

A SALUTE TO SUNNYVALE

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Sunnyvale, California did not become an "All-American City" overnight. It took many years of planning, hard work, and citizen involvement. Sunnyvale is now a haven for clean industry, retail stores and residential life. But let us go back and find our roots, and learn how our great city was born.

The Murphy Family and Sunnyvale's Early Years

Two hundred years before the birth of Sunnyvale, the land was inhabited by Indian tribes. In 1777, Spanish priests and soldiers came to Christianize the Indians and to establish Mission Santa Clara and Pueblo San Jose.

In 1844, before the gold rush, Martin Murphy, Sr., an Irish immigrant, traveled by wagon train over plains and mountains. He had his family with him, which included his sons, daughters, and several grandchildren. His traveling partner was Captain Elisha Stevens. They took the same route over the Sierra as the ill-fated Donner party took two years later. Martin Murphy, Sr. settled in Santa Clara County, which was then called San Martin; whereas Martin Murphy, Jr., went to Sutter's Fort, later called Sacramento. Here, he enlisted under Sutter's leadership to go to the aid of Governor Micheltorena. As a result of their participation, the immigrants were free to settle where they chose.

The gold rush of 1849 enabled Martin Murphy, Jr. to sell his land and livestock at a considerable profit. He then moved to Santa Clara Valley where he purchased the Rancho Pastoria de los Borregas, part of which was to become Sunnyvale.

What the Murphy's found when they arrived in the Santa Clara Valley is described by the following accounts:

"Then (1847) there were many more Indians in the valley than white people: There must have been from eight to nine thousand Indians here. This valley did not look then as it does now. It was covered with thick woods, and¹ there were many wild animals, especially elk and grizzly."

"My wife's father (Don Jose Estudillo) once told me that in one night he, with ten soldiers from the Presidio in San Francisco, in the woods at a place near San Francisquito Creek (now Palo Alto), lassoed and killed forty grizzly bears."²

"They found low-lying hills and numerous forests of redwood, pine, and oak. Here bubbled springs that went below little rivers, that in winter flooded and deposited among the oaks of the valley richest sediments."³

According to Manuel Vargas, the oldest living resident in Sunnyvale and the city's unofficial historian, "Murphy bought 3,027 acres for \$12,000 which he paid in gold dust. Then in 1865, Murphy bought 4,894 more acres from the government until later his claim consisted of approximately 9,000 acres"⁴

The house erected on the Rancho Pastoria de los Borregas was ordered and shipped from Bangor, Maine, because there were no saw-mills in California in 1849 capable of turning out the lumber. It came on a slow sailing ship that made its way from the east of the United States, around the coast of South America and in through the Golden Gate. It was complete in every detail when it was unloaded at the wharf. Every piece was numbered so that the Murphys would have no difficulty in putting it together. There were windows, doors, brick, cement, nails, shingles, and porch rails. Martin Murphy and his six sons separated the material and put the house together.

"In this home, hospitality was offered to all and no one in need was ever turned away from it. In praise of his father, Bernard Murphy related that 'one of his strong points was his cordial reception of all. It made no difference whether it

was a tramp or a millionaire.' The latchstring always hung outside the door and plenty was found within. Priests on their way from San Francisco to Mission Santa Clara used the home as a stopover. A special room was set aside for visiting church dignitaries; altars were set up downstairs, and Mass celebrated for worshippers living in the area."⁵

Different members of the Murphy family occupied this house continuously until 1953. There were many debates between citizens of Sunnyvale and the City Council regarding the future of this homestead.

"The issue probably raised more interest, caused more short tempers, and used up more time than any other single controversy in Sunnyvale's history."⁶ However, its destruction was ordered in 1961 and the house was no longer a segment of Sunnyvale's history. Today, Sunnyvale's Historical Society is trying to raise money to construct a replica for a museum by repeating the famous Murphy barbecue.

The ranch was the site of many exclusive barbecues for which guests traveled miles and miles. The famous Murphy barbecue was the celebration of the 50th wedding anniversary of the Martin Murphy, Jr.'s on July 18, 1881. Not wanting to leave anyone out, the Murphy's extended a general invitation in the newspapers, inviting their many friends throughout the state. Guests attending have been estimated at 7,000 to 10,000.

"Huge barbecue tables built to seat 1,000 persons at a time were set under the spreading oaks. Barbecued over a trench 115 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 4 feet deep were seven 18 month old beeves, fourteen sheep, and ten swine. Supplementing the barbecue were wagon-loads of ham and roasting chickens with salad served in bushel baskets. Guests downed the feast with 500 gallons of coffee, 15 barrels of lager, kegs of whiskey, hogheads of lemonade, and a freight car of champagne."⁷

But after the party guests left, it was very peaceful because the Murphy and Vargas families were the only residents of what is now Sunnyvale.

Martin Murphy, Jr. lived three years after the golden wedding anniversary; his widow lived until 1892. Following their deaths, their estate was divided among their surviving children.

In 1898, Murphy's son, General Patrick Murphy, sold 200 acres of his land to a prominent realtor named W. E. Crossman. It was bounded by the Southern Pacific right-of way, El Camino Real (the old San Francisco-San Jose road), Bayview Avenue and Mathilda Avenue.

Crossman's ads in local newspapers called it the "City of Destiny" and it became an actual city with incorporation in December, 1912.

Different stories have come down through the years regarding the choice of the name Sunnyvale. Some people give credit to W. E. Crossman. When Crossman purchased the land, it bore the name, Encinal. An area near Oakland had a similar name, so he decided to avoid any confusion. When naming his new subdivision, he looked across the bright clear valley and said, "Let's call it Sunnyvale."

Others say the name was suggested by a wheat salesman named Horace Smith, who claimed Encinal was the only place between San Francisco and San Jose where the sun shone, "so why not call it Sunny Vale?"

Manuel Vargas was opposed to and fought against the first established police and fire departments in 1912. "I told them that the volunteer fire department had been able to handle everything," Vargas stated. "I also fought having a city council. We had our own 'council' made up of six businessmen (called trustees.)." "I've seen a lot of changes--I've watched Sunnyvale grow from farmland to what it is today."⁸

It was on March 24, 1901, that the old name for the community, Encinal, was changed to Sunnyvale. The announcement in the San Jose Mercury read like an obituary: "Encinal has passed away and in its place beautiful, eden-like Sunny Vale has arisen."

Sunnyvale's Growth and Expansion

As a young city, Sunnyvale was known for her sunny climate and rich soil, and as a spot ripe for development. Her residents bragged that she was growing faster than any city in the state. One local description read like this: "During 1907 (summer and winter) there were three families for each house, and it was not an unusual thing to see families of workingmen camped under some spreading oak and living as though on vacation."⁹

This pre-World War I period in American history brought a conclusion to the first progressive stage in Sunnyvale's development. It watched, it struggled, and it learned. After 1906 there were two industries. They were Libby's and Hendy's Iron Works.

In 1946, the Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce was revitalized. New industries came into the area. In 1949, Sunnyvale became chartered and a council-manager city government was formed.

From then on, growth did not have anything to do with it. Sunnyvale did not grow because of chance advantages. Sunnyvale was steered by an energetic Chamber of Commerce and a progressive city management into channels, not just of growth, but civic and industrial expansion which have amazed the whole nation.

What does Sunnyvale have that other cities do not have? Here are three possible answers to this question.

1. Service - A Chamber of Commerce that does things, fosters public relations, tempts big business, stimulates internal trade, keeps Sunnyvale's citizenry well informed, provides information swiftly, courteously and accurately.
2. Planning - A farsighted civic government that anticipates the needs of its people and its community, an organization that thinks in large terms.

3. Administration - City leaders who cooperate, coordinate, and act. Quietly in the background are the administrators whose skill and hard work developed major policies which shaped a man-made destiny into a course of unparalleled progress."10

Sunnyvale is an organized industrial area, clean and with every conceivable facility. Large shopping districts and modern stores at convenient locations please Sunnyvale citizens with quality and variety of merchandise. Wide, landscaped streets make Sunnyvale's residential districts particularly healthy and comfortable for family living.

Medical services, modern schools and business and professional organizations of all kinds serve the ever-increasing population and industrial expansion program.

A daily newspaper of nationally recognized merit is published in Sunnyvale. Residents can get fine radio and television reception.

Excellent universities serving Sunnyvale include Stanford University, Santa Clara University, University of California and San Jose State. Many other colleges are within a short driving distance of Sunnyvale.

After her main phase of development, Sunnyvale settled down to the business of improving her area and expanding services to her citizens. There were streets built to honor her early settlers, particularly the Murphy family: Murphy, Mary, Elizabeth, Taffe, Carroll, Helen, Maude, Mathilda, Bernardo, Evelyn, and Arques. Sunnyvale also honored her developers: Crossman, Hollenbeck, Kifer, Stowell and Wright with street names. She recognized also her agricultural ancestry in the names of some of her streets: Olive, Orange, Orchard, Oak Avenue, Oak Court, and Fair Oaks.

In 1940, Sunnyvale bought twelve acres for her first city park, Washington Park. The Sunnyvale Parks and Recreation Department began

in 1945 with a part-time director and two employees providing a summer program of folk dance, arts and crafts, and drama.

The Government In Sunnyvale

The mayor of Sunnyvale is selected by the members of the council and serves at their pleasure for a one-year term. The mayor is the presiding officer at city council meetings and the official head of the city.

The council appoints the city manager. The manager is the chief executive officer, head of the administrative branch of city government, and responsible for the day-to-day management of the city.

Civic and Industrial Changes

In the same year she adopted her charter, Sunnyvale made another decision for which she would later become famous: she combined her police department and volunteer fire department into a unified Public Safety Department. From then on, Public Safety Officers were trained for both fire and police protective services.

Sunnyvale has a "Unified Public Safety Department of trained police officers and firemen. Every possible civic utility is available in efficient, modern setting."¹¹

A change in the economy of the city as well as in her government occurred in the early 1950's. Lockheed and other industries began to move to Sunnyvale. Many people then moved there to work in the new industries. The growing population required additional city services.

The water system had to expand right along with the population. More water was being pumped from the underground water table than was being replaced by natural means. There were places where the ground

had subsided eight to ten feet. The existing wells were upgraded, and a search for new sources of water was begun. In 1952, Sunnyvale went north to the Sierra, the Hetch-Hetchy Reservoir. There we bought sparkling mountain water from the City of San Francisco, owner of the Hetch-Hetchy system.

Sunnyvale's rapid growth was also straining her pure water supply. In 1969, she went to the Sacramento Delta and bought clear water from the Santa Clara County Flood Control and Water District. With three sources of water, (wells, Hetch-Hetchy, and the Delta) she delivered sufficient water to her citizens. Sunnyvale also installed a highly automated and sophisticated telemetering system to keep the water flowing smoothly.

Sunnyvale was well on her way to becoming a modern city. Because she planned her development as well as took pride in her growth, she has become a sophisticated city today. While many other cities are operating from crisis to crisis, Sunnyvale, since 1968, has been planning ahead for progressively longer periods of time.

Sunnyvale also has the lowest crime rate in the county, and one of the lowest in the nation. In November, 1922, the city was the first in the county to initiate the "911" emergency call system for police, fire and ambulance. By dialing only three digits, the caller has instant access to the Public Safety dispatch office and can obtain emergency care quickly.

Sunnyvale has come a long way--from Indian dwellings to pioneer ranches, to a small orchard community to a sophisticated modern city. Sunnyvale had done and is still doing many things for her citizens. But what she becomes is up to the inhabitants of Sunnyvale.

Manuel Vargas' words can best describe the feelings of many Sunnyvale residents: "I've been in Sunnyvale all my life, and I love it!"¹²

Footnotes

¹City of Sunnyvale, "The Sunnyvale Story," City of Sunnyvale Report to Citizens for winter, 1973.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Judy Pflieger, "City's Past Recalled by Prominent Sunnyvale Citizen," Sunnyvale Scribe, August 12, 1971.

⁵Sister Gabrielle Sullivan, Martin Murphy Jr. California Pioneer 1844-1884, (Stockton, CA: University of the Pacific, 1974) p. 18.

⁶Ibid, p. 44.

⁷City of Sunnyvale, "The Sunnyvale Story," City of Sunnyvale Report to Citizens for winter, 1973.

⁸Judy Pflieger, "City's Past Recalled by Prominent Sunnyvale Citizen," Sunnyvale Scribe, August 12, 1971.

⁹Sunnyvale Public Library, Sunnyvale Panorama of Progress.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹City of Sunnyvale, "The Sunnyvale Story," City of Sunnyvale Report to Citizens for winter, 1973.

¹²Judy Pflieger, "City's Past Recalled by Prominent Sunnyvale Citizen," Sunnyvale Scribe, August 12, 1971.

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