

ATHERTON'S ICONS

Celebrating Atherton's 100th Birthday The Race to Incorporate

Atherton's first families traveled from San Francisco on the SF-San Jose Railroad and got off at *Fair Oaks*, a convenient flag stop for them to get to their summer estates. An early photo of the Fair Oaks train station is pictured to the right.



Located about one mile north of Menlo Park, the community of Fair Oaks was an oasis of large farmlands, orchards, and estate homes, a contrast from the rapidly growing surrounding communities. Neighboring commercial developments of the time included Menlo Park's downtown, pictured second.



The Fair Oaks community was so bucolic that there were no house numbers. Mail was delivered with only cross streets listed as addresses. Residents lived on large lots, with winding avenues and tree-lined streets. The last photo to the right of Elmwood Farm depicts a typical early estate.



Edward L. Eyre and his brother Perry, both prominent in the community, were at the forefront of trying to incorporate Fair Oaks to maintain the rural community. In seeking advice from Hillsborough's city attorney, they learned that at least 50 residents needed to sign a petition in order to incorporate. Volunteers sprung into action going door-to-door throughout the night, securing 130 signatures. Upon collecting the necessary signatures, one of the volunteers jumped on his horse and raced to the County courthouse in Redwood City -- delivering the incorporation petition exactly 1 hour and 20 minutes before Menlo Park delivered signatures attempting to incorporate with Fair Oaks.

Although the petitions indicated that the Town would be called *Fair Oaks*, it was discovered that there was already a town with that name. Quickly, the name was changed to *Atherton* after Faxon D. Atherton, one of the very early settlers and property owners. The first step in the incorporation of Atherton was truly a "horse-race."

Source: Under the Oaks by Pamela Gullard & Nancy Lund and the Atherton Heritage Association

Save the date! Atherton's Centennial Celebration
will be on September 24, 2023 at Town Center.

