

# ATHERTON'S ICONS

## Celebrating Atherton's 100th Birthday

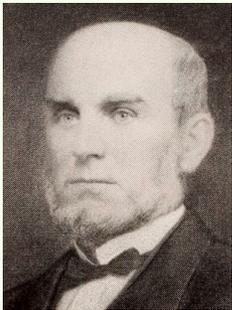
### How Atherton Got Its Name



**José Darío Argüello**  
(1753-1828)

The current "Town of Atherton" was originally part of a 35,000-acre Spanish land grant made to Don José Darío Argüello in 1795. It was known as Rancho de las Pulgas – meaning "Ranch of the Fleas" and was so large that the present-day cities of San Mateo, San Carlos, Belmont, Redwood City, Menlo Park, and Atherton were within its boundaries. Atherton being the smallest town, measuring approximately 5 square miles.

At the urging of his good friend and business partner, Thomas Larkin, Faxon Dean Atherton traveled by train down the peninsula from San Francisco, getting off at the flag-stop called Fair Oaks. The rural countryside was also known as Fair Oaks because of the many beautiful oak trees throughout the area. It was so bucolic and beautiful, that Atherton immediately purchased over 600 acres at \$10 / acre from the Argüello's becoming the largest land owner.



**Faxon Dean Atherton**  
(1815-1877)

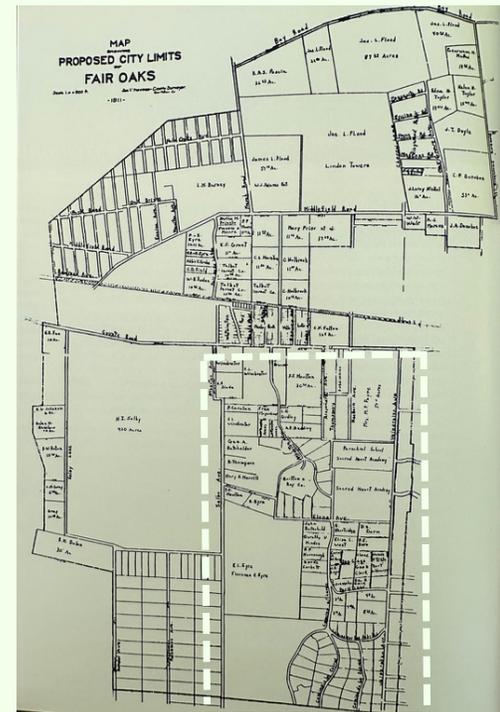


*Mame and Rena Roach pose in the earliest known photo of the train station from 1906. Their father Frank was a nurseryman in Menlo Park. Below "Fair Oaks" on the sign is written: Elevation 50 Feet; and at right: To San Francisco 31 6/10 M.*



*Four commuters in 1913*

His property which he named Valparaiso Park after his wife, Dominga's hometown in Chile, extended from today's El Camino Real all the way to the Alameda de las Pulgas, and from Atherton Avenue to Valparaiso. Valparaiso Park is outlined on this 1911 map to the right used to define Atherton's boundaries for incorporation.



When the race to incorporate the Fair Oaks community and stay independent of the City of Menlo Park, volunteers took the necessary signatures required for incorporation, the County would not incorporate "Fair Oaks" because it was discovered that there was already a town near Sacramento with that name.

Quickly, it was decided to change the name to "Atherton" because of Faxon's influence as one of the very early and large property owners.

*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.**