

# RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION

AGENDA 12-10-2020

## ITEM 6-B

RECOMMEND A NAME FOR THE PARK  
FORMERLY KNOWN AS JACKSON PARK

PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

**Subject:** Renaming Jackson Park information

Hello Commissioners,

Below is an email from Deja Gould, Language Carrier of the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Tribe here in the East Bay. This is further clarification that we will include in the presentation on Renaming Jackson Park but I'm forwarding it to you in advance as written comment.

Thank you so much! I'm happy we could talk earlier the Tribes preference would lean towards Chochenyo. With Ohlone being an umbrella term used for many Ohlone Tribes, Chochenyo seems appropriate as it is the language that is spoke by our people in the East Bay.

As far as meeting times I will try to get back to you tomorrow with a more solid date and time we would be able to meet. Thank you again! I hope to talk soon.

'Uni (Respectfully),

***Deja Gould, Language Carrier***

Confederated Villages of Lisjan Tribe

Amy Wooldridge

Recreation and Parks Director

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## Thoughts on the Naming of a Park

The two emails reproduced here are from a recent digital conversation with Rasheed Shabazz about the original name and current renaming of the former “Jackson Park.” He initiated the exchange by reaching out to me (on Sept 29) with questions about the name “Alameda Park.” I have also been following online commentary concerning this name. Since some comments make reference to the *Park Avenue Heritage Area* (1988) and *Alameda at Play* (2001), my history of the park system commissioned by the Alameda Recreation and Park Department, I felt compelled to provide some clarification.

I asked my correspondent if he would consent to posting our exchange online, but his conditions were such that I decided to go ahead and post my emails alone. Thus his emails—his half of the dialogue—are not included here. My texts are pasted into this document exactly as written, with the following exceptions: greetings and signoffs are deleted; one instance in which I quote my correspondent is redacted [*like this*]; and typos have been corrected. Graphic changes have also been made to fonts, line spacing, and paragraph formatting for readability and consistency. The attached black-and-white Sanborn maps (1897 and 1948) have headings not found in the original transmission. The 1987 Sanborn maps have been omitted because they are redundant; the park names on those maps are the same as those on the 1948 maps. Examples of full-color Sanborn maps (including the 1897 Alameda maps) are available online.

Anyone interested in this issue should check out the recording of the community forum held on November 23, which can be accessed on the ARPD website. I post this document not as an advocate for the “Alameda Park” name, which will become clear as you read on, but as a historian offering his perspective.

—Woody Minor

29 November 2020

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**6 October 2020**

I went through my old files on Jackson Park and came up with some items that may help clarify the naming history. Let me begin by recounting a bit of the historical backdrop.

As you know from the history in *Alameda at Play*, the park's name derived from the 1867 Alameda Park tract, which in turn derived its name from Alameda Park, opened by the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad in 1865. This was the city's first resort, giving birth to a dynamic and long-lasting tradition. It was also the first major development in the vicinity of the main train station, at Park and Lincoln, and as such marked the beginning of the modern city, that is, the post-gold rush, rail-oriented, suburban city. Park Street derived its name from the resort as did Park Avenue.

The resort included a hotel north of Central Avenue and 60 wooded acres south of Central to the bay. The hotel became an insane asylum in 1867 and burned in 1871; its redeveloped site is not discernible today. The wooded acreage was subdivided by railroad directors in 1867 as the Alameda Park tract, which included an oval green for the use of the homeowners. The tract was renamed Alameda Park Homestead in 1874 under new owners. When the oval became a city-owned park, perpetuating the original layout and name, the new public park preserved an important piece of Alameda's earliest rail-era rebirth.

That said, let me note some items I came across wherein the name "Alameda Park" seems to have been applied formally to (or identified with) the new public park, as it came into being in the years 1889-1894, to wit:

**[1] Ordinance No. 109 [17 June 1889]** - "Determining that certain land in the City of Alameda, known as Alameda Park, is necessary for a public park, and directing that proceedings be instituted to condemn the same."

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**[2] “Alameda Park: Our Trustees Seem to Favor Its Improvement”** [*Alameda Argus*, 16 Aug 1889]. “At the close of the meeting of the Board of City Trustees, Monday evening, Trustee Hammond desired some information as to the program of gaining title to Alameda Park ... Mr Hammond thought that ‘if we are to beautify Alameda Park, we ought to get at it.’”

**[3] Ordinance No. 165 [25 May 1891]** - “Defining width and location of roadways of Park Avenue around Alameda Park.”

**[4] “Alameda Park: Further Legal Action Necessary to Secure It”** [*Alameda Argus*, 8 March 1893]. “While Alameda has become noted for its beautiful homes and park-like appearance, it has never had a park which it could call its own and point to with the finger of pride.”

**[5] “To Improve the Park: Plans Adopted for the Desirable Improvement”** [*Alameda Argus*, 2 Dec 1893] - “The Board of Trustees met last night to consider ... several plans for the beautification of Alameda Park ...”

**[6] “Now Has a Park: City Attorney’s Good News to the Trustees: Review of the Litigation Concerning Alameda Park”** [*Alameda Argus*, 12 June 1894] - “In the action City of Alameda vs. EB Mastick, Trustee, et al., judgment has been rendered in favor the city condemning Alameda Park for public use, as a public park, without damages.”

I hope this information proves helpful in the city’s deliberations. While it is true that prior to 1909 Alameda Park was sometimes referred to informally in newspaper articles as “the city park” or simply “the park,” since there was no other, it seems evident from the record that the private park’s historic name morphed naturally into the public park’s official name. I for one would like to see the park’s name revert to “Alameda Park,” invoking not only the origins of the park but of the entire resort tradition and of the modern city itself.

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*12 November 2020*

I intended to write sooner but the complexity of the issues gave me pause, leading to a fair amount of reflection, and then I got caught up in the national election. 😊 Since the “Creating Our Future” event is happening this weekend, I want to get this to you without further delay. As before, please forward this email to ARPD staff et al in the loop.

I would like to start with the “Alameda Park” name and then move on to broader issues. I was startled by your assertion, in your last email, that [redacted]. How can you be so sure? Have you followed every path to its source? I persist in seeing the original naming process as somewhat shrouded, though the likelihood is “Alameda Park” was the first official name.

The most compelling piece of new evidence for the “Alameda Park” name was so obvious that I failed to see it. I’m referring to the nomenclature found in the local Sanborn maps. As you know, these maps were prepared by the Sanborn-Perris Map Co of New York under contract with municipalities for fire insurance purposes. The survey crews worked closely with local officials, property owners, businesses, and organizations to ensure accuracy. In addition to meticulously measured footprints of structures, the maps include precise names for business, churches, and public facilities like schools, libraries, and parks. The maps are authoritative sources for urban historians tracking the evolution of the built environment and its nomenclature.

The 1897 Alameda Sanborn—the oldest edition in the Library of Congress collection—clearly identifies the park as “Alameda Park.” Since Sanborn maps do not include tract names or “unofficial” popular names in their labeling of buildings and places, this would indicate that the official name at the outset was “Alameda Park.” Occasionally surveyors missed something or failed to update a name. Thus, as you can see in the attached maps, the park is identified as “Alameda Park” on both sheets in 1897 and as “Jackson Park” on one sheet in 1948. The name as it appears on the 1897

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map cannot be an anachronism, however, since that first map was the baseline for all that followed. The most recent maps (1987) are also included to show how the maps look in color, with the colors referring to structural systems. The 1897 and 1948 maps included here are black-and-white pdfs of the original color maps.

Moving on to the current process of renaming the park, I believe the complexity of the issue calls for a nuanced, multi-layered approach. As you noted in your last email, interpretive plaques would be helpful. Whatever the name ends up being, I see three narratives at work, each warranting an interpretive plaque. (The other day I took a walk in the park and noted that the three east-facing sides of the bandstand would make ideal backdrops for three standing plaques mounted on posts.) These narratives are informed by intensive research over the past several years as I have delved into the “deep history” of Alameda, trying to grasp its natural and human dimensions over many millennia.

[1] The ancestral Diaspora out of Africa some 100,000 years ago into Europe, Asia, and the Americas, the likely settlement of California some 15,000 years ago at the close of the last Ice Age, and the likely continuous habitation of the place we now call Alameda for at least 7,500 years by the descendents of the original migrants and by later migrants. The natural history of the place since the last Ice Age could be summarized, e.g., the establishment of the oak forest and the creation of the peninsula as sea levels rose. It was a fine place for people to live, quite beautiful, with food and freshwater at hand.

[2] The counter-narrative out of Africa, addressing the brutal irony of slavers regarding the human homeland as a hunting ground for people brought to America against their will and treated as property. And the other counter-narrative in America, wherein the ancient inhabitants, the First People, were killed by germs and guns and then corralled, their land appropriated. Andrew Jackson’s military and political career is embedded in this narrative. In California, it began decades earlier with the Spanish.

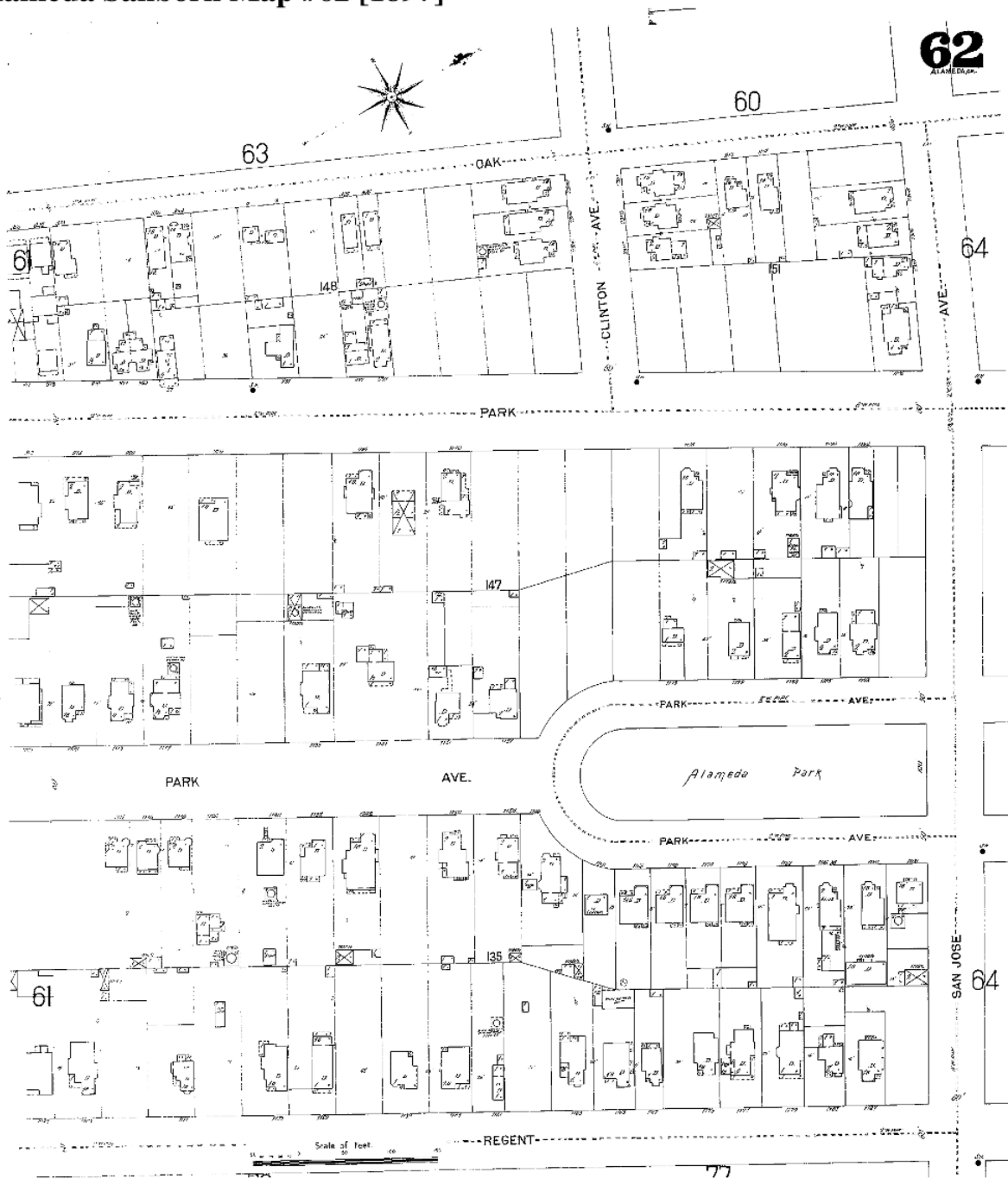
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[3] Finally, the place called Alameda—the modern city—from its settlement during the gold rush to the advent of rail and the consequent creation of the Alameda Park resort and the Alameda Park tract. How did the public park come into being, how was it named, and why was it renamed to honor Jackson? The local narrative provides an important balance to the global, national, and regional narratives, returning the plaque-reader to a particular place in time—perhaps with a better understanding of a California city whose history accounts for roughly one percent of the total time people have lived here.

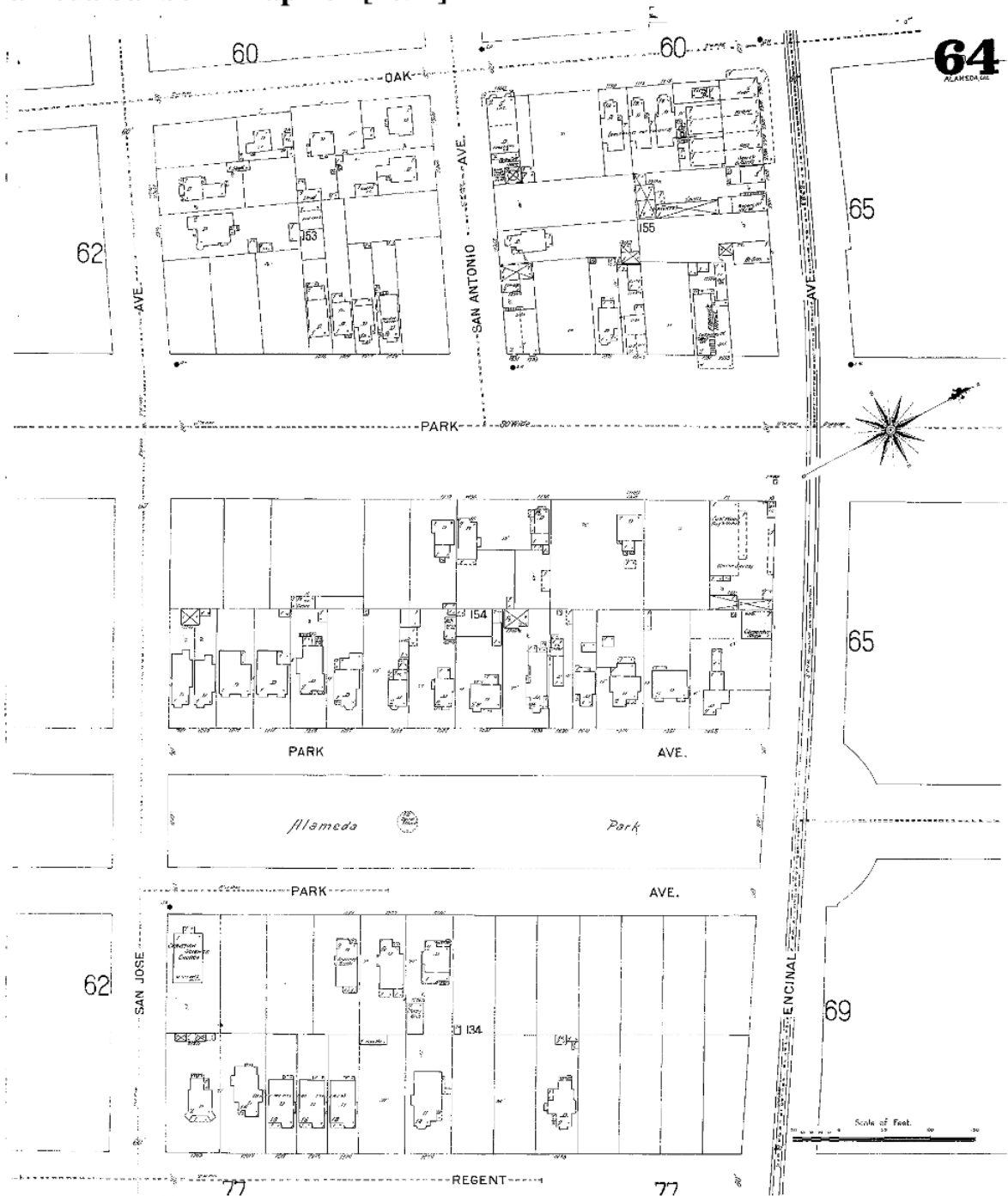
I always thought it a shame the park commissioners renamed the park back in 1909. They should have left it alone. To have the name revert to “Alameda Park” at this point makes sense from the perspective of the third narrative. In the context of the first and second narratives, however, other names come to mind. I wonder if there’s one out there that might resonate with all three narratives.



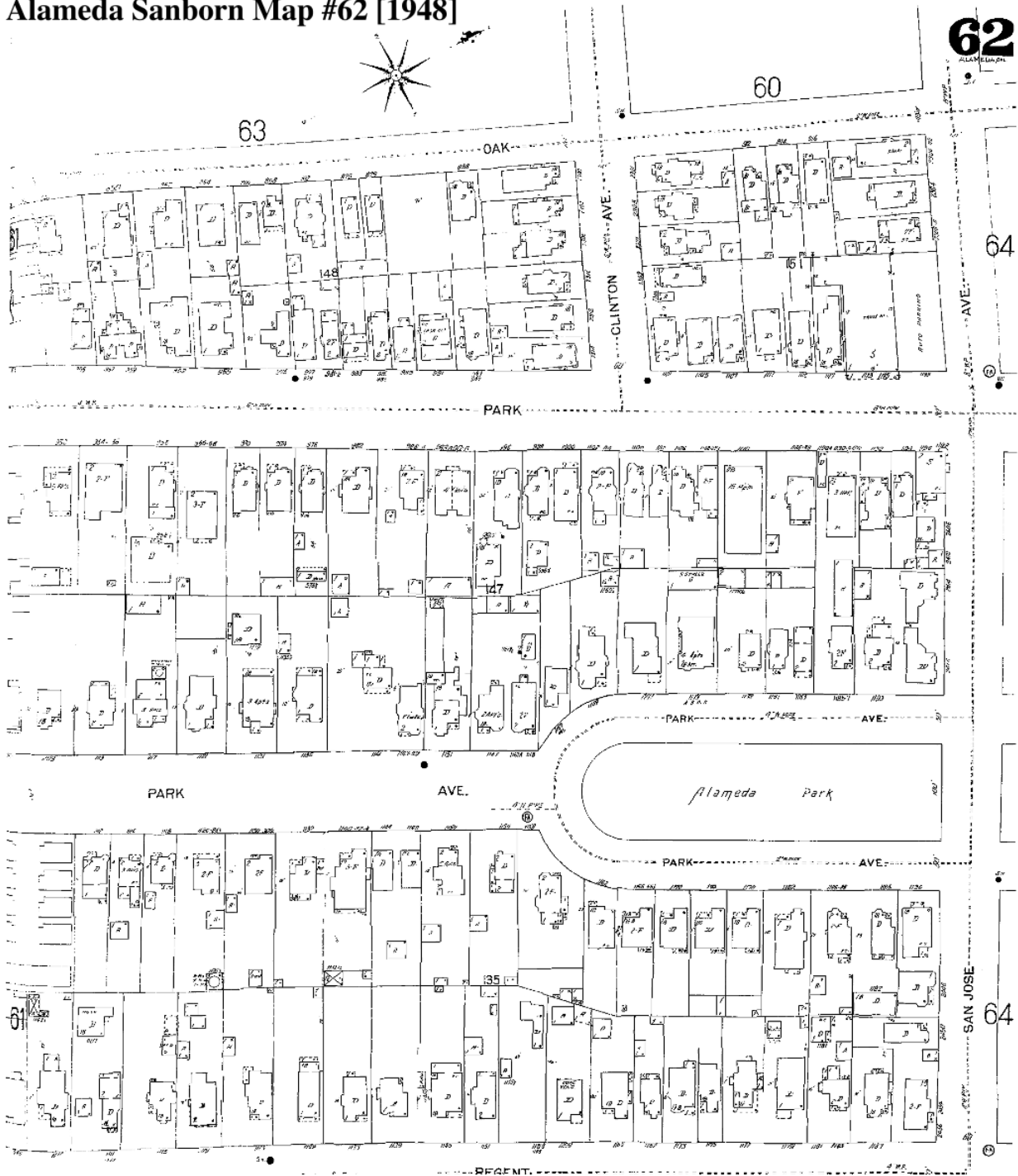
# Alameda Sanborn Map #62 [1897]



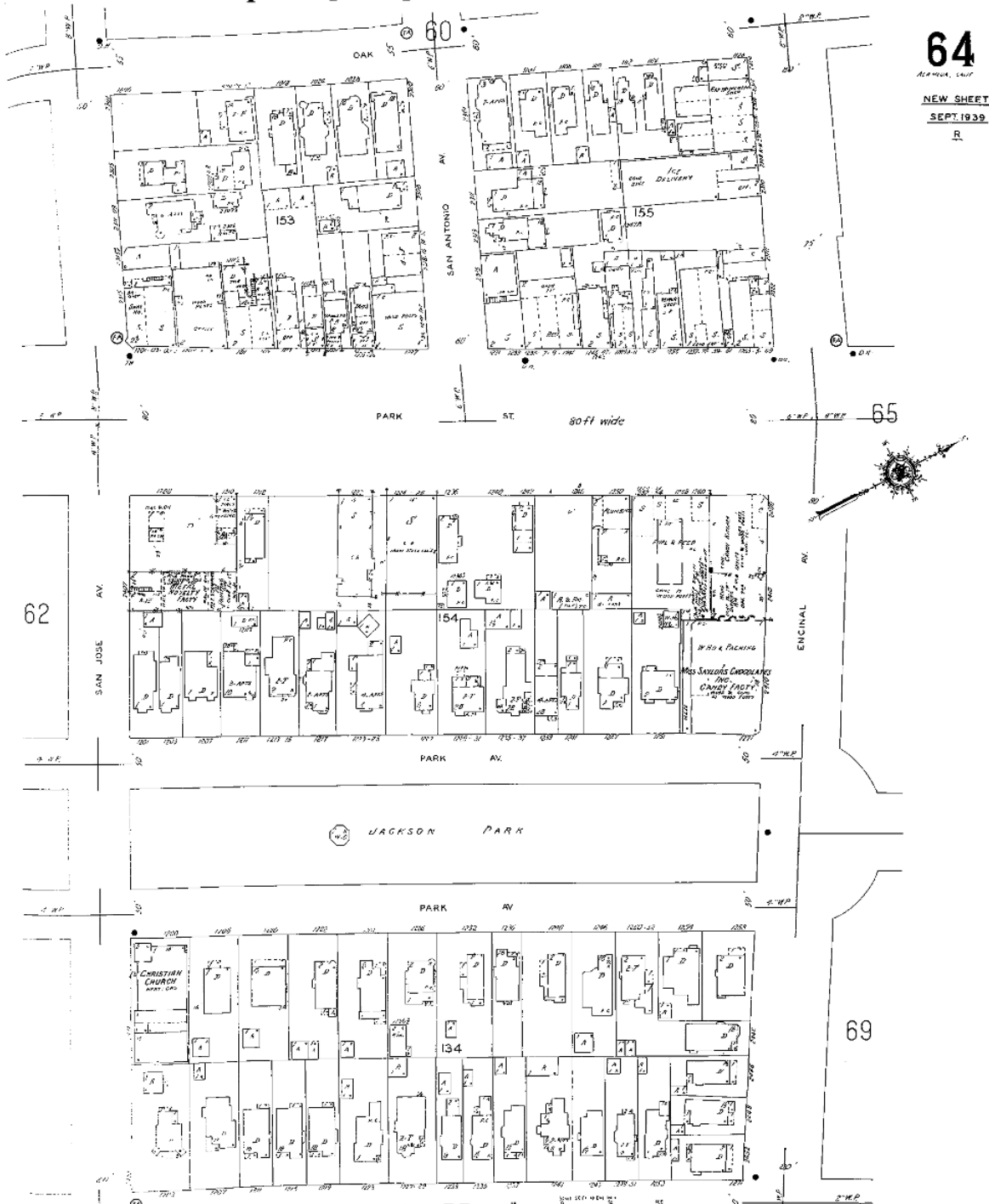
# Alameda Sanborn Map #64 [1897]



# Alameda Sanborn Map #62 [1948]



# Alameda Sanborn Map #64 [1948]



**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

Honorable Commissioners:

I applaud the work of the Renaming Committee for the park formerly known as Jackson Park ("FKA Jackson Park"). The collaboration and resulting work product are worthy of a citywide effort.

A few years ago I participated in a march from the former Haight School to City Hall, urging the school district to rename the school because of Mr. Haight's racism. After that successful effort, I learned that numerous city streets, parks, and other facilities would be renamed for the same reason.

Jackson Park moved to the head of the list. Renaming the park seemed a simple task because, unlike the other streets and facilities on the list, Jackson Park had a perfectly good previous name—Alameda Park.

Alameda Park was established as part of the surrounding residential subdivision in 1867. It began to be used for public concerts, for which a bandstand was constructed in 1890. The park became Alameda's first public park in 1895. The 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows Alameda Park during its early years as a City park. Unfortunately, Alameda Park was renamed for Andrew Jackson in 1909.

Many of my neighbors and I advocate returning the park to its original name. The symbolism of yanking away the name of Andrew Jackson and reverting to the original name is powerful.

The Committee's short list of ten potential park names is a wonderful resource worthy of consideration for use on any of the streets and facilities that need new names or, in the case of some new parks, initial names. None of the names, other than the original name Alameda Park, is uniquely suited to FKA Jackson Park. Any of the proposed names could be used interchangeably anywhere in the city.

I urge the Commission to simply undo the mistake made in 1909 and return the name Alameda Park to Alameda's first public park.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Betsy Mathieson  
1185 Park Avenue  
Alameda

## **Written Communication for Item 6-B**

### **Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Renaming Jackson Park

To whom it may concern,

I have lived overlooking the park for nearly 25 years and thoroughly enjoy looking out of my windows at the park every day. I am delighted to see the park in all seasons and the thousands of people who regularly enjoy spending time there. Dog walkers, people with kids, and others who picnic, spread a blanket to enjoy the sunshine and trees. Countless activities, from Frisbee, eating, chatting, napping, exercising, reading, practicing their instruments, playing games, workouts, meetings, and since the pandemic we now have dance classes, and lots of socially distanced groups meeting. To be truthful, none of these activities are likely to change due to the park name. However, I am saddened to hear that the original historic name "Alameda Park" is not in the final list.

The first park in Alameda with the sole purpose of being a beautiful area to gather and walk around enjoying the trees and open space. For over 100 years people have been doing exactly that! The name Alameda Park is a recognition of the history of this park and non-political. I vote for the name Alameda Park.

Sincerely,  
Alanda Orozco  
(1207 Park Ave)

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

**From:** Cybelle Kelley-Whitley  
**Sent:** Friday, December 4, 2020 6:38 PM  
**To:** Amy Wooldridge  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The park formerly known as Jackson

Hi Amy,

I would like to once again submit Alameda Park for consideration as the new name of the park formerly known as Jackson. I know that 3 other names are being considered. This is surprising, because aside from Ohlone, the other names were not at the top of the polls that were presented during the Zoom meeting. I think bringing back the original name is the most appropriate way to honor the history of our first park.

Thank you.

Cybelle Kelley-Whitley

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

**From:** Shannon Whitley  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 6, 2020 8:04 AM  
**To:** Amy Wooldridge  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Jackson Park Renaming Process

Greetings Ms. Wooldridge and Commissioners,

There are many fine choices amongst the group of names to be considered for the park. I humbly ask that we continue to include one of the most popular names on the list, Alameda Park.

As a community member who lives on Park Ave., I've been closely following the renaming process for the park. I appreciate the efforts that have been made to gather feedback and to represent the views of people across the city.

There is one part of the renaming process that I have found confusing. I observed that "Alameda Park" was consistently one of the top choices in discussions and polls. Alameda Park is the first choice of Woody Minor, a Bay Area historian, who asserts that Alameda Park is the original name of the park. Renaming the park to its original name seems to be the best way to honor the history of the park and our city.

As a footnote, I believe the park was originally named by A.A. Cohen. His family had some holdings in Jamaica that included slave labor, however, he was four years old when the Crown outlawed slavery and therefore he was never a slave owner himself.

Thank you,

Shannon Whitley  
Park Ave. Resident



**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

> On Dec 10, 2020, at 12:29 PM, Ezra Denney wrote:

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> Commissioners,

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> I write today to express my support for the name Mabel Tatum Park to replace the Park named after a slave owner. I do not need to remind the commission about the bio of Ms. Tatum, but I feel her work for Alameda's Black and low-income residents, especially in regard to housing resonates today. Honoring Ms. Tatum will allow us to educate the City on the many obstacles our Black community has faced, and continues to face.

>

> I am reminded of the words of Commissioner Barnes in her editorial of July 8, 2020: "What we choose to elevate, through monuments or the honor of naming, shows what we value."

>

> It's time for Alameda to show that we value the struggle and activism of our Black and Brown communities. It's time for Alameda to show that we are true to our motto "Everyone Belongs Here." It's time to give Mabel Tatum the honor she deserves.

>

> Thank you,

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> Ezra Denney

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

On Dec 10, 2020, at 12:48 PM, Laura Gamble wrote:

Hi Director Wooldridge,

I was hoping to pass the below letter along to the commissioners as I am unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration -

*Alameda Recreation and Parks Commissioners,*

*Thank you for voting to rename this Jackson Park. Removing monuments to white supremacy in our community is long overdue.*

*While I think that the four options that the renaming committee has presented are great choices, I believe that both Ohlone and Chochenyo offer something that the other options do not - these both hone in on the spirit of truth and reconciliation. A necessary process for the nation, and for Alameda, to embark on as urgently as possible.*

*And while this is outside the scope of a rename, I hope this commission will eventually take this one step further and work towards a memorial in this park to honor the indigenous people harmed by Andrew Jackson.*

*Thank you for your consideration.*

*Laura Gamble*

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

On Dec 10, 2020, at 2:20 PM, Helen Simpson wrote:

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> Ms. Wooldridge.

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> I understand that The Recreation and Parks Commission will hear the issue and made a recommendation to City Council for the final action of renaming Jackson Park at the December 10th meeting. On the staff's report, it lists four finalists, Ohlone, Chochenyo, Mabel Tatum and Justice.

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> The staff report also states 625 responded to a survey which included 10 names on the survey. I note that the survey was conducted from November 23rd through 27th, the week of Thanksgiving when people were preparing for the holiday. The survey should be open for more than 5 days. What about the individuals that do not go on social media or are on ARPD's email list? With conducting a survey, it should be done where all the residence of Alameda have access to the voting. Only 625 out of an estimated 80,000 residence participated in the survey? That should be a red flag. The 625 that participated in the survey is a little over half the people (1,200) whom signed the petition to remove the name "Jackson Park." Why does this have to be done during the holidays?

>

> Can the committee for renaming Jackson Park reveal how many votes for each of the 10 names on the survey and how the 4 names made the list? It also indicates a large majority of respondents were older, white residents. Can the committee also reveal the complete list of this too? How many voters did not answer the question about age or race?

>

> The staff report indicates that the park was named after President Andrew Jackson in 1909, when, in fact, the first name of the park was Alameda Park, which in Spanish means "grove of trees" which fits the park. Attached are copies of the maps.

>

> On the finalists is Mabel Tatum, which in a newspaper clipping from 19966, the speech she made in the first sentence was: "To hell with the Alameda Police Department . . ." and her first paragraph ends with "So, I say heck with the Alameda Police Department." I find it interesting that the staff report omits this paragraph. It is apparent that Mabel Tatum had an issue with the Alameda Police Department, but the commission is recommending the park be named after her. Attached is the newspaper article from 1966.

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> It is also costing \$10,000.00 from the Park and Rec. Department's general fund, with an additional \$4,000 for an educational sign. \$14,000 for two signs sounds excessive. What about all the maps that need to re-printed? Has the commission tried to have someone sponsor the signage so the \$14,000 of the general fund can be used for improving the parks?

>

> I am opposed to the commission voting on re-naming Jackson Park. This should have more community voices other than the 625 that responded to one survey over the Thanksgiving week. The City should either keep Jackson Park as is or go back to the original name "Alameda Park."

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> Helen Simpson

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

> On Dec 10, 2020, at 2:19 PM, PS wrote:

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> Hello,

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> My name is Pamela Shepherd and as residents of Alameda, my family and I would like Andrew Jackson Park renamed to Ohlone Park.

> This land was taken by force from the Ohlone Tribe. I'd like to start healing the wounds by renaming this park and offering a sincere, heartfelt apology to our Ohlone people.

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> Thank You,

> Pamela Shepherd

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

Dec 10, 2020, at 2:44 PM, Jerome Szymczak wrote:

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> Mabel Tatum Park gets my vote! A great tribute to a local and too-long- unsung hero!

Jerome Szymczak

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

On Dec 10, 2020, at 4:10 PM, Rob Halford wrote:

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>

> Dear Ms. Wooldridge and Commissioners,

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> As a resident of Alameda, I'd like to provide my support for the Ohlone Park choice for the renaming decision. In my view this is a fitting way to pay homage to the original inhabitants of the island. Further, naming after an individual is always going to be subject to future discovery of human imperfections, as evidenced by the previous name, and should be avoided in my view.

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> Last, I hope that you will take some time in the meeting to review the results of the poll, and how the final options were determined.

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> Thank you.

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> Rob Halford

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

On Dec 10, 2020, at 3:47 PM, Katherine Cameron wrote:

HI. I submitted Truth, but Justice works very well too. Here's my reasoning:

Why not a Native American tribal name? I find it sad that all over the USA , you find parks, cities, counties, states and sports teams named after Native American tribes that were almost annihilated by the very people adopting these names, and stealing the land. It is a kind of sentimentality- following- brutality that I find particularly repugnant. Therefore, I do not support following this pattern on our island, thinking we have somehow honored the Ohlone by naming a park after them. Better to find a few remaining tribal members and see what we can do to REALLY help and honor them. I am guessing we are NOT about to give them back the park itself, or our houses, or other land on our island. Truly, we who are not Ohlone are settlers. We are occupiers. Let's not gloss over that by naming a park after the people from whom we stole.

Why not a name of an individual who made a contribution? I think naming a park after one particular individual is unwise. Unless the park land was donated by a particular person, it just gives rise to "why not this other person" kind of thinking. Instead, let's make the park name ASPIRATIONAL - about values we all share.

**It is because JUSTICE PARK is about all of us, about what we aspire to, and what others have died for, that I think it brings us together, and unites us. In this spirit, I vote for Justice Park among the choices.**

Katherine Cameron  
2716 Bayview Drive  
Alameda CA 94501  
510-814-6593

**Written Communication for Item 6-B**  
**Recommend a Name for the Park Formerly Known as Jackson Park**

On Dec 10, 2020, at 3:41 PM, Ryan LaLonde wrote:

Hello Alameda City Recreation and Parks Commission,

I know tonight you are receiving the final four options for the renaming of Jackson Park. All four names are quite amazing and different nuances. But I do love the juxtaposition of renaming the park in honor of the our first people's and reclaiming the horrible history that Jackson had on Native Americans in the United States. As a decedent of an Eastern Cherokee woman who died on the trail of tears and someone who has worked in the Native American sphere for many years - renaming this ill named park for the Ohlone People would be so fitting. I would go one step further and ask that Ohlone elders have the chance to weigh-in on a name they think maybe more fitting.

I organized the Ann Arbor Pow Wow for over 4 years, and as an Alameda resident - I can see organizing a small gathering every year in the park to teach and watch Native culture and customs. I hope you choose this name and then hand over the respected task to tribal leaders to bless or change the name.

Thank you.

Ryan LaLonde  
2945 Marina Dr.  
Alameda, CA