

288 FIRST STREET. The Craftsman-style Southern Pacific Depot building replaced two freight cars that had served as the town's first depot. The depot served both the Peninsular Railroad and the Interurban Electric Railroad Lines from 1913 until 1959. The front of the depot was moved to the rear of the building when Foothill Expressway was built in the old railroad right of way in 1965. A bank, a restaurant – which added a train car as a cocktail lounge – and an antique store have also occupied the building.



309 FIRST STREET. This was the site of the town's first two buildings — Charles Ezra Berry's livery stable and Franklin L. Rathbun's plumbing and well drilling business. The two structures originally housed and fed the men who built the railroad. The roof of the building echoes the original corrugated iron barn built here in 1907.

395-399 MAIN STREET. The two-story "Copeland Building" on the corner of First and Main Streets was the fourth building on Main Street, erected in 1911. Jack Gregory's drugstore, the town's post office and a bakery originally occupied the building. As the post office, it was the focal point of the community in the early years. Later, the Gregory and Shoup Theatre offered silent movies as well as live entertainment here, becoming the town's Saturday night gathering place during the mid-1920s. Upstairs were the living quarters for the proprietors, later to become office space.



Main Street Los Altos 1920

LOS ALTOS HISTORIC WALKING TOUR
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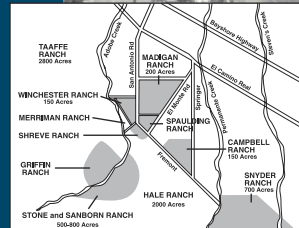
DESIGN:
The Br@nd Ranch
650-559-1914
www.brandranch.com

The Los Altos Historic Walking Tour
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LOS ALTOS HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

*A Self-Guided Tour
of Downtown Los Altos*



In the late 1800s,
the land that is now the
downtown triangle was
part of a ranch owned
by Sarah Winchester, of the Winchester Rifle
family, and her sister, Isabelle Merriman. The
closest center of commerce was Mountain View.

TAKE A STEP BACK IN TIME on a stroll through downtown Los Altos.

The history of modern Los Altos began in 1906, when Southern Pacific bought a right of way from Palo Alto (now Foothill Expressway) and Paul Shoup (pronounced like "shout") acquired the Los Altos area to develop into a community around a depot along the proposed electric and steam railroad lines linking Palo Alto and Los Gatos.

Originally called "Banks and Braes", the name was soon changed to Los Altos ("The Heights" in Spanish). In March 1907, at an outdoor land sale sponsored by the Altos Land Company, prospective buyers attended a promotional BBQ and purchased the first of the downtown lots. The site of the sale, near the intersection of Foothill Expressway and Main Street, was the focal point of the new town.



This self-guided walking tour highlights some of the first commercial buildings erected in the Los Altos downtown triangle. The tour begins on First Street and traces the city's history from train depot and fruit orchards to today's quaint Village. Enjoy the beautiful Chinese Pistache trees lining downtown streets, which date from a "tree planting bee" in 1954.



4 388-398 MAIN STREET. Across Main Street is a Spanish Colonial Revival. This was the third building erected on Main Street. The Altos Land Company and town library occupied one side, and the First National Bank of Los Altos opened on the other side in 1919, later occupied by Gordon's Red and White Grocery.

5 343 MAIN STREET. Once a grocery store and butcher shop, the façade of this 1912 building has remained virtually unchanged over the years.

6 325 MAIN STREET. This was the site of Mac's Tea Room restaurant, a local institution for decades until it closed in the 1990s.

7 316 MAIN STREET. Eschenbruecher's Hardware was the first commercial business in downtown Los Altos. William Eschenbruecher, the first postmaster, constructed the building in 1908, before electricity and water were generally available.

8 300 MAIN STREET. The second permanent building in Los Altos, completed in 1910, was the Shoup Building, or Shoup Hall. Over the years, it housed several grocery stores, a Boy Scout hall, a schoolhouse, a church, and several banks. Inside is a small but informative exhibit of local history. The original entrance was on the diagonal at the corner of Main and Second Streets.



9 295-301 MAIN STREET. Los Altos Pharmacy was originally located near Mac's Tea Room. It later moved to the corner of Main and Second Streets. Larry Nelson's sons continue to run the pharmacy, now at its third location on Second Street.

10 220-240 MAIN STREET. This was the location of the Altos Theater from 1948 until 1974. A coffee shop, and later a soup kitchen, stood adjacent to the lobby. The theater served as a gathering place for people in the thriving downtown area during the 1950s.

11 216 MAIN STREET. This site was the third location for the fire department, from 1940 to 1948. The building dates from 1939.

12 215-225 MAIN STREET. This building's unusual façade is a reflection of Victorian Queen Anne style. It was built in 1936.

13 200 MAIN STREET. Sam Kahn was a pharmacist who began his local practice at the other end of Main Street in the Copeland Building in the early 1930s. His son operated Kahn's Corner Pharmacy at this location until 2000.

14 165 STATE STREET. This was the fire department's fourth location. The present site of the Los Altos Fire Department at the corner of San Antonio Road and Almond Avenue is its fifth location.

15 130 SECOND STREET. William Eschenbruecher, the town's first postmaster, built his home on this site in 1908. The house was moved to Los Altos Hills in 1986 and renamed "Heritage House". The house still stands near the Town Hall.

16 244 STATE STREET. This was the original telephone exchange building, near the old Purity food store. The original Los Altos exchange was known as "Whitecliffe".

17 266 FIRST STREET. Site of the first Los Altos City Hall, in a rented facility.

18 201-249 FIRST STREET. This was the site of the Los Altos Garage. M. O. Andreen was the original owner; George Ramsey was its last owner. It was also the second location of the fire department, from 1931 to 1940. The new buildings mimic the façade of the old garage.



19 151 FIRST STREET. Thomas Woodworth built his home on this site in 1920. The Thos. J. Woodworth Fuel and Feed was located next to his home. The first location of the fire department was at Woodworth's warehouse across the street, and served the community from 1922 to 1931. The Fuel and Feed building was torn down after World War II to make room for the parking plaza.

20 145 FIRST STREET. This 1915 Craftsman Cottage was built by Ada Brooks, the first librarian of the early Los Altos Library, and her husband George.

21 20 FIRST STREET. At the corner of Edith Avenue is a tiled-roof house that belonged to the Ramsey family from 1936 until a few years ago.

22 WHITNEY AVENUE AND SAN ANTONIO ROAD. This is the site of the influential Los Altos Union Church built in 1917. Reverend Thomas Landels was the minister for many years. In 1957 the church moved to University Avenue.

23 164 S. SAN ANTONIO ROAD. In 1910, San Antonio School, also called Los Altos Grammar School, was located near the three-way intersection where Edith meets Main and San Antonio. The four-room grammar school was expanded in 1922, with wings for classrooms on each side and an auditorium in the rear. It was demolished in 1952.



24 51 S. SAN ANTONIO ROAD. In 1905, J. Gilbert Smith built the shingled house which now sits behind the Los Altos Library. Smith and his wife, Margaret, sold their home and surrounding 10-acre apricot orchard to the city in 1954. The J. Gilbert Smith History House has been a museum since 1977 and is furnished as a typical 1930s farmhouse. The house was designated a California State Point of Historical Interest in 1987.

The Los Altos History Museum in the adjacent barn-style building was built in 2000 and highlights the area's history in its permanent exhibit. The museum is open Thursday through Sunday from 12 Noon to 4 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call 650-948-9427 or visit www.losaltoshistory.org.

25 CIVIC CENTER ORCHARD. J. Gilbert Smith planted the apricot orchard surrounding Los Altos City Hall in the early 1900s. The orchard is a City Landmark that has been preserved as a reminder of the area's agricultural past.

26 321 UNIVERSITY AVENUE. The Los Altos Chamber of Commerce building was designed by famous Los Altos architect, Goodwin Steinberg, in 1961. He charged \$1 as his fee.

27 400 UNIVERSITY AVENUE. Shoup Park, dedicated June 18, 1955, was the city's first park. The Altos Land Company at the direction of Paul Shoup provided the land.

28 482 UNIVERSITY AVENUE. Redwood Grove Nature Preserve was purchased in 1974. Many Los Altos Recreation Department programs for children are held among the redwoods in this serene setting.

