed the land running from today’s Sigmund Stern Grove to the beach, including Pine Lake and south to Lake Merced.

The Greene family arrived during the American-Mexican War of 1846-1848, and squatted on land in the Laguna de la Merced Rancho. Francisco de Haro’s sons, who ran the rancho, had been killed during the war and De Haro himself died in 1849. Other squatters challenged the Greenes’ claim, which led to an alleged battle against trespassers from inside a metal-lined structure in the 1850s. The Greenes, tellers of these dramatic tales in later years, were successful in keeping much of their land.⁴³

The Greene family—George, Alfred, William H., and Daniel—planted barley and potatoes, raised cattle, and imported hogs from Australia. They stabilized the sandy soil by planting bunch grass and eucalyptus trees (which still remain). William H. Greene and his sons George W. and Leopold continued to farm on the acreage. George W. built the Trocadero Inn in 1892, and Abe Ruef, San Francisco’s political boss in the early 1900s, was arrested there in 1907. Ruef’s trial was one of San Francisco’s spectacular political scandals, and is detailed in a later section of this statement.

42 “The road from the Golden Gate Park south-westward to the Ocean House. This road has no attractions, and part of it has been covered with drifting sand.” J.S. Hittell, *Hittell’s Hand-Book of Pacific Coast Travel*, A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1885.

43 Kortum, page 20.

William H. Greene died in 1905, leaving his farm heavily mortgaged to his son George W. Greene. In 1931, the Greens sold the Trocadero Inn and surrounding land to the Sigmund Stern Recreation Fund, administered by Rosalie Stern, who turned it over to the city as a park in honor of her late husband.

Carl Larsen

In 1889 Carl Larsen, the owner of the Tivoli Café in downtown San Francisco, bought land between 17th and 18th Avenues, Moraga and Ortega Streets and started a chicken ranch to supply his restaurant with eggs. By 1906, he owned all or parts of fourteen blocks in the Sunset and Parkside and became one of the largest landowners in the district by the 1920s.⁴⁴ He lobbied for civic improvements and streetcar service to the area⁴⁵ and donated land for a city park in the Parkside that bears his name at 19th and 20th Avenues, between Ulloa and Wawona Streets.⁴⁶



Larsen's ranch facing west on the open sand dunes of the Sunset District circa 1900.

Explosive Factories

The unpopulated remoteness of the Sunset District made it an appropriate location for the manufacture of explosives. The California Powder Works, also known as the Hercules Powder Works, ran a plant near Fourth Avenue in the Inner Sunset before accidental explosions in 1870, 1872, and 1877 closed it.

The Giant Powder Factory existed as early as 1871 on five acres of land bounded by 19th and 23rd Avenues and K and N Streets. This factory blew up in 1879. Following the explosion, the directors of the company moved the plant to Berkeley, and the era of explosive manufacturing ended in the Sunset District.⁴⁷

Italian Vegetable Gardeners

Although the Sunset and Parkside were not used for agriculture during the 19th century, Italian vegetable farmers leased lands to the south and east of the Parkside from the late 1880s until the land was sold for housing developments during the early 20th century. The Spring Valley Water Company, which also owned lots in the Parkside, leased out about 350 acres near Lake Merced.⁴⁸

By 1900, Italian-operated farms stretched from today's Villas Parkmerced housing complex, east to Urbano Drive in the Ingle-side, north to Sloat Boulevard, and west to Sunset Boulevard.⁴⁹

44 San Francisco Block Book, 1906.

45 Larsen did protest the assessment method to pay for the Twin Peaks Tunnel, which was an immediate, one-time tax on land owners near the tunnel or projected streetcar lines. He argued that the tunnel was valuable to the whole city so everyone should pay. He took his case to the California Supreme Court, but lost in 1920. He later protested his assessment for the Sunset Tunnel as well. Ring, pages 88, 89, 125.

46 Lorri Ungaretti, *San Francisco's Sunset District*, pages 47-48.

47 Email from researcher Angus Macfarlane, October 6, 2007. Newspapers reported the 1879 explosion damaged "near-by saloons."

48 Kortum, page 38.

49 Raymond Stevenson Dondero, *Italian Settlement in San Francisco*, a Masters thesis at UC Berkeley dated 1953, page 57. The thesis was published under the same title in 1974 by R&E Research Associates, Saratoga, California.



1928 aerial photograph of the west side of the Parkside District, looking north. White lines on the print represent the future path of Sunset Boulevard. The streetwork and the first homes of Pinelake Park are just north of Sloat Boulevard, while the land to the south is leased and under cultivation. Courtesy of Society of California Pioneers.

Italian farmers also leased land along today's West Portal and Claremont Avenues from Adolph Sutro on his Rancho San Miguel.⁵⁰

These farms produced most of San Francisco's fresh produce, which was sold at the Colombo market located downtown at Davis and Pacific Streets.

Spring Valley Water Company

In 1868, the Spring Valley Water Works Company spent \$150,000 to purchase the water rights to Lake Merced. This began a several-decades-long ownership of the area. In 1877, Spring Valley began to purchase land encircling Lake Merced and, by the turn of the 20th century, owned 2,000 acres stretching from the county line to Sloat Boulevard, and from Junipero Serra to the ocean.⁵¹ The monopoly supplier of water for San Francisco, Spring Valley was directed by the leading capitalists of the age: Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker (the Big Four of the Central Pacific railroad); Darius O. Mills and William Ralston of the Bank of California; and other wealthy individuals.⁵² The company began to sell off its landholdings around Lake Merced beginning in the 1890s. Numerous housing tracts, several golf courses, and the San Francisco Zoo are all on former Spring Valley land.⁵³

Development in the Sunset

First Public Transportation

On December 1, 1883, the Southern Pacific Railway opened up the northeast Sunset District with the construction of the Park & Ocean Railroad. The line ran from Stanyan Street out H Street (today's Lincoln Way) to the ocean. A steam engine line until 1898, when it converted to an electric streetcar line, the P&O primarily catered to day-trippers seeking recreation at the beaches.⁵⁴ This line may have hastened development of the Inner Sunset, but it had little effect on the center and outer Sunset District, which remained empty sand dunes until the 20th century.⁵⁵

The Park & Ocean line did create one exceptional community in the late 19th century. In 1895, obsolete horse and cable cars began being recycled as residences and clubhouses just south of the railroad's station at H Street (now Lincoln Way) and the Great Highway. Initially called "Carville," the neighborhood grew, with more conventional houses constructed after the turn of the century, and became known as Oceanside.⁵⁶ Both the Inner



Park & Ocean steam dummy car, 1885.
Courtesy of Paul Trimble.

50 Richard Brandi, "Farms, Fire and Forest—Adolph Sutro and Development West of Twin Peaks," *The Argonaut: Journal of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society*, Summer 2003.

51 Shoup, page 32.

52 Shoup, page 31.

53 Shoup, page 52.

54 Walter Rice Ph.D., and Emiliano Echeverria, *When Steam Ran on the Streets of San Francisco*, Forty Fort, PA, 2002. Pages 27-38.

55 Angus Macfarlane, "How the Sunset became 'The Sunset,'" 2005. Accessed October 5, 2007 at <http://www.outsidelands.org/sunset-name.php>.

56 Woody LaBounty, "Carville," November 2002. Accessed October 5, 2007 at <http://www.outsidelands.org/sw18.php>.

Sunset and Oceanside had their origins in the 1890s but grew as islands, hugging the train line and separated by two miles of sand dunes. With a few exceptions, the land farther than a few blocks south of Golden Gate Park and the train line remained undeveloped until the Parkside District's creation in 1905.

1894 Midwinter Fair

The California Midwinter Fair of 1894, held in Golden Gate Park, with a main entrance at Ninth Avenue and H, introduced the Inner Sunset to thousands of people. The ground-breaking ceremony alone brought 60,000 San Franciscans to the area. The infrastructure built for the fair—sewer and water lines, street grading and transportation, businesses attracted to serve the crowds—meant meaningful house construction could begin.

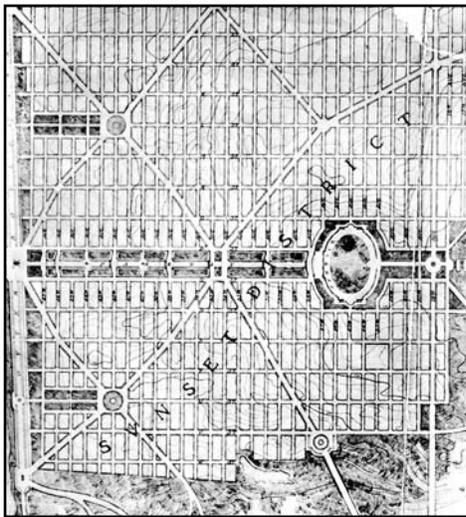
While it encouraged transportation and development in the Sunset District, the 1894 fair site was still miles away from the future Parkside and had minimal impact on the area.

Burnham Plan for San Francisco

In 1904, noted city planner Daniel Burnham was hired to produce a “Plan for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco.” The impetus for this plan was the popular “City Beautiful” movement that called for scenic boulevards, parks, and Greek-inspired decorative elements in radial or curvilinear street designs. Part of Burnham’s vision for San Francisco was a great parkland running from Twin Peaks to Lake Merced, a “Vista to the Sea.” The plan also called for improving traffic circulation across the city, including many diagonal boulevards through the Sunset and Parkside.⁵⁷

While the Burnham Plan was not adopted, and didn’t affect the design or development pattern of the Parkside, City Beautiful ideals influenced the development of nearby residential developments built after the earthquake and fire, including Forest Hill and St. Francis Wood.⁵⁸ Streets were typically laid out to conform to the terrain in curves, and featured decorative monuments and staircases. City Engineer Michael O’Shaughnessy also followed the contours of the land when he replatted Golden Gate Heights in 1923, probably because the hill was too steep to do otherwise.⁵⁹

Burnham recommended the widening of 19th Avenue and this was done in the 1920s and again in the 1930s. However, instead of Burnham’s system of diagonal boulevards running throughout the Sunset, only a straight-running Sunset Boulevard was built linking Golden Gate Park with Lake Merced in the 1930s.⁶⁰



Daniel Burnham’s 1904 plan to break the grid of the Sunset/Parkside with radial boulevards.

57 Daniel H. Burnham, Edward H. Bennett, *Report on a Plan for San Francisco*, 1906, reprint, Urban Books, 1971.

58 Patrick McGrew, “Neighborhoods and Innovators,” *The Argonaut: Journal of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society*, Winter 2004, and Richard Brandi, *San Francisco’s West Portal Neighborhoods*, Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

59 Burnham, *Introduction to the Burnham Plan* by James R. McCarthy, Director of Planning, San Francisco, 1958-1966 and *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 25, 1925, page 6.

60 A proposal in 1925 by O’Shaughnessy would have cut a diagonal boulevard from the Inner Sunset to the San Francisco Zoo site.

The Parkside District

Parkside Realty Company

In 1905, a group of investors quietly purchased lots from dozens of individual owners⁶¹ until it owned a contiguous mass of 100 blocks from the western boundary of the Rancho San Miguel almost to the beach.⁶² North to south, the holdings ran from today's Quintara Street to Sloat Boulevard and included the land that would become Stern Grove and Pine Lake Park.⁶³ When the investors secured a final 40 blocks of land from the Adolph Sutro Estate for \$280,000, they formally filed papers for incorporation as the Parkside Realty Company, with an announced capital stock of \$1 million. William H. Crocker, president of the Crocker National Bank and the son of Charles Crocker, one of the "Big Four" from the politically powerful Southern Pacific Railway, was the corporation's principal stockholder.

In July 1905 the Parkside Realty Company revealed plans to turn this large tract of land into a residential neighborhood.⁶⁴

The Parkside Realty Company's announcement spurred other west-side real estate firms to raise prices and start using the Parkside name. The Metropolitan Improvement Company, selling lots near the established streetcar line at 19th Avenue and Lincoln Way, started calling its sales office a "Parkside" office, despite being almost a mile away.⁶⁵

Purchasing the land was only the first step for the Parkside Realty Company. Sewer lines, street and block grading, and the establishment of gas, electric, water, and transportation services were needed to create a residential neighborhood. To sell lots and houses, the company also had to overcome public perception that the area was a distant wilderness. The *San Francisco Chronicle* described the remoteness of the area: "To most persons the land acquired by the Parkside Realty Company is a *terra incognita*" (unknown territory).⁶⁶

Unfamiliarity with the territory was a double-edged sword for the corporation's sales plans. While the eucalyptus and other vegetation that the Greenes had nurtured east of Pine Lake made the area more attractive than most of the Sunset, the Parkside was still primarily sand dunes with a foggy climate. The name "Parkside" likely was the Parkside Realty Company's attempt to suggest an alternative vision of the area.⁶⁷ Early reports on the

PARKSIDE REALTY COMPANY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DIRECTORS

W. H. CROCKER HUGH KEENAN J. N. O'BRIEN W. GREGG JR. DOUGLAS S. WATSON
C. E. GREEN J. J. MAGUIRE A. E. MORRISON W. N. WATSON J. E. GREEN

CAPITAL - - - - \$1,000,000.00

OWNERS OF PARKSIDE

The company announces that Parkside first subdivisions will be open for sale Sunday, August 6, 1905.
Cliff cars to Nineteenth Avenue and H Street.
Parkside automobiles from there to the property.
The new electric road comes down T street.
Sewers, gas, water, electric lights, paved streets, level lots. All guaranteed.

PARKSIDE REALTY COMPANY OF SAN FRANCISCO
CROCKER BUILDING, Third Floor
Nineteenth Avenue and H Street Parkside Office, Nineteenth Avenue and T Street

Ad from *San Francisco Call*, August 5, 1905.

61 Adolph Sutro's estate held 40 blocks, and many other individuals, including Carl Larsen and the mayor's adviser Abe Ruef, owned lots.

62 Walter Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1952, page 91.

63 Parkside Realty Company Map, G. Umbesen Corporation. The corporation perhaps optimistically included the Stern Grove property since at least parts of it were still owned by the Greene family.

64 *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 29, 1905, page 16 and *San Francisco Call*, July 29, 1905, page 16.

65 *San Francisco Call*, July 30, 1905, page 37.

66 *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 29, 1905, page 16.

67 Many unfamiliar with the area assume the Parkside District borders Golden Gate Park. In the 1890s some real estate firms *did* promote Inner Sunset lots as being in "Parkside."

P WHAT MAKES PROPERTY VALUABLE P



HOMES

What makes property valuable?
 Good streets, good buildings, sewer, water, gas, electricity, quick car service, good view, equable climate, proximity to shops, banks, schools, churches, amusements, life—and business. Yes, business!

You may still find select homes where there is an abundance of sunshine, where the air is delightful, where the view is ever pleasing, where nature smiles, and there build a street-car line, beautiful streets, wide avenues, delightful surroundings—and still find that your investment did not increase in value, for while everything else was provided there lacked one necessary element—business.



WHOLESALE

True, your property in such a location might be pleasant for your home and for the wife and children, but there must needs be something besides these surroundings.

Within San Francisco all of the elements we have mentioned are abundantly supplied at Parkside—the new residence section on the sunny slope of the Sunset District, looking out upon the blue Pacific—having improvements made upon a grand scale and an electric car service building which will carry the residents to the center of the city in half an hour. And, besides, there is the business of San Francisco—business that is growing in volume and importance and in permanency.



RAILROADS

The receipts at the San Francisco Postoffice, and at the Custom-house, and the Internal Revenue office, and the amount of money changing hands at the Clearing-house, and the business being done by our railroads, our steamship companies and our wholesale houses, and manufacturers and retailers, grows and expands and develops bigger and bigger every month and every year.

That's why lots at Parkside will increase in value. That's why you should buy at Parkside now. Not alone because Parkside will be a delightful place to live, but because, added to the delights of residence in this favored section, will be the certainty of increase in the price of lots—it cannot be otherwise.

Our banks are overflowing with money. Our merchants are continuously advertising for help. Our manufacturers are crowding their capacity to the limit. Our railroads haven't sufficient cars to carry passengers or freight. Our steamships leave freight on the wharves. The business of the port of San Francisco is getting bigger and more far-reaching and more extensive every day.

These statements are not exaggerations made to boom Parkside. They are not wild stories set down here to attract buyers to Parkside. On the contrary, they are the facts as we see them, and as we believe you realize them. But realizing facts and knowing a thing will do you no good unless you act upon it. If you are convinced of all we say concerning Parkside and you do not buy a lot there, what benefit will it be to you?



SHIPPING

It is to you we are talking—you! you! You have some money saved up—you have a good income. You can buy a lot at Parkside and you pay for it month by month. Maybe you can buy several lots. Surely the more you buy the better it will be for you.

The prices on lots at Parkside are already a good deal higher than they were a year ago. They will be higher—a good deal higher—a year from now. Why do you not make that profit? Why not be convinced? Why put off doing a good thing?



RETAIL

Come to Parkside today. Come Sunday. We have automobiles to meet you at our branch office at 19th avenue and H st. to take you to Parkside and return, and you could not spend the time to better advantage than to take the ride with us and ascertain what we mean when we say "Parkside the Beautiful."

Take 19th avenue and H-street car at Fourth and Market streets, running on Ellis and O'Farrell streets, direct to branch office at 19th avenue and H street, or the Haight-street car and transfer at Stanyan to the H-street cars.



MANUFACTURING

P PARKSIDE P

G.H.UMBSEN & CO. SOLE AGENTS 20 MONTG. ST. BRANCH OFFICE 19TH AVENUE & H ST.

An April 13, 1907 ad from the *San Francisco Call* promises buyers an "abundance of sunshine" in the Parkside.

land that the company fed to the media were, at best, optimistic. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that “owing to its topography and the shelter of its trees, it is said that the temperature of Parkside is ten degrees warmer than that of Golden Gate Park...”⁶⁸

Parkside Transit Company

The lack of streetcar access was the major hurdle to the Parkside subdivision’s success. The Parkside Realty Company planned to sell lots and houses to middle class buyers who needed easy access to work downtown.⁶⁹ In August 1905, when the corporation first opened land for sale, they had to meet potential buyers at the 19th and H (Lincoln Way) streetcar stop and drive them to the property with the promise of a future streetcar line.⁷⁰ Four months later, the Parkside Transit Company was incorporated, with a board of directors that included most of the directors of the Parkside Realty Company.

The transit company proposed a route for a streetcar line that would approach the Parkside from the southeast, using the Corbett Road from Market Street to 16th Avenue and T (Taraval) Street. On T Street, the proposed line continued west to 33rd Avenue, south to W (Wawona) Street, and then west to the Great Highway and the beach. A spur line was also proposed from T street and 20th Avenue north to H Street, thereby creating a transfer connection with the existing line on H Street.⁷¹

These plans had to be scaled back considerably as the Parkside Transit Company became entangled in the graft trials after the 1906 earthquake and fire. The company also had to contend with a rising public tide against the granting of private transit franchises on public streets. A community organization named the Municipal Ownership League protested the Parkside Transit Company’s bid to the Board of Supervisors, proposing instead that the planned municipal railway for Geary be directed south to serve the Parkside District.⁷² The national Progressive Movement of the early twentieth century called for public ownership of privately-run utilities and the City itself had planned public ownership of municipal service in the 1900 charter.

This philosophy was evident in the address made by the president of the Municipal Ownership League to the Board of Supervisors that “the streets belonged to the people and should not be given to any corporation for the purpose of enabling them to make a profit.”⁷³ The franchising of such public needs to corporations and private companies was often tainted by payoffs and graft, and the Parkside Transit Company’s request eventually proved no exception.

A compromise was reached in which the franchised lines to the Parkside would revert back to city control after 25 years and

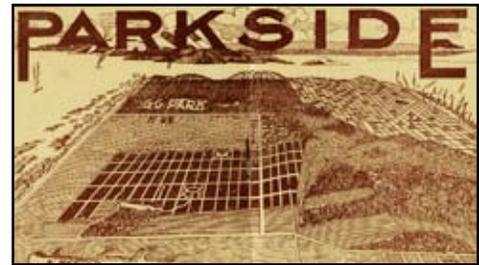


Illustration from a 1907 Parkside Realty Company brochure shows downtown San Francisco clouded with smoke stacks.

68 *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 29, 1905, page 16. During summer months especially, the opposite is often true.

69 Bean, page 91.

70 Parkside ad, *San Francisco Call*, August 5, 1905, page 4.

71 *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 13, 1905, page 12.

72 *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 16, 1906, page 9. The municipal railway’s first line was the A-Geary in 1912.

73 *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 27, 1906, page 18.

the Parkside Realty Company moved forward with its plans. On March 26, 1906, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution seeking bids for a streetcar franchise that would run along 20th Avenue from H Street to T Street. The bid deadline was set for May 7, 1906, and the Parkside Transit Company began to prepare an application.⁷⁴ In between, however, the whole city of San Francisco met with disaster.

1906 Earthquake and Fire

On the morning of April 18, 1906, a great earthquake shook San Francisco. Chimneys fell; streetcar lines warped; and precious water mains broke. Many buildings collapsed, trapping people inside. Fires began in different locations and, after three days, more than five miles of the city's core lay destroyed. Jack London described the scene:

San Francisco is gone. Nothing remains of it but memories and a fringe of dwelling-houses on its outskirts. Its industrial section is wiped out. Its business section is wiped out. Its social and residential section is wiped out. The factories and warehouses, the great stores and newspaper buildings, the hotels and the palaces of the nabobs, are all gone.⁷⁵

Some 3,000 San Franciscans lost their lives, and more than 225,000 suddenly found themselves homeless. Many left the city immediately. Others searched for shelter in the unburned parts of town or camped outside in the streets, empty lots, or city parks.

The Parkside District, still empty sand dunes, wasn't materially affected by the earthquake and fire, but plans for the community had to be delayed while all resources, planning decisions, utility installation and repair, and construction materials went to the task of rebuilding San Francisco's core. In one sense, the instant dislocation of hundreds of thousands provided an opportunity for the Parkside Realty Company. San Francisco needed to retain the working class to rebuild and reestablish the city as the economic center of the West Coast.

Even before the earthquake, civic leaders feared San Francisco's loss of prestige to growing West Coast cities like Los Angeles and Portland. The ascendance of Bay Area suburbs such as Oakland and Berkeley also worried business leaders that the geographic limitations of San Francisco would retard its growth and leadership position.⁷⁶ Now the dislocation of thousands threatened the city's future as a power. One estimate of San Francisco's post-quake population went as low as 175,000 from a 1900 count of 342,782.⁷⁷

This climate of desperation to rebuild and create housing for workers and population prestige seemed an ideal time for the

74 Bean, page 96.

75 Jack London, "The Story of an Eyewitness," *Collier's*, May 5, 1906.

76 A constitutional amendment to merge the towns of the Bay Area with San Francisco to create a "Greater San Francisco" super metropolis was defeated by California voters in 1912. Ring, pages 30-35.

77 San Francisco Real Estate Board Circular, November 1910, page 1.

Parkside Realty Company's plan of selling starter houses to former renters. Indeed, the districts beyond the fire line that catered to these buyers and had reliable mass transportation, such as the Richmond, Sunnyside and Outer Mission, experienced a population boom in the decade after the disaster. But in the aftermath of the disaster, some unpleasant aspects of city government were coming to light, and the Parkside Transit Company found itself entangled in San Francisco's largest government scandal.

Parkside and Boss Ruef

A postscript to the 1906 earthquake and fire was the revelation of widespread municipal graft and resulting legal prosecution of the City's administration. Coinciding with the physical rebuilding of a great metropolis came the downfall of the San Francisco's "boss," Abraham Ruef.

Using the Union Labor Party as his vehicle, Ruef had orchestrated the election of Eugene Schmitz as mayor in 1901 and not only won Schmitz reelection in 1905, but also control of the city's Board of Supervisors.⁷⁸

Once in power, despite holding no public office, the dapper attorney secured bribes for himself, the mayor, and the Board of Supervisors to conduct any major business in San Francisco. Gas companies, boxing promoters, bars, railroads, contractors, and telephone corporations all ended up paying Ruef tens of thousands of dollars for "consultative services." Municipal graft was common in major American cities in this era, and its existence was well known and generally tolerated. Federal prosecutor Francis J. Heney warned that, if unchecked, it was "such a condition of corruption as must inevitably lead to the destruction of the republic."⁷⁹

The future Parkside District played a role in unsettling Schmitz and Ruef from their positions of power. Shortly after the Parkside Realty Company announced its formation and plans, its principal stockholder, William Crocker, arranged a meeting with Mayor Schmitz for approval of the Parkside project. The mayor, without consulting Ruef, gave Crocker enough assurance of the Board of Supervisors' favor in granting a streetcar franchise that the company began the work on laying streets, sewers, and utilities. When the Parkside Transit Company formally presented its application for a trolley franchise to the Board of Supervisors, Mayor Schmitz spoke in favor of the project, emphasizing the great profit that it could represent. According to later testimony by Ruef, this inclined the supervisors to believe they would receive a bribe for their approval of the franchise.

When J.E. Green, president of the Parkside Realty Company, later hosted a tour of the tract for the supervisors and mayor, with lunch and liberal amounts of wine, one supervisor, Dr. Charles Boxton, made a florid address to the entire assemblage and asked: "How much money is in it for us?"⁸⁰

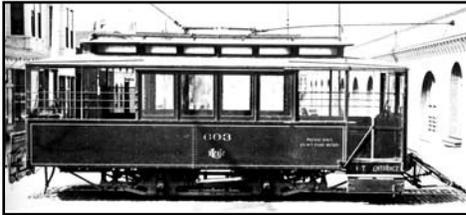


Abe Ruef, 1907. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

78 Bean, page 26.

79 Bean, page 153.

80 Bean, pages 90-96.



Parkside line streetcar as operated by the United Railroads in the 1910s. From *San Francisco's Century of Streetcars*, Fred A. Stindt, 1990, Kelseyville, CA.

Green subsequently used realtor Gus H. Umbesen as a conduit to doing “business” with Abraham Ruef, the man who controlled the supervisors and mayor. Umbesen’s company had exclusive rights to sell the Parkside lots (at a 10% commission), and had previously used Ruef as his personal attorney. After a couple of conferences, the two men struck a deal. The Parkside Realty Company would employ Ruef as an attorney for two years and pay him \$30,000.

Just a month after the earthquake, when the Parkside directors were particularly anxious to take advantage of the huge number of displaced residents seeking new houses, Umbesen paid half of the fee, in cash, to Ruef.

Ruef planned to share the bribe with the supervisors, with each receiving around \$750, but the pay-off never went beyond Ruef, as he became distracted with the beginning of what would be known as the “Graft Trials.”

For years, the *San Francisco Bulletin*, led by editor Fremont Older, worked to expose the open secret of the Union Labor Party’s corrupt system and to prosecute Ruef. Most editions of the *Bulletin* featured barbed cartoons, accusations, intimations of graft, and calls for grand jury indictments.

After the 1906 earthquake and fire, Older convinced a superior court judge to impanel a grand jury free from Ruef’s influence.⁸¹ The various trials that removed the mayor and supervisors from office and put Ruef into San Quentin prison spread over five years, and the deal to grease the wheels for the Parkside rail line was one of the first scandals uncovered by the legal team. The Parkside Transit Company officers agreed to testify against Ruef in exchange for immunity, but a number of jurors apparently felt the officers’ culpability made them questionable witnesses. The jury deadlocked 6 to 6 (with some suspecting jury fixing) and it was left to a different railroad extortion case to put Ruef in jail.

Meanwhile, property owners who had purchased lots in the Parkside still waited for their new streetcar line. A petition signed by more than 1,000 Sunset District property owners was presented to the new Board of Supervisors, asking that the final adoption of the franchise be granted, whatever the previous scandals.⁸² They were supported by the Chamber of Commerce and the San Francisco Real Estate Board.⁸³

The franchise was eventually approved in October 1907⁸⁴ and a single line track was laid in June 1908. The first line to the Parkside ran south on 20th Avenue from H Street to T Street, then turned west, reaching 33rd Avenue before turning south again and continuing a few more blocks to Sloat Boulevard. The line was a fraction of the Parkside Transit Company’s initial vision, which included a main line that snaked over Twin Peaks on Corbett Avenue and reached to Ocean Beach, but it relieved the typical commute downtown, when the closest car service was at least

81 Ruef was arrested for trial hiding in the Trocadero Inn in the Parkside District. Ungaretti, page 52.

82 *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 30, 1907, page 13.

83 *San Francisco Call*, October 10, 1907, page 15.

84 *Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors*, October 14, 1907, page 585.

twelve blocks of sand dunes away and ran just once an hour. Parkside pioneer H.H. Dobbin, Sr. recalled:

“...those who had taken up homes in this beautiful section were compelled to walk to their places of abode from the streetcars in utter darkness for there were no street lights to guide them, and scarcely any mark by which one street could be distinguished from another, often leading to confusion.”⁸⁵

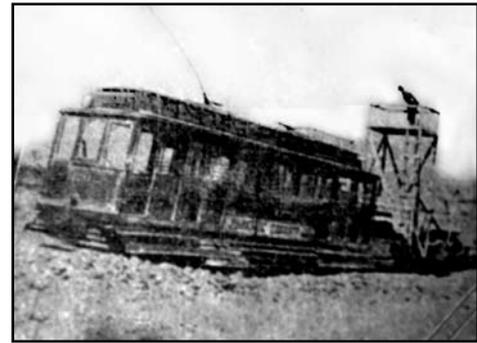
While the Parkside Transit Company struggled to get the streetcars working, its sister corporation, the Parkside Realty Company, had already begun building houses.

Building Begins – the “Parkside Cottage”

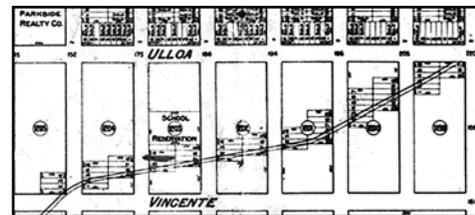
In early 1908, the Parkside Realty Company finally began construction on its ambitious project. The company sold lots for \$800 to \$1,200 with 10% down and small monthly payments, claiming houses would quickly be worth twice the purchase price. It made reference to the future Panama-Pacific International Exhibition as a marketing pitch, because the land was “lying between the only two possible sites of the fair.”⁸⁶

The Parkside Realty Company used two marketing strategies, selling speculative land to investors, while simultaneously constructing houses for residents.⁸⁷ The media was upbeat:

“Parkside has made good. What the realty promoters said they would do when they undertook the scheme in 1905 they have done, and today a cute district large enough to accommodate 25,000 people without the least crowding—one family in its house in its individual plot of ground—is ready for the builder and the homeseeker. The expense has been enormous—typical of the daring with which promoters have backed their confidence of the district. Before the sales exploitation has begun, or a single return been forthcoming on their investment, they have spent \$1,000,000 for the tract and nearly another million for improvements. A great many reservations have been made however, of home sites in the tract for anxious purchasers who realize the coming value of the property. For, already at hand, they have gas, electricity, water, sewers, streets completely graded, a CARLINE THAT [emphasis in the original] will run on a regular schedule but a few blocks at most from their homes, and fine boulevards for their pleasure if they happen to own an automobile. Everything is there for their comfort and convenience,



Parkside Transit Company streetcar, *San Francisco Bulletin*, June 6, 1908.



Detail of real estate map from page 6. The first cottages built by the Parkside Realty Company follow the path of the old Central Ocean Road from 26th to 32nd Avenue between Ulloa and Vicente streets.

85 “Parkside Improvement Club,” *Sunset Journal*, January 28, 1910.

86 Ring, page 46.

87 The Parkside Realty Company land equaled 5,300 25 x 120-foot lots, Ring, page 94. Advertisements encouraged lot purchase both for house builders and as speculative investments.

waiting only for the building of the homes, for Parkside has made good.”⁸⁸

The company erected 62 cottages that snaked from the corner of 26th Avenue and Ulloa Street southwest around a ridge line of sand dunes to 32nd Avenue and Vicente Street.⁸⁹ Each block between Ulloa and Vicente had groups of three to seven houses facing each other across graded but unpaved streets. This sprinkling of construction on seven blocks may have been a way to “seed” the district, getting the first residents to spread across the neighborhood. The path of cottages also followed the old Central Ocean Road, perhaps offering easier grading for the company.

These Parkside cottages came in six varieties of façade styles with essentially identical floor plans. The cottages were approximately 800 square feet (20 x 40 feet) on one story with two bedrooms and one bath. Buyers could choose façades with elements of Italianate, Spanish, Colonial, Dutch Colonial, or Craftsman styles. The exteriors were of shingles, wood siding, or plaster. Although advertisements promised that plans would be furnished free to lot buyers, evidently no other houses were built to these plans.

The existence of the cottages, combined with advertising and the housing shortage caused by the 1906 earthquake and fire, worked in the Parkside Realty Company’s favor. Privately-constructed houses joined the cottages and by the summer of 1908 some 100 residences in the new development were occupied.⁹⁰ In 1910 more than 300 people resided in the Parkside.⁹¹ The company announced in October 1910 that 59 of their 62 cottages had been sold.⁹²

The Parkside Realty Company’s initial plan was to appeal to renters who wanted to own their own houses. Early promotions focused on how the same amount of money spent on rent could buy a Parkside dwelling in 84 months. Some ads featured a sketch of a large country house “under construction” in the Parkside, while the company was offering cottages of a much smaller scale.⁹³

Growth did taper off after the initial offering. By 1917, the company claimed that 600 people lived in the Parkside.⁹⁴ Conservatively estimating three people in each household, only about 200 houses would have existed after ten years, including the 62 the company built. By the time house building took off in the 1920s, newer styles replaced the cottage style, especially since a garage for an automobile was no longer a luxury.

PARKSIDE LIVE FREE

The Rent you Pay Is all You Pay for a Home at Parkside

Parkside the beautiful Parkside the residence section par excellence of San Francisco
Parkside with its wide expanse of marine view
Parkside on the sunny side of the Sunset district where the morning sun warms its soil
Breathing life into the flowers and the grasses and the trees
Parkside with its broad avenues
Its public park
Its splendid boulevard
Its modern electric railway
Its thorough sewer system
Its water and its gas and its electricity attracts home buyers and home builders and home seekers
Parkside has so many advantages besides those on which it is sold that every resident of San Francisco should spend a portion of the Sunday visiting it
Everyone should come and see Parkside, for only by seeing it can you know of the advantages it has to offer
Those who come to see Parkside, go away delighted
They can foresee in a short time its broad avenues lined with beautiful homes
They see church and stores and banks and theaters and schools and the quick-moving electric cars and life and activity on all these streets
They realize that life at Parkside will be the life delightful because there is the marine view that may always be seen from Parkside; that you never tire of seeing
There is the coming and going of the commerce of the world
There is the city's pleasure drive
Parkside is surrounded by the most beautiful and attractive drive in or about the city of San Francisco
There's every reason why lots at Parkside will increase in value

The growth of the city is astonishing the old residents and many of them are bestirring themselves to buy property, because they see in the future profits, profits, profits
But you should buy property where it may be marketed the next day if you wish to dispose of it
You should buy property that is improved
Where there are improvements all around
Don't deal in uncertainties
Buy at Parkside where a million dollars has been paid for the most substantial improvements possible to be made
Where the streets and avenues are wide, and all graded and curbed and sewered and the water and gas pipes laid
Where the lots are graded ready for building
Where you have no street assessments
Where the work has been done thoroughly and well
And remember, too, that you are buying Parkside lots direct from the owners and not from speculators

THE HOME
Fifty homes ready to occupy—sold for a few dollars down and monthly payments—less than rent—no interest—no taxes—no insurance.
Come to Nineteenth avenue and H street by the electric cars south of Golden Gate Park—get off at our branch office and take our free automobile to Parkside and return
We will welcome you to come and look and see for yourself what we mean when we talk about a million dollars being paid for improvements
See for yourself
Let your own judgment guide you, but take this advice from us. Don't put it off—don't delay
Do it now
Do not fail to see the model cottages furnished by the Sterling Furnace Company.

PARKSIDE REALTY COMPANY
OF SAN FRANCISCO

408 Crocker Building, Telephone Kearny 2741
Branch Offices—1210 and H streets, T and 28th avenues.
Also G. H. Embury & Co., 28 Montgomery street.
Take cars to Nineteenth avenue and H street, or Ingleisle cars and transfer to Parkside cars.

Parkside Realty Company
of San Francisco
1210 and H streets, T and 28th avenues.
Also G. H. Embury & Co., 28 Montgomery street.
Name
Address

The Parkside Electric Road Will Run on Regular Schedule, Wednesday, July 1st.

Ad from *San Francisco Call*, June 12, 1908.

88 “Parkside Makes Good,” *The San Francisco Bulletin*, June 6, 1908.

89 Ring, page 45.

90 This was resident H.H. Dobbin’s estimate in 1910. The 1913-15 Sanborn fire insurance maps show 207 structures in the Parkside District, all but five listed as residences.

91 1910 United States Census. Not including a construction camp of street workers on Sloat Boulevard, the actual count is 330.

92 *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1910, page 10.

93 “Live Rent Free at Parkside” ad, *San Francisco Call*, October 2, 1908, page 10.

94 Ring, page 95.

All street work done. Sewered, graded, curbed. Sidewalks finished. Gas, Spring Valley water, electricity. All lots graded ready for building.

SHINGLES
PLASTER
SHAKES

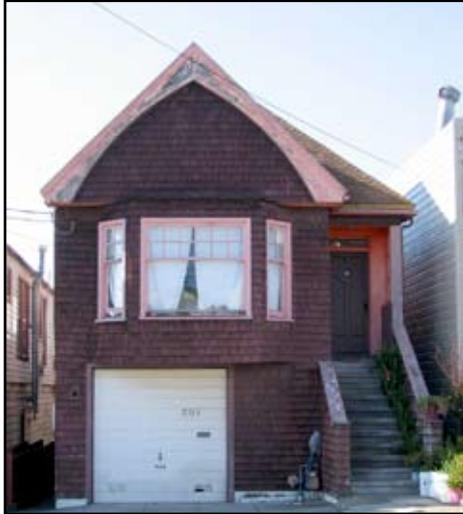
SHINGLES
PLASTER
SHINGLES

FLOOR PLAN

Suggestions for Parkside cottages—plans will be furnished free to buyers of lots

Parkside cottage models displayed in a Parkside Realty Company brochure, circa 1908. Taken from the Parkside District Improvement Club Scrapbooks, Volume 1. These original Parkside cottages are shown below, circa 1915, beside high sand dunes. This image is looking northeast towards 32nd Avenue and Vicente Street.





2515-27th Avenue, a Parkside cottage elevated for garage. Photo from January 2005.



Craftsman-style home at 2514-23rd Avenue, November 2006 photo.

An informal survey in August 2007 found all but one of the original 62 cottages still stand, but 60 have had garages added, often by raising the structure and/or excavating underneath the cottage. Nearly every Parkside cottage has been extensively and, for the most part, unsympathetically, remodeled. The Parkside cottages are now surrounded by single family houses in the more typical Sunset row house style constructed in the 1920s and 1930s.

A complete list of extant Parkside Cottages can be found in the “Other Structures of Interest” section.

Parkside Realty Company’s Changing Strategies

Sluggish sales could have provided the company’s inspiration to plat specific lots between T and U Streets and 19th and 22nd Avenues to be 33 feet wide instead of 25. A “Woodside Addition” in the tract went as far as to offer 60-foot wide lots.⁹⁵ The company promoted the larger yard space this would give a typical house and encouraged a few residences grander than the workingman cottages they originally envisioned.⁹⁶

Borrowing some of the popular restrictions residence park communities such as Presidio Terrace and St. Francis Wood required, certain sections supposedly couldn’t be built on unless the construction cost \$3,000 or more.⁹⁷ A review of notations in city title records show the application of these restrictions to be spotty—usually just in houses built by the Parkside Realty Company itself—and the enforcement of the restrictions lax. For example, the 1920 deed conditions for the house at 2516-23rd Avenue require a \$2,500 building, but the permit for construction filed with the city was for a \$1,500 house.⁹⁸

Building restrictions such as twelve-foot front setbacks were followed, and are evident in many of the finer Craftsman-style houses between 20th and 26th Avenues south of Taraval Street.

By the mid-1920s, the Parkside Realty Company had stopped advertising its offerings altogether, seemingly content to allow other house-building operations and small-scale construction companies to buy and build on its lots. The Lang Realty Company emerged as the major builder in the Parkside at this time, erecting over 200 houses in 1926 and 1927. Lang Realty advertised prices between \$6,950 and \$8,500 for California Bungalow style houses.⁹⁹ Many smaller building companies, such as F.M. Biggam, Jas. Arnott and Sons, and others became active in the Parkside at this time, usually focusing on no more than four to eight houses at a time. Stucco façades with one-story-over-garage floor plans emerged as the dominant architectural style in this era.¹⁰⁰

95 Ad, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 3, 1912.

96 *San Francisco Call*, September 17, 1910, page 10.

97 *San Francisco Call*, March 18, 1911.

98 Copies of deed and permits for 2516-23rd Avenue courtesy of Nancy Wuerfel. The building’s architect was W.E. Collins.

99 *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 3, 1926, pages 8-9.

100 Arnott did create a larger development on the eastern edge of the Parkside named “Portal Heights” on 16th Avenue north of Taraval.

Pinelake Park

In the house-building boom of the late 1920s, the Sunset and Parkside districts were the focus of renewed interest from real estate firms and construction companies, particularly after the opening of the Sunset Tunnel in April 1925.¹⁰¹ In 1927, after being personally encouraged by development and real estate boosters in the area, William H. Crocker led a Parkside Realty Company plan to build a new neighborhood in the Parkside tract.¹⁰²

“Pinelake Park” focused on the southwest corner of the Parkside land near 34th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard. The company broke ground on April 2, 1927, with Mayor Rolph turning over the ceremonial first spade of earth. As with the 1905 announcement of the Parkside development, the Parkside Realty Company promised great plans for this new “village.” Pinelake Park was intended as a fully-planned community in the manner of higher-priced residence parks, and borrowed many hallmarks from such developments. The company put utilities underground to eliminate unsightly overhead wires, created a contoured street in Crestlake Drive, and required front-yard setback restrictions for houses. The development was publicized to cost over \$5 million and intended to have 500 houses and a commercial center on 35th Avenue with stores, a bank, and a movie theater.¹⁰³

Again, the Parkside Realty Company advertised the building of large impressive houses but constructed humbler demonstration houses “which the average rent-paying salaried man can afford.” In 1927 and 1928 the company built ten to fifteen houses near Sloat and 34th Avenue that mixed Spanish Colonial Revival and Tudor elements with California Bungalow style. A few larger houses were erected on Crestlake Drive overlooking Pine Lake, including two striking Spanish Colonial Revivals at 496 and 510 Crestlake Drive.¹⁰⁴

The Parkside Realty Company didn’t continue work on Pinelake Park past the creation of the sidewalk and street infrastructure and construction of these first houses. Slow initial sales may have retarded the company’s plans, and the onset of the Great Depression stalled further development in the area until after World War II. In the late 1940s, the Pinelake Park neighborhood was aggressively developed by the Standard Building Company with “Sunstream” ranch-style houses.

Pinelake Park was the Parkside Realty Company’s last major project. The company erected a few rows of Sunset type homes north of the park in the early 1930s, but was no longer listed in San Francisco directories after 1933.

Pinelake Park ad, August 20, 1927.
San Francisco Chronicle

101 The *San Francisco Chronicle* featured a twelve-page spread commemorating construction of the Sunset Tunnel on April 25, 1925 and over 20 realty companies and builders advertised in it.

102 “Pine Lake Work Urged By Group,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 9, 1927, page 9.

103 “Pinelake Park, on Sloat Boulevard, Opens Today,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 9, 1927, page 11. Promised commercial center in *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 20, 1927, page 9.

104 *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1927, page 13.



2571-31st Avenue in 1915.
Courtesy of California State Library.

Parkside District Improvement Club

The Parkside Realty Company provided the first residents of the Parkside the minimum in infrastructure and services: limited street and lot grading, sewer and water utilities and, by late 1908, a single-track spur streetcar line running at one-hour intervals. There were no streetlights, leaving commuters to walk home in the dark. The closest fire station was more than a mile away across poor roads, and the entire district had only three hydrants. The houses had no postal delivery, and the children had to walk a mile or more to reach the closest school at Junipero Serra Boulevard and Ocean Avenue.¹⁰⁵

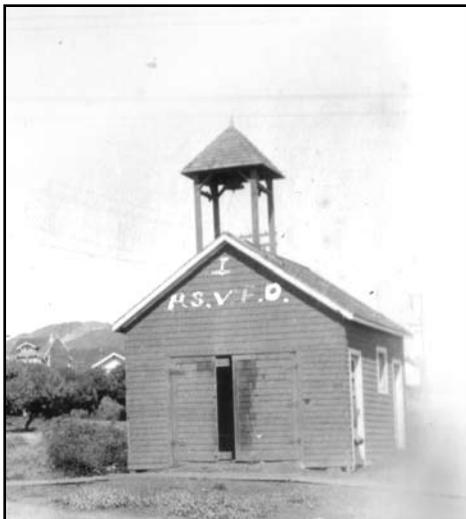
In the face of these challenges, the residents of the Parkside District formed an organization to address the quality-of-life issues in the new neighborhood. The first meeting of the Parkside District Improvement Club took place in the early autumn of 1908. The small assembly met on the corner of 26th Avenue and T Street, in the sparse sales office of the Parkside Realty Company.

The place was void of furniture and fittings and the only illumination was that afforded by candles which were stuck around in the rafters, and in order to keep them burning it was necessary for the audience to shield them with their hats against the wind which blew into the place through the broken windows and an unruly door which refused to be a door and be closed.¹⁰⁶

The gentlemen who attended agreed to form an organization with its initial mission being to secure improvements in the neighborhood. Several committees were formed—streets and sewers, parks and water, schools and mail service, health and police—and one committee was assigned to draw up a constitution and bylaws. At the second meeting, two weeks later, the number of attendees had doubled. A month later, the club had already succeeded in having a few streetlights installed. R.M.J. Armstrong was elected president of the organization, with W.M. Savage vice-president, Harry H. Dobbin, Jr. (2571-31st Avenue) secretary, and Fred W. Alsing (2583-31st Avenue) treasurer.

In the first eighteen months of its existence the Parkside District Improvement Club (PDIC) could boast several achievements:

- It had formed a volunteer fire brigade of 25 men and secured the donation of a firehouse, carriage, and hose reel from the Parkside Realty Company. It persuaded the city fire commissioners to donate hoses, axes, hooks, and ladders, while the PDIC supplied lanterns and a 100-pound brass alarm bell. This firehouse stood near the northeast corner of 28th Avenue and Ulloa Street (no longer extant).
- It petitioned successfully for telephone and mail service and for a more frequent rail schedule.



Parkside District Volunteer Firehouse, 28th Avenue, near Ulloa Street, circa 1915. Courtesy of Ada and Chas. Williams.

105 H.H. Dobbin, Sr., "Parkside Improvement Club," *Sunset Journal*, January 28, 1910.

106 Ibid.

- It fought for a neighborhood elementary school. The first Parkside School, on land donated by the Parkside Realty Company on Taraval street near 31st Avenue, opened with four grades in 1909 (no longer extant).¹⁰⁷

In addition to these issues of neighborhood need, the club began lobbying officials on citywide issues. In 1910, it endorsed the construction of the Twin Peaks Tunnel and the use of the Lake Merced area for the planned Panama-Pacific Exposition.¹⁰⁸

Eugene Williams, owner of the first store in the Parkside, was an early member of the Parkside District Improvement Club and offered the second floor of his building at 2201 Taraval Street as a meeting place. Called “Williams Hall” or “Parkside Hall,” the space provided an open auditorium with attached gymnasium and hosted community dances, costume parties, classes, and talent shows in addition to monthly PDIC meetings.¹⁰⁹ Agenda items included issues of local concern and speakers on larger subjects, such as Women’s Suffrage.

While hosting suffrage speakers, the PDIC restricted its membership to men until 1935.¹¹⁰ Denied a place in PDIC, Parkside women formed their own auxiliary in September 1908. The Parkside Women’s Improvement Club was established “to advance interest among the women residents of this district in literature, education, social affairs and current events.”¹¹¹ More than a monthly tea party, the Parkside Women’s Club soon entrenched itself in citywide political affairs, protesting saloon permits at Ocean Beach and, according to the *San Francisco Call*, planning protest marches on the mayor’s home.¹¹²

By 1910, even with fairly high monthly dues of 50 cents, the membership of the Parkside District Improvement Club had risen to the point that those Parkside residents who hadn’t joined were called “delinquents.”¹¹³



First Parkside School on Taraval Street near 31st Avenue, circa 1912.



Williams’ store at Taraval and 32nd Avenue in 1925. Courtesy of Ada and Chas. Williams.

107 This building was later moved to 15th Avenue and Taraval Street and served as the first St. Cecilia’s Catholic Church.

108 C.F. Adams, “Parkside Club has Done Wonders in Two Years,” *San Francisco Call*, March 25, 1911. Both Golden Gate Park and the Lake Merced area were proposed locations for the exposition, which was held in the future Marina District in 1915.

109 This building is extant in the form of “Gene’s Liquors.” More information on it can be found in the “Notable Buildings” section.

110 Mrs. A.B. Saunders, whose husband was a charter member of PDIC, reported that women repeatedly urged to be given membership status over the first two decades of the club’s existence. PDIC historian Opal Piercy noted that when the club accepted female members in the mid-1930s, PDIC was reinvigorated and became a more influential force in the neighborhood and in city politics. PDIC scrapbooks, Volume 1.

111 *Sunset Journal*, January 28, 1910.

112 “Mass Meeting and Parade to Protest Against Dive,” *San Francisco Bulletin*, April 6, 1910. This march never happened and the *Bulletin* article apparently led to a split in the women’s club between those wanting to influence public policy and those who “didn’t want to get dragged into political discussions.” PDIC scrapbooks, Volume 1.

113 *Sunset Journal* clippings from the PDIC scrapbooks, Volume 1.



19th Avenue at Santiago in 1917. Today the state highway is six lanes wide and one of the most traveled arterials in San Francisco. Courtesy of California State Library.

Throughout the 1910s, the prominent issue of concern to the Parkside and the entire southwestern quadrant of the city was the proposed Twin Peaks Tunnel. This streetcar tunnel promised to connect the west of Twin Peaks neighborhoods to Market Street with a vastly reduced commute time, invigorating development and real estate sales in the area. Developers and real estate firms had invested fortunes based on the tunnel's construction, and the progress toward its realization was a daily topic in the newspapers.

The Parkside District Improvement Club proved no exception to this obsession, and the extension and improvement of streetcar lines to connect the district to the tunnel was its major concern after basic street and utility services in the Parkside had been met. Thoughts of the tunnel even entered residents' poetry, as seen in the ending of this abridged "Ode to Parkside," published in the *Sunset Journal* in October 1911:

"There is a place called Parkside,
Where people go for health;
It's just the place for a poor man
Or for a man of wealth.

"It is not half as far away
As some of you have heard
It's only thirty minutes ride
To Market street and Third.

"But when the tunnel is complete
(Which will be very soon),
They will all go home for dinner
Every day at noon."¹¹⁴

PDIC sent representatives to public meetings planning and promoting the tunnel, and on February 3, 1918, opening day of the Twin Peaks Tunnel, officers of the Parkside District Improvement Club joined the mayor on the first car.

Michael M. O'Shaughnessy, the city engineer of San Francisco, who oversaw construction of the tunnel, greatly influenced the course of physical development in the entire city. O'Shaughnessy deliberately extended new railway lines to heretofore inaccessible districts west of Twin Peaks, the Marina, the remoter sections of North Beach, and the Mission. These lines ran at an operating loss in order to attract people after the 1906 earthquake and fire. New houses sprang up by the hundreds in all the areas penetrated by the publicly owned transit facilities.¹¹⁵

O'Shaughnessy's "scenic" boulevard system, which took shape between 1915 and 1920, also aided Parkside and development west of Twin Peaks. Concurrent with the construction of the Twin Peaks Tunnel, O'Shaughnessy laid out Portola Drive from Castro and Market to St. Francis Circle by extending Market Street along



PDIC officers join other dignitaries for the opening of the Twin Peaks Tunnel in 1918. Courtesy of California State Library.

114 Mrs. F.W. Alsing, "An Ode to Parkside," *Sunset Journal*, October 1911. PDIC Scrapbooks, Volume 1.

115 Mel Scott, *The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959.

the slopes of Twin Peaks until it merged with Corbett Street near 24th Street. He also built the Great Highway; El Camino Del Mar, linking the Presidio with the Great Highway; and Sloat Boulevard, another means to reach the Parkside.

Residents of the Parkside were most interested in the benefits of the municipally owned L-Taraval line. After the Twin Peaks Tunnel opened, the PDIC continued to push for improved access between the Parkside community and the tunnel's west portal. Motor bus service acted as a temporary solution until L-Taraval tracks were laid as far as 20th and Taraval in September 1918 and extended to 33rd Avenue in April 1919. Finally, by January 1923, the L-Taraval ran all the way to 48th Avenue, making development to the beach a practical reality.¹¹⁶

With adequate transportation and neighborhood services in place, the PDIC went into a state of semi-dormancy in the 1920s. In 1970, club historian Opal Piercy tried to research the organizational activities during this time, but noted:

“Several persons have stated that they conducted a brief business meeting and adjourned to play poker. Thus the Improvement Club was frequently referred to as ‘The Men’s Poker Club.’ Apparently no minutes were kept, or they have been destroyed.”¹¹⁷

PDIC Revitalized

When Ray Schiller moved to the Parkside in the early 1930s, he brought with him an organizational genius and a zeal for community building. Schiller had been president of the South of Market Boys, a service and social club, and he used this experience to help revitalize the Parkside District Improvement Club.

A local businessman, who repaired luggage in the garage of his house at 2422–25th Avenue, Schiller and local newspaper editor Russell Powell (2326–38th Avenue) aggressively recruited Parkside businesses and residents to join PDIC. Women were invited to join as members, swelling its size and energy. The first indication of a revitalized PDIC came at a dedication ceremony for improvements to McCoppin Square in 1935. Schiller acted as organizing chair to the huge event that featured a parade from West Portal School to the park and drew an estimated 10,000 people.¹¹⁸

A new generation of Parkside Improvement Club members worked tirelessly to ensure that services and amenities increased with the growing district, and monthly meetings averaged as many as 116 attendees in 1938.¹¹⁹ Through the 1940s, the club's influence, lobbying, and hard work brought about improvements to Parkside Square, including tennis courts and ball fields; new schools in the district, including Ulloa Elementary and Lincoln



May Day celebration sponsored by the PDIC in 1944. Russell Powell on far left and Ray Schiller on far right. PDIC Scrapbooks, Volume 2.

116 Lloyd Piercy, “Parkside’s Transportation Story,” PDIC scrapbooks, Volume 1, May 1970.

117 PDIC Scrapbooks, Volume 2.

118 *Parkside Journal*, October 30, 1935.

119 PDIC Scrapbooks, Volume 2. Summary of 1938.



Corner Parkside Cottage at 2501-26th Avenue.

High School; extension of streetcar and bus services; and Halloween parades and May Day festivals for the community.

On December 31, 1948, Ray Schiller died suddenly from a heart attack at 53 years of age. The core of the PDIC that he helped pull together and energize continued. PDIC officers usually served in other capacities in serving the city; for example, Evelyn LaPlace acted as a library commissioner in addition to being PDIC president.¹²⁰

By the 1950s, the Parkside District Improvement Club had grown from a small group interested in strictly local concerns to a powerful civic organization that could influence citywide initiatives and elections. PDIC supported saving the cable cars and redevelopment housing in Chinatown. It fought the proposed Western Freeway, rezoning actions to add more gas stations to the district, and “cracker jack” housing that was not up to the building standards of the neighborhood.¹²¹

As the core of Parkside activists aged, moved away, or died, the PDIC lost steam. Into the 1970s the club continued to host candidate nights and May Day celebrations but had less influence on the day-to-day activities of the Parkside or the policies in City Hall. Meetings were still held into the 21st century but were usually attended by only five or six members. Betty Jehl acted as the last president of the PDIC until her death in 2004.

In almost 100 years of existence, the Parkside District Improvement Club defined the Parkside District as much as the Parkside Realty Company or any builder could. The PDIC, consisting of Parkside residents, created one of San Francisco’s most admired neighborhoods by fighting for parks, responsible zoning, school facilities, and adequate transportation.

Patterns of Development

The Parkside was one of only three areas that developed in the Sunset before 1920. Building in the Inner Sunset began in the 1880s and accelerated after the 1894 Midwinter Fair in Golden Gate Park. The Inner Sunset attracted home-owners, but also eventually renters, middle class residents who could afford flats near the streetcar lines. The Oceanside, near the beach, started as a community of recycled horse and cable cars in 1895 and was a mix of both beach cottages owned by the wealthy and humble houses for families.

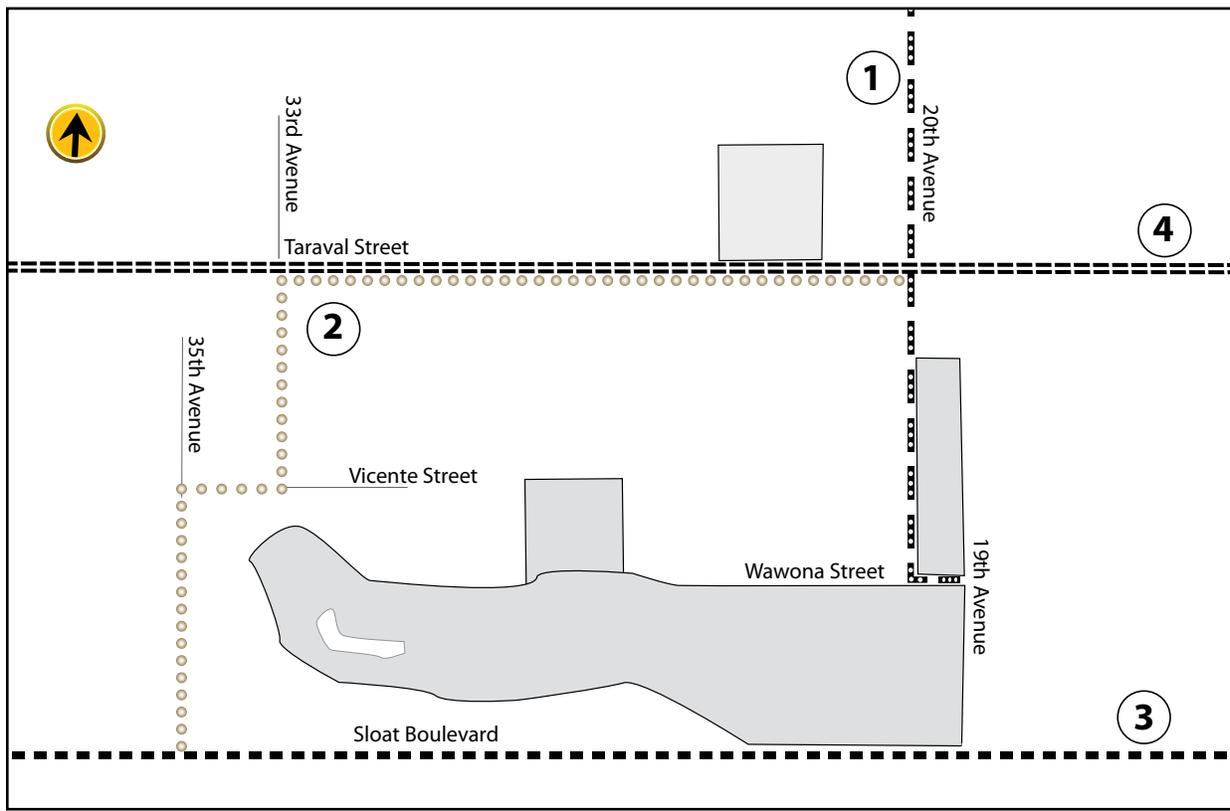
The availability of transportation was the greatest single influence on development patterns. The more remote buildings were from the streetcars lines, the less builders could charge for them.¹²² In the early 20th Century the United Railroads, and successor Market Street Railway, operated three streetcar lines into the Sunset: the #7 streetcar line along H Street (now Lincoln

120 LaPlace privately started the Parkside’s first circulating library at 2590-32nd Avenue in the 1930s.

121 During World War II, PDIC stopped Doelger Brothers in mid-construction from building substandard housing at the corner of Ulloa and 21st Avenue. The foundation of the uncompleted structure sat undisturbed for seven years.

122 Ken Zinns, “The Tradition Continues: The Sunset District Rowhouse of San Francisco 1920-1945,” December 1983.

**Streetcar routes serving the Parkside District
1908-2007**



- 1** **20th Avenue line, 1908-1945.** Operated by the Parkside Transit Company, 1908-1915, running from Lincoln Way and 20th Avenue to Wawona Street and 19th Avenue. Taken over by the United Railroads in 1916 to become the #17 Haight & Ingleside line, which connected to tracks downtown without need of a transfer. Operated by the Market Street Railway from 1921-1945. On Sundays from 1916-1937 the line extended down 19th Avenue, turning west on Sloat to the beach. Service terminated completely in 1945.
- 2** **Parkside “Dinky” 1910-1927.** Strictly a local line, the “Dinky” car ran from 20th and Taraval to 33rd Avenue, Vicente Street, 35th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard. Installed by the Parkside Transit Company to connect residents with both the 20th Avenue and Sloat streetcars downtown. Operated by successor companies the United Railroads and Market Street Railway until 1927.
- 3** **Sloat Boulevard line, 1909-1945.** Extended west from a line that previously terminated at Ocean Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard, this streetcar traveled from the Ferry Building to Ocean Beach, making it the longest line in the city. Run by the United Railroads, 1909-1921, the Market Street Railway, 1921-1945 as the “#12 Sloat.”
- 4** **L-Taraval line, 1918 - present.** Publicly-owned Municipal Railway line connects to downtown through the Twin Peaks Tunnel. Began running in 1918, with line extending west in spurts through the 1930s.



2500 block of 31st Avenue in 2005.



Parkside Garage, 1830 Taraval Street.

Way), that followed the line of the old Park & Ocean train; the #17 line down 20th Avenue, which acted as successor to the Parkside Transit Company's first line; and the #12 line along Sloat Boulevard from Ocean Avenue. Inadequate service from these lines impeded development up to the 1920s, as all three lines had to wind through several neighborhoods of the city before reaching downtown.¹²³ The opening of the Municipal Railway streetcar lines through Twin Peaks Tunnel in 1918 and the Sunset tunnel in 1928 greatly improved commute times and access.

In the meantime, the automobile had evolved from a rich man's toy into affordable transportation for the middle class. A 1913 article, "The Automobile and Its Mission," summarized the astounding progress of the auto age: in 1908 it was still a "transcendent play thing—thrilling, seductive, desperately expensive." By 1913, it was opening up a new pattern of residential development.¹²⁴ The first mass produced car, Henry Ford's Model T, revolutionized travel. The Model T cost \$850 in 1908, less than half what cars cost at the time. By the 1920s, the price had fallen to \$300.¹²⁵ Auto registration in San Francisco tripled from 12,000 in 1914 to 31,817 in 1917 and tripled again to 103,341 in 1924. By 1930, there were 155,888 autos registered in San Francisco.¹²⁶

The automobile allowed less valuable land farther away from streetcar lines to be practical for house sites. After World War I, the developers of the Sunset foresaw the dominance of the automobile and laid out their sites with the auto in mind.¹²⁷ Architect and researcher Ken Zinns noted that although the distance, from property line to property line, across a street in the Sunset is nearly identical to that in the Haight-Ashbury (developed in the 1880s before cars):

"the actual width of the street surface is about twelve feet wider in the Sunset, as the sidewalks are much narrower. The additional width allowed on-street parking, while still leaving plenty of room for traffic. All the various row-house forms had very similar relationships to the street. All were set back from ten to fifteen feet from the front property line. This allowed autos to be parked in the driveways without blocking the street. It also made the streets appear wider and the buildings lower than they actually are, since the buildings were farther apart. This created a streetscape much different from older parts of the city, an almost suburban streetscape where the auto clearly has dominance over the pedestrian. There are no

123 <http://www.streetcar.org/mim/spotlight/yesterday/sunset/index.html>, accessed September 6, 2007.

124 Robert Stein, ed, *The Anglo American Suburb*, London, England: Architectural Design, 1981, page 11.

125 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Model_T, accessed September 4, 2007.

126 Ring, pages 56, 100, 101.

127 By 1970 the residents were much less likely to use Muni daily (19%) than they were a car (81%). Coro Foundation, *The District Handbook, A Coro Foundation Guide to San Francisco's Supervisorial Districts*, 1979.

real gestures to the pedestrian along the street, no stoop entries, no front yards, no street trees.”¹²⁸

Since the 25-foot wide lots precluded room for a driveway along the side, as was common in suburban lots of the period, high basements were provided so they could be used as garages.¹²⁹

Housing construction west of Twin Peaks was slow up to the end of World War I. When house construction boomed nationwide in the 1920s, San Francisco mirrored the trend.¹³⁰ By this time, the Shingle and Craftsman styles had been surpassed by the Sunset house type, which provided an integral garage.

Prominent developers of the Parkside and Sunset from the 1920s to 1950s were the Gellerts (Sunstream Homes and Standard Building Company), Henry Doelger, Ray Galli, Lang Realty Company, Chris McKeon (Happy Homes Building Company), and the Meyer brothers.¹³¹ These merchant builders did not resemble the community builders who comprehensively planned developments such as Duncan McDuffie in St. Francis Wood or Harry B. Allen in Sea Cliff.¹³² Instead, they were often family-run businesses concerned with building affordable houses quickly on the standard city grid in a range of façades to suit current tastes.¹³³ None of these builders employed architects, although they did use building designers.¹³⁴ The builders borrowed ideas from one another and kept track of which floor plans and façade styles were selling best.

Before World War II, styles were a mixture of Spanish (red tile roofs), Second Empire, English Tudor, and Colonial. After the war, period revival detailing was less common, both to control costs and to offer a “modern” look. The results are houses that are so similar it is difficult to identify the builder.¹³⁵



2424 Vicente Street, constructed by Doelger Brothers in 1949. Photo 2007.

128 Zinns, page 16.

129 In San Francisco row houses, “basements” usually are at grade in contrast to the typical definition of a basement as a space below grade.

130 Carolyn S. Loeb, *Entrepreneurial Vernacular, Developers' Subdivision in the 1920s*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001, page 6.

131 Zinns credits the Gellerts with building 20,000 houses in San Francisco between 1920 and 1945 and Doelger with building 25,000 houses, mostly in the Sunset. Daniel Gregory states that the Gellerts and Doelger produced the “lion’s share” of the houses in the Sunset: Daniel Gregory, “Be It Ever So Humble: The Impact of the Merchant Builder-Land Developer on the Evolution of Housing in the Bay Area,” Department of Architecture, University of California 1979, page 10.

132 Marc A. Weiss, *The Rise of the Community Builders*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, pages 2, 51, 58, 120. The Doelger and Gellert companies did engage in community planning and development in later years with Daly City’s Westlake and Serramonte areas.

133 The Gellerts did consult with the Parkside District Improvement Club on zoning and development plans and even had a family member on that organization’s board. PDIC Scrapbooks, Minutes, Volumes 3 and 4.

134 Zinns, pages 8 and 9.

135 “The inexpensive trolley housing areas even lean toward uniformity of architecture,” James E. Vance, Jr., *Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area*, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, page 54.



2601-31st Avenue. November 2007 photo.

Generally, houses were built for middle-class, first-time buyers, with prices from \$4,500 to \$7,000. Building increased tremendously in the late 1920s and fell off briefly in the early 1930s before picking up again, reaching a peak in 1939. By this time, rows of houses were built across the sand dunes.

While early real estate maps indicated plans to plat and develop the Stern Grove, Pine Lake Park, and even the reserved city parkland of McCoppin Square and Parkside Square, these parks were never encroached upon. With the addition of, and improvements to Larsen Park, the landscaped strips along Sunset Boulevard, and the Lake Merced area in the 1920s and 1930s, Parkside offered a high percentage of open space compared to older San Francisco neighborhoods. The relatively small homes built by cost-mindful developers also created larger than average backyards for city residents.

Shops and services grew along Taraval Street, and boomed with housing construction in the 1920s. The first two bank branches and the Parkside District's only movie theater opened near the intersection of 20th and Taraval in 1927.¹³⁶ The primary shopping area for the Parkside extended from 17th Avenue to 24th Avenue on Taraval. Stores and businesses sprang up more or less spontaneously along the L streetcar line during the 1920s to serve the growing population, a typical pattern in the Bay Area.¹³⁷ A subsidiary shopping area also grew along Vicente Street between 22nd and 24th Avenues.

During this time, the Parkside's larger institutional buildings were constructed: a new Parkside School, the San Francisco Protestant Orphanage cottages and Pinehurst Home for Children. Further information on the latter two is in this statement's "Notable Buildings" section.

After World War II, new Parkside civic and community buildings followed the popular "moderne" styles of the time. The Parkside Branch Library (Taraval and 22nd Avenue), post office (Taraval and 28th Avenue), and First United Presbyterian church (1740 Sloat) are examples. The modernist American Seed and Nursery Company building at 1550 Taraval Street (no longer extant) was even featured in national magazines.

Demographic Patterns

Development of San Francisco's newer residential areas in the early 20th century often followed previous demographic patterns. The new "high class" districts of Forest Hill (1912) and St. Francis Wood (1912) were continuations of the professional and upper middle class found in Nob Hill and Pacific Heights. The Richmond was an extension of the middle class living in the Western Addition, and the Outer Mission/Excelsior was populated by the skilled workers and lower middle-class Irish, Italians, and Germans of the Mission District.

136 "Sunset to Get New Buildings," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 20, 1927.

137 James E. Vance, Jr., *Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area*, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, page 53.



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SEE these new homes now while you have a wide variety of beautiful designs to select from. All are located within a half block of the car line, in fast-growing PARKSIDE.

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LANG REALTY CO.

Tract Office: 28th and Taraval

Sunset 5038

April 3, 1926 ad from San Francisco Chronicle.



Vicente Street homes near 32nd Avenue, November 2007 photo.

Development in the Parkside and Sunset was fueled by a desire to own a house, and the builders responded with single-minded focus. The Parkside grew into a heterogeneous area of single family homes inhabited by Irish-Americans, and others of western European descent from the 1920s through the 1940s.¹³⁸

The creation of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934 encouraged home ownership with low down payments and long-term mortgages at a time when economic activity had slumped during the first years of the Depression. This greatly spurred the construction and sales of houses in the Sunset/Parkside, and especially the building of single-family homes. The construction and establishment of businesses, flats, and apartment structures lagged, so that by 1939, the Sunset had between 60% and 80% home ownership, while the Inner Richmond and Inner Sunset had figures between 20% and 40% and the Western Addition and Haight-Ashbury Districts were below 20%.¹³⁹

After World War II, returning servicemen looked to the Parkside as a more attractive place to raise families than their boyhood homes in the Mission District. After both World War II and the Korean War, a flood of Irish left the Mission for the Parkside:

“The Mission is too crowded and has been for 50 years. It wasn’t just status an Irishman was seeking when he moved to the Parkside. He wanted a yard, with some grass, and a park near by. The Mission had the climate, but it wasn’t the place to raise a family. Nobody wants his kids playing in the street.”¹⁴⁰

The desire to own a house with a yard was the key driver of development in the Parkside. From the earliest days, through the booming 1920s, the Depression of the 1930s, and the hordes of returning servicemen after WWII, builders produced affordable houses in large numbers for first-time buyers.

By 1970, the Parkside had matured into a solid middle-class district. Sixty-nine percent of the land area in the Parkside was residential (compared with 39% citywide) and only 3% was commercial (compared to 6% citywide). The housing stock was overwhelming single-family (97% vs. 68% citywide) and owner occupied (81% vs. 31% citywide).

Still largely of European descent (85% white, compared with 57% citywide)¹⁴¹ and married (the highest percentage of married persons in the city), the Parkside was the most politically conservative and homogenous district in San Francisco. In the 1975 mayor’s race, 65% of the Parkside voted for the more conservative

138 Cherny, page 79. Minutes from the PDIC meetings often list “Irish songs and jokes told.” See PDIC Scrapbooks, Volume 1.

139 Zinns, page 18.

140 Eneas J. Kane, executive assistant to Mission District U.S. Congressman John F. Shelley, quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 4, 1962, page 12. Shelly served as mayor for one term (1963-1967).

141 Coro Foundation, page 190. Coro defined the Parkside as between Sloat Boulevard, 19th Avenue, Ortega Street, and Sunset Boulevard.

John Barbagelata while his liberal opponent George Moscone won 51% of the citywide vote.¹⁴²

As with other suburban-style neighborhoods in San Francisco, some residents and community groups tried to restrict minorities from buying property or even residing in the Sunset and Parkside Districts from the 1920s into the 1950s.¹⁴³ In 1943 the Parkside District Improvement Club asked the Real Estate Association of San Francisco how they could prevent African-American and Filipino-Americans from purchasing houses in the district.¹⁴⁴

Chinese-American families made in-roads into the Parkside in the 1970s and 1980s, and by 2000 people of Asian-American descent made up over half of the Parkside's population.¹⁴⁵

This trend has accelerated in the new century, and the Parkside is today a primarily Asian-American middle-class neighborhood.¹⁴⁶

142 Coro, pages 22-30.

143 Jacob Pemberton, "Amid the Sand and the Fog: The Development of the Sunset District of San Francisco, 1930-1940", 2002, page 19.

144 Copy of May 17, 1943 letter. PDIC correspondence, 1943-1944.

145 U.S. Census, 2000.

146 Since the reestablishment of San Francisco district elections in 2000, the only members of the Board of Supervisors of Asian descent have been elected from District 4 (Sunset/Parkside). Many businesses in the Parkside now feature street signage in both Chinese and English, with a few in Chinese only.

Part 3

Property Types

Residential

Single-family homes make up the vast majority of the housing in the Parkside District. Most were originally built in the 1920s and 1930s as one-story over garage with floorplans of five to six rooms including kitchen, designed for small families. The smaller cottages built by the Parkside Realty Company in 1908 have almost all been raised to accompany basement garages.

Larger family homes of Craftsmen and Edwardian styles built in the 1910s and early 1920s can have front setbacks from 8 to 15 feet, and a few feature a garage as a side or back-of-lot structure.

Flats and small apartment buildings/complexes, most dating from the 1940s and 1950s, are usually found at corner intersections along the streetcar line on Taraval Street. Flats, with one residence per floor, generally are two story over garage.

Housing types in the Parkside are remarkably homogeneous, with façades as the most apparent difference between houses.

The following is a general characterization and timeline of residential construction in the Parkside:



2594-26th Avenue, north from Vicente Street, November 2007 photo.

1900-1920: Parkside cottages and craftsmen-inspired bungalows. Usually detached, with gable roofs. Originally built without an integral garage.

1920-1940: Sunset style house. Attached or detached houses with ground story basements and garage door facing the street for automobile access, an entry door on the second story with a straight stairway from the sidewalk open to the sky, and a flat roof. A second, internal staircase leading to an access door on the sidewalk was a feature through about 1930. Façades are a mixture of Mediterranean, Second Empire, English Tudor, and Colonial.

1930-1940: “Patio style.” A variation of the Sunset house, with a light well or patio in the center of the building open from the second floor. The patio is not visible from the street.

1935-1960: “Tunnel” entrance style. Another variation of the Sunset house with the open entrance stairs replaced with a partially or fully enclosed internal staircase, usually with one or more turns, leading from the sidewalk into the middle of the house on the second story. The façades may be either period revival or modern styles.

1940-1960: “Modern or International style” and “Ranch style.” The Sunset house form was continued after World War II but often without period revival detailing to give a modern look. Ranch style and some Colonial Revival houses also made their appearance, particularly in the Pine Lake Park area.

Commercial

The Parkside District's commercial structures are limited to Taraval Street, 19th Avenue, and small sections of Vicente Street. Single story retail buildings are intermixed with two- to four-story structures that feature housing or office space over ground floor retail. Some larger commercial buildings run half or the full length of a block, with space for four to seven individual businesses on the street and delivery access from the side streets to the rear of the property. Styles range from Mission revival to Art Deco to Streamline Moderne.

Taraval Street has always been the commercial heart of the Parkside. The 1954 San Francisco Directory listed 224 businesses on Taraval Street between 12th and 35th Avenues, with the highest concentration (58 businesses) on the blocks between 19th and 22nd Avenues. Commercial buildings intermix more frequently with residential construction west of 22nd Avenue. Many large houses in this area of Taraval have had storefront additions over the decades, but most are not used for commercial activity in 2007.

The typical neighborhood businesses of fifty years ago—clothing shops, retail goods stores, and mid-sized food markets—have disappeared with consumer migration to supermarkets and shopping malls. Larger commercial buildings originally created as automotive garages and food markets have in many cases been repurposed as offices or housing. The former Parkside Theater on Taraval near 19th Avenue, for instance, now houses condominiums and a childcare center, and the Ring's Market building on Taraval and 33rd Avenue has been subdivided into office space.

Most commercial structures are now dedicated to food or service industries, such as nail salons, real estate agencies, restaurants and cafés.

Institutional and Community

In the early days of the Parkside neighborhood, community services were, by necessity, housed in structures built for other purposes. Storefronts and residences were used as churches, meeting places, and the neighborhood's first library. Only two buildings were specifically erected for community use before 1915: a one-room schoolhouse and a volunteer firehouse, built quickly and cheaply to serve until larger and more permanent structures were constructed.

The 1920s saw the emergence of structures specifically constructed for civic and community needs. Some extant institutional structures from this period, such as the Parkside Adventist Christian Church (2250 Ulloa Street, built 1927) and the former San Francisco Protestant Orphanage, were modeled to blend in with surrounding stucco homes. Other structures stand out with atypical building styles and materials for the neighborhood. Examples of the latter include the Taraval Police Station (built 1924) and Pinehurst Home for Children (built 1928), both of which feature brick façades.

Adaptation of structures for new uses continued. Taraval Street features a number of large houses with ground-floor offices and storefronts (2014, 2020, 2417), and former commercial spaces on Vicente Street have in recent years been transformed for use by religious communities.



1757 Taraval Street at 28th Avenue.

Notable Buildings in the Parkside

Parkside Library



Location: 1200 Taraval Street and 22nd Avenue.

Built: 1951

Architects: Appleton and Wolfard

When it opened, the Parkside branch of the San Francisco Public Library was hailed as the “finest branch library in the country... light, spacious and comfortably quiet.”¹ *The Architect and Engineer* of March 1952 noted that it has “the appearance of a swank country club or a modern luxurious residence,” and that “its gay turquoise, yellow and natural brick color scheme” gave it the look of “a refined night club.” It replaced a rented one-story wood frame storefront at 1541 Taraval Street that was built in 1928² and used as a library in the mid-1930s (extant).

The design by Appleton and Wolfard looked more like a suburban home than an institutional building. The open plan featured a fireplace with reading lounge and an outside patio with landscaping by Lawrence Halprin. The copper-hooded fireplace, along with furniture designed by Eames and Hermann Miller, evoked the informality and comforts of a post-war California tract home. Appleton and Wolfard went on between 1953 and 1966 to design the similar Marina, Ortega, Merced, North Beach, Eureka, Western Addition, and Excelsior library branches.³

1 *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 29, 1951.

2 San Francisco Assessor/Recorder's, parcel data web site, accessed November 7, 2007.

3 Richard Brandi, “Modern Branch Libraries Face Rehabilitation,” *Heritage News*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, July/August 2003, pages 5-7.

Trocadero Inn



Location: in the area now known as Sigmund Stern Grove.

Built: 1892.

Original owner: George M. Greene

Architectural details: The Trocadero Inn (sometimes called “El Trocadero”) is a two-story wood frame structure with steep roof and dormers, gothic type, cresting on its ridge and wood siding on the first floor with shingles on the second floor. Interlacing stick ornamentation on the first-floor porch and around the windows articulate the principle facade. The building has a simple interior with a paneled bar and a massive stone fireplace and flue. A center stair hall leads to the second floor double-loaded corridor under the ridge with small rooms front and rear. The second floor has been altered to accommodate a live-in caretaker.

Greene leased the inn as a resort to such notable San Franciscans as C.A. Hooper, Adolph Spreckels, and Hiram Cook. Under Cook, the Trocadero sported a deer park, boating pavilion, and beer garden. In 1907, political boss Abe Ruef was arrested at the Trocadero Inn, where he had been hiding when the San Francisco graft trials began.

Trocadero Inn closed in 1916 and is now part of Sigmund Stern Grove, a Recreation and Park department property purchased by Rosalie Meyer Stern in 1931 and donated to San Francisco in memory of her late husband.⁴

⁴ Description from “Sixteen Notable Buildings: Architectural and Historical Resources of the Sunset District,” published by SPEAK, San Francisco, CA, 2004-2005.

Pinehurst Lodge



Location: 2685 30th Avenue

Built: 1928

Architects: Ashley, Evers, and Hayes

General Contractors: J.S. Sampson Company

Pinehurst was built by the San Francisco Junior League as a home for underprivileged children and orphans awaiting foster homes. Over the years, the building has served a number of social service agencies and has been owned by the Salvation Army since 1946.

Architectural details: Situated on a large landscaped lot with mature trees, the building stands out in its neighborhood of modest row houses. An elegantly curved driveway leads to an inviting entrance framed in light stone. The two-story brick building with a hipped tile roof was designed reminiscent of Mediterranean style. Its three wings form a protected courtyard suitable for social gatherings on the west side of the building. While the ground floor is occupied by several large and nicely designed rooms and a kitchen, the upstairs accommodates bedrooms.

Tiles of animals, ships, and castles decorate the walls of the recreation room. In the visitor's room, the fireplace features a frieze of Old King Cole. The salon was donated by the Ghirardelli family in memory of their daughter Esperance. The ceiling of the salon is inscribed in Latin with the text from Corinthians 1:13, ending with "So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

In 1929, the building received a "city clubhouses" award at the Northern California Architectural Exhibition held at the M.H. de Young Museum.⁵

⁵ Ibid

San Francisco Protestant Orphanage



Location: 1801 Vicente Street

Built: 1924

The preferred model of care for orphanages shifted in the early 20th Century away from single structure dormitories to a “cottage” system of recreating family-style environments. San Francisco’s first and best-known orphanage moved to the Parkside in the 1920s, adopting this cottage system. The six residential cottages and administration building now are the home of the campus for Edgewood Center for Children and Families.

Williams Store/Gene's Liquors



Location: 2201 Taraval Street at 32nd Avenue

Built: 1908

Original owner: Eugene Williams

Eugene Williams' store was the first local business and grocery in the Parkside. More importantly, it acted as a community meeting place into the 1920s. Musicals, lectures, parties, and early community group gatherings were held in "Williams Hall" above the store before the space was renovated into a residence.

Lincoln High School



Location: 24th Avenue between Quintara and Rivera streets.

Built: 1940

Architects: Fred H. Meyer, Martin Rist, and Timothy L. Pflueger

Lincoln High School was constructed after years of lobbying by Parkside residents, and voter approval of a 1938 bond measure.

The main academic building is four stories high, constructed of reinforced concrete with cement stucco plaster exterior. Limited funds prevented the kind of elaborate frieze work Pflueger used at Washington High School, and exterior design elements were mostly limited to the main entrance stair hall and use of Travertine colored terra cotta bands window bands. Lincoln's gymnasiums and auditorium were added in the 1950s.

Other Structures of Interest

Parkside Cottages

(Constructed by the Parkside Realty Company in 1908 for the first residents of the Parkside District.)

26th Avenue, west side: 2501, 2507, 2511

27th Avenue, east side: 2500, 2506, 2514, 2518, 2522; **west side:** 2515, 2519, 2523, 2527, 2531, 2535

28th Avenue, east side: 2522, 2526, 2530, 2534, 2538, 2542, 2546; **west side:** 2539, 2543, 2547, 2551, 2555, 2559

29th Avenue, east side: 2550, 2554, 2562; **west side:** 2555, 2559, 2563, 2567

30th Avenue, east side: 2558, 2562, 2566, 2570; **west side:** 2563, 2567, 2571, 2575

31st Avenue, east side: 2566, 2570, 2574, 2578; **west side:** 2571, 2575, 2579, 2583

32nd Avenue, east side: 2574, 2578, 2582, 2586, 2590; **west side:** 2583, 2587, 2591, 2595

Other Residential

This list represents an informal walking survey of houses that pre-date the typical stucco “Sunset” residence in the Parkside. Most are larger Craftsman-style buildings constructed by the Parkside Realty Company before 1925. Some of these buildings are referenced further in other sections of this statement. *Note that this is not intended as a comprehensive survey.*

19th Avenue: 2447, 2467, 2475, 2489

20th Avenue: 2430, 2446, 2455, 2457, 2476

21st Avenue: 2407, 2418, 2434, 2435, 2444, 2461, 2477, 2484, 2487, 2488, 2507

22nd Avenue: 2412, 2419, 2532, 2543, 2571

23rd Avenue: 2435, 2471, 2501, 2506, 2512, 2514, 2516, 2578

25th Avenue: 2522

26th Avenue: 2431, 2451, 2462, 2474, 2624, 2626, 2628, 2632

27th Avenue: 2426, 2459, 2461, 2469

28th Avenue: 2443, 2454, 2458, 2462, 2468, 2472

29th Avenue: 2371, 2374, 2491, 2558

30th Avenue: 2499

33rd Avenue: 2363, 2451, 2570

34th Avenue: 2466

Ulloa Street: 2350

Taraval Street: 1409 (mixed-commercial), 1420, 2337

Commercial/Civic/Religious

(Churches, institutional, governmental, and commercial.)

28th Avenue: 2414-18

Taraval Street: 800, 901-907, 1100-02, 1101-23, 1634-44, 1745-47, 1830, 2120, 2124

Ulloa Street: 2250

Next Steps

Threats to Historic Structures

While almost all of the “Parkside cottages” constructed by the Parkside Realty Company in 1908 have survived to the present, most have been altered, some to a substantial degree.

Despite these alterations, the Parkside cottages are easily recognized in form, and each holds historical significance for its association with the settlement of the Parkside District. In addition, the cottages appear to be rare examples of a small-house blueprint taken from an architectural pattern book, with six façade treatments offered to buyers. While further research is required, these façade styles may be unique in San Francisco.

The Parkside cottages and residential structures of more recent vintage are threatened with unsympathetic renovations, such as out-of-scale rear or second story additions, and inappropriate replacement of historic fabric with contemporary materials, e.g., wood shingles replaced with vinyl siding.

Rising property values and modern trends for large houses have already meant some of the Parkside’s smaller Craftsman houses have been demolished for larger buildings.

A similar danger exists for historic commercial structures along Taraval Street. Potentially-historic commercial buildings below maximum height allowed by zoning restrictions are threatened with unsympathetic additions or demolition.

To protect potential historic resources, this report is meant as a guiding document for the larger historical context of development in the Parkside District.

The most desirable next step is an intensive survey of all resources within the study boundaries of the Parkside District. As a first priority, however, we recommend surveying and completing 523 A and B forms for each of the surviving Parkside cottages (about 60). Many of the cottages appear to have been altered and awareness of their historic significance is low, thus further unsympathetic alterations are likely. In addition to the survey of all cottages, we additionally recommend an in-depth inspection and documentation of the interior and exterior of one or more cottages that retain all or most of their original features, to be made available to owners as a guide for sympathetic restoration, repairs, and alterations.

Conclusion

Distinctive neighborhoods are one of San Francisco's defining amenities. Whereas many large metropolises feature districts with differing cultural or architectural identities, San Francisco's compact size combined with its varied topography has created a great number of "cities in a city."

The Sunset and Parkside Districts are often ignored in the discussion of diverse and interesting neighborhoods of San Francisco. Perhaps the assembly-line style of construction that created the majority of the housing stock, combined with the neighborhood's reputation as the city's "bedroom community," give the impression of a bland, homogenous suburb. To balance this characterization, in recent years community groups such as SPEAK (Sunset Parkside Education and Action Committee), the Ocean Beach Historical Society, and the Western Neighborhoods Project have fostered new appreciation of the Sunset's varied architecture and individual neighborhoods.

As with much of San Francisco's history, the Parkside District had its share of entrepreneurial vision, scandals, circumstantial setbacks, and community leaders. The city grew into one of the world's most popular destinations and the Parkside developed into a attractive home for a major city's middle class families.

Parkside residents always recognized that they lived in a unique San Francisco neighborhood, even if the boundaries weren't always obvious. The Parkside may be part of the Sunset District, but it has a distinguished past and, as the neighborhood moves into its second century, perhaps a distinctive future.

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