

# Rock Parks Parks of Berkeley

Held on Saturday, August 26, 2006

**10:00 -- Meet at Solano and the Alameda.**

**10:10 --** Welcome to the Berkeley Path Wanderers Greenbelt Alliance joint Rockin in Berkeley walk. Introductions: how many are GA members, how many BPWA how many have been on a Greenbelt outing before, how many a BPWA walk and how many have visited the rock parks of Berkeley before.

To tell you a bit about today's outing-- In Northeast Berkeley are quite a few rock outcroppings, mainly of a type of volcanic rock called rhyolite. Some of these have been turned into small parks (seven we shall visit) while others are in people's gardens or have been used in rock walls, etc. We will be visiting quite a number of these but unfortunately they are not located right next to BART. So we have decided to start here at a spot also accessible by transit, namely AC Transit buses. It will take only about 12-15 minutes walking to get to the first of the rock parks. After that we will visit quite a few that are not too far apart and we shall have lunch some time around 12 at the sixth rock park. There won't be any shops along the way so if you need a snack you should grab something now on Solano and I can tell you how to catch up with us if needed. There is a porta potty near our luncheon stop but not toilets before that I know of. At some of the rock parks we can climb up steps cut into the rock for views though no one is required to do so if they don't want to. I think you will find the variety of rocks and ways they are used quite interesting.

We will sometimes be going uphill before lunch with a few steep sidewalks or paths. We will generally be on sidewalks but sometimes on public pedestrian pathways or steps. After lunch we will visit one more rock park and then work our way downhill back to this starting point. Since this is a city walk I urge you to be careful about cars since you can assume many Berkeley drivers are blind, deaf and insane like those elsewhere in the country. Don't get so involved in chatting with your fellow hikers or enjoying the views that you forget about the traffic. I anticipate we should be back on time by 2:00 pm and perhaps earlier.

**10:15 --** Start walking along the Alameda, perhaps noting rhyolite in the rock walks and even in a garage just past Capistrano. A bit after this we come to Indian Trail. This is a steep trail with rough hewn big rock steps but quite fascinating and unusual in style as it goes up between two impressive homes. At the top is:

**10:30 -- Great Stoneface Park -- Acreage: .73 acre -- 31,800 sq. ft.**

Can walk around and note the locked restroom.

## History

Great Stoneface Park was a gift to the City of Berkeley from Mason-McDuffie Real Estate Company during its development of the Northbrae area. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1921. The feature that gave the park its name is seemingly now hard to see due to the shrubbery.

Geology- There is some disagreement among geologists but there seems to be a view that they are about 11-12 million years old. They are rhyolite- a volcanic rock which could have occurred as a flow or were auto-brecciated meaning that that the lava rapidly congealed and became too viscous to flow and thus broke up explosively into pieces or ashes. Fault movements and landslides have greatly altered and moved the rocks over millions of years which leads to the confusion about their precise origin. Professor Lawson, who mapped the San Andreas and Hayward faults, discovered them together with his geology students and named them Northbrae rhyolite in honor of this neighborhood. Apparently they were formed by volcanic activity in

an area near Hollister south of San Jose so they have moved a long ways—the rock is harder and different from other area volcanic rock such as that found at Sibley Round Top

We might head down Yosemite to see the three impressive houses in different styles with rock walls and the big Swiss chalet style one with rocks in garden (and supposedly Indian caves on the property). Just around the corner on Thousand Oaks is a Julia Morgan house with big rocks in the front yard and one right next to the front door. Note the house across the street. This is a fine John Hudson Thomas design and even more interesting from the back side as we shall see. As we come back down the path along fence and head east on Yosemite the house with Japanese style garden also has some impressive rocks as well as one on the opposite side of Yosemite which are quite large. The JHT house also has big rocks and fine native trees.

Then continue to stay on Contra Costa as Yosemite goes off to left, continuing to Blackberry Creek, which was cleared out and planted with some natives; there are some nice rocks upstream. Just beyond this are the Japanese temple style house and the Hercules oak.

**10:55 -- Contra Costa Rock Park -- Acreage: .17 acre -- 7,410 sq. ft.**

### **History**

Contra Costa Rock Park was also a gift to the City of Berkeley from Mason-McDuffie Real Estate Company during its development of the Northbrae area. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1917.

We can take steps up from left side and exit via back and then note small caves on return path on south side. There is a view but we don't need to linger here as the next one has an even better view. Go along Contra Costa a bit further to Indian Rock Path and say something about the Berkeley paths and BPWA.

Cross Arlington carefully and head left just a bit to see recently landmarked Julia Morgan house at 883 with liberal use of the local stone—part of the protected features. Return to the path and continue up.

**11:10 --Indian Rock Park -- Acreage: 1.18 acres -- 51,400 sq. ft.**

Path to right has access to steps leading to top. Be cautious about steep drop-offs on other side—this is probably the most panoramic view of today's stops.



### **History**

Indian Rock Park was a gift to the City of Berkeley from Mason-McDuffie Real Estate Company during its development of the Northbrae area. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1917. Dick Leonard, the “father of modern rock climbing,” and noted environmentalist David Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth, learned rock climbing and developed their mountaineering techniques at Indian Rock (and also at Cragmont Rock Park which we shall visit at lunch). Brower used this special knowledge to prepare training manuals during World War II, which proved critical in enabling the 86 th Regiment of the U.S. Army to surprise the Germans at Riva Ridge in the North Appennines in Italy, the major action disrupting German lines in southern Europe.

There is possible lunch site across the street but I feel it is better to continue onward and there are no toilets here. **Side trip** to house built over rock on Shattuck and the one next to it with big oak growing on top of a large rock.

Return and go along Indian Rock Ave. to next park.

### **Mortar Rock Park -- Acreage: .39 acre -- 16,990 sq. ft.**

#### **History**

Mortar Rock Park was yet another gift to the City of Berkeley from Mason-McDuffie Real Estate Company during its development of the Northbrae area. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1917.

There are also steps around from right side but recommend against climbing as view mostly blocked and disappointing and not much space at top. But we should take path through the rocks and along the side to see mortar holes and also note the native trees. Acorns were ground here with other items and tannins perhaps leached out in nearby creeks. Head on up Indian Rock St and go slightly left at Santa Barbara

### **11:35 -- Grotto Rock Park -- Acreage: .31 acre -- 13,500 sq. ft..**

#### **History**

Grotto Rock Park was a gift to the City of Berkeley from Mason-McDuffie Real Estate Company during its development of the Northbrae area. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1917.

Steps from right side do not seem to go all the way to top so optional but worth walking around to see the interesting shape of it all.

#### *Route options*

Marin to Spruce, cross carefully, right to Easter Walk (2 steep blocks with steps and then an easier one, be careful crossing Euclid and jog to left and up)

Marin to Spruce, right to Easter Walk and up

Santa Barbara to Cragmont, then left and up

Santa Barbara other direction to Montrose and across Spruce to Regal and up

### **12:00 -- Cragmont Rock Park -- Acreage: 3 acres -- 130,680 sq. ft.**

— toilet stop here then perhaps on upper part of park. Then Greenbelt and BPWA spiels after lunch

#### **History**

Neighborhood residents bought the land for Cragmont Rock Park from the Cragmont Land Company and donated it to the City of Berkeley at purchase price. It was dedicated for park purposes in 1920. Dick Leonard, the “father of technical climbing,” formed the Cragmont Climbing Club, which was absorbed a few months later into the Sierra Club’s Rock Climbing Section. Using the techniques he had learned climbing at Cragmont Rock, Leonard planned the first technical rock climb in Yosemite in 1934. Leonard led over a hundred expeditions and climbs in the Sierra Nevada, at times with his friend, environmentalist David Brower, making many first ascents on mountains earlier thought impossible to climb. Porta potty here. (It seems to me it is open on weekends as well)

The Bay Area is blessed with diverse open space of productive working farms, forests that act to cleanse our

air and water, recreation areas, and natural habitat for native plants and animals. However, the greenbelt of open space is threatened by sprawling development that uses land inefficiently. Greenbelt Alliance works with local city staff, elected officials, and concerned citizens to protect our greenbelt in the nine counties around the bay. We also realize that we cannot avert sprawl unless we revitalize our existing cities and use land more efficiently within them. This can also help us deal with the problem of unaffordable housing for young families and workers.

Thus we have a program to endorse compact development in appropriate locations while our urban outings program highlights examples of smart growth urban development and main street revival. A certain amount of population growth seems inevitable in the Bay Area for some time to come and we need to deal with that in a manner that does not destroy the quality of life that so many of us hold in high regard. Like most American metropolitan areas we have been using land at an ever increasing rate relative to population in the last 50 years but there are signs that that is starting to change in some places. As our staff and volunteers work to provide livable communities and a protected greenbelt we seek help from members and volunteers. Etc.

After lunch and spiel, leave about 12:45 and take time to see the Mediterranean style “village” across the street and then perhaps up Hilldale to Poppy Lane and right to our next park.

**1:00 -- Remillard Park -- Acreage 5.9 acres -- 257,000 sq. ft.**

Note the donation plaque at the park.

### **History**

The property with Pinnacle Rock on it was donated to the City of Berkeley by Lillian Remillard Dandini in 1963. The City purchased additional acreage in 1969–1970. The interim landscape design, based on community input, was adopted in May 1969. In June 1969, \$35,000 was allocated from capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds to develop a “rural park.” Informally known as Pinnacle Park, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the dedication of Remillard Park, in memory of Lillian Dandini’s father, on October 22, 1964. The playground was constructed by community volunteers at a work party held on August 24, 1974 and redone more recently. The park was awarded the 1975 Park Facility Citation by the California Park and Recreation Society District III for neighborhood participation in design concepts and volunteer labor.

From here might go back to Pinnacle Steps, down to Cragmont and right to Euclid (or if group seems eager we can go left to see redwood houses, right on Keith) another possibility is just to left from Bret Harte on Kieth go down El Mirador to Euclid

Carefully cross Euclid go down Keith to Spruce, go left and carefully cross at signal to go down Los Angeles; at Mariposa go left and then right on terrace walk. Cross to right of tunnel and up Fountain Walk, then down continuation of Los Angeles Avenue to the Alameda and turn right (going to left of tunnel to avoid noisy traffic).