



Walking Tour of Victorian Architecture In Downtown Menlo Park

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This 60-90 minute, 1.5 mile walking tour features some of the oldest Victorian style homes in downtown Menlo Park. We will introduce you to some of the people and families who built, and lived in these beautifully crafted homes. We will cover history and architecture topics at each stop.

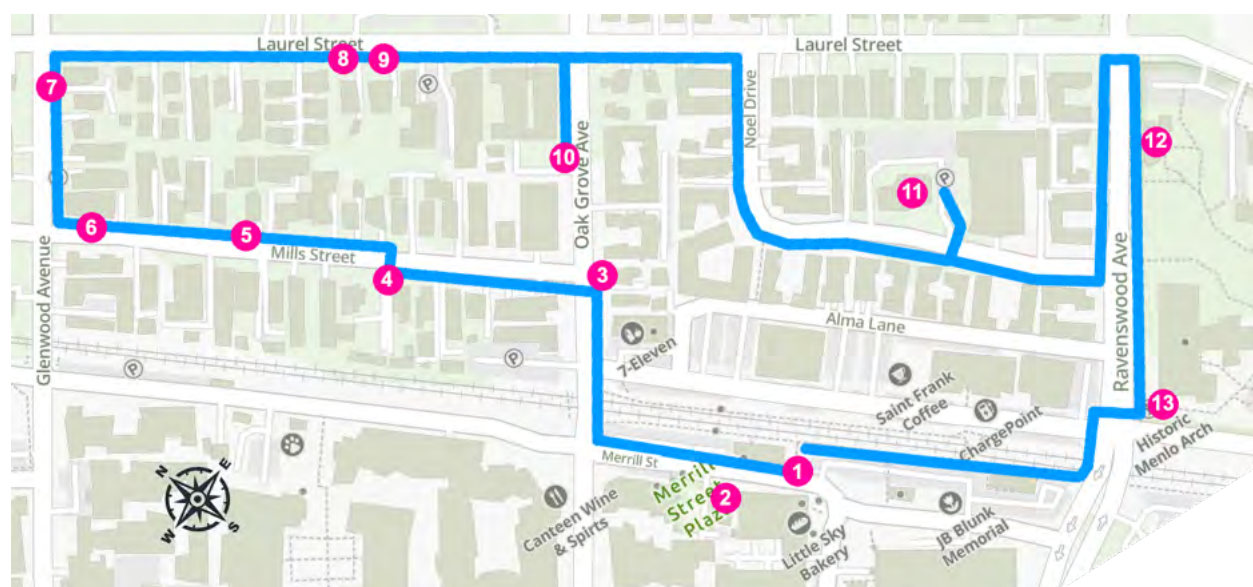
You will learn to recognize and identify several types of Victorian-era styles and specific architectural features. Boxed text like this indicates that this part of the tour stop is specifically about design and architecture.

The tour is self-paced and is designed for use on a mobile device with a small screen, so rotate, pinch and zoom to enlarge text, photos and maps. Web links are provided for reference information.

The tour starts, and ends, at the Menlo Park Railroad Station and can be walked in either direction. A map of the intended route is provided here and repeated for each stop for easier navigation.

Please be extra careful when crossing streets and the railroad tracks. The best time for the tour is during daylight hours.

Walking Tour Map and Directions

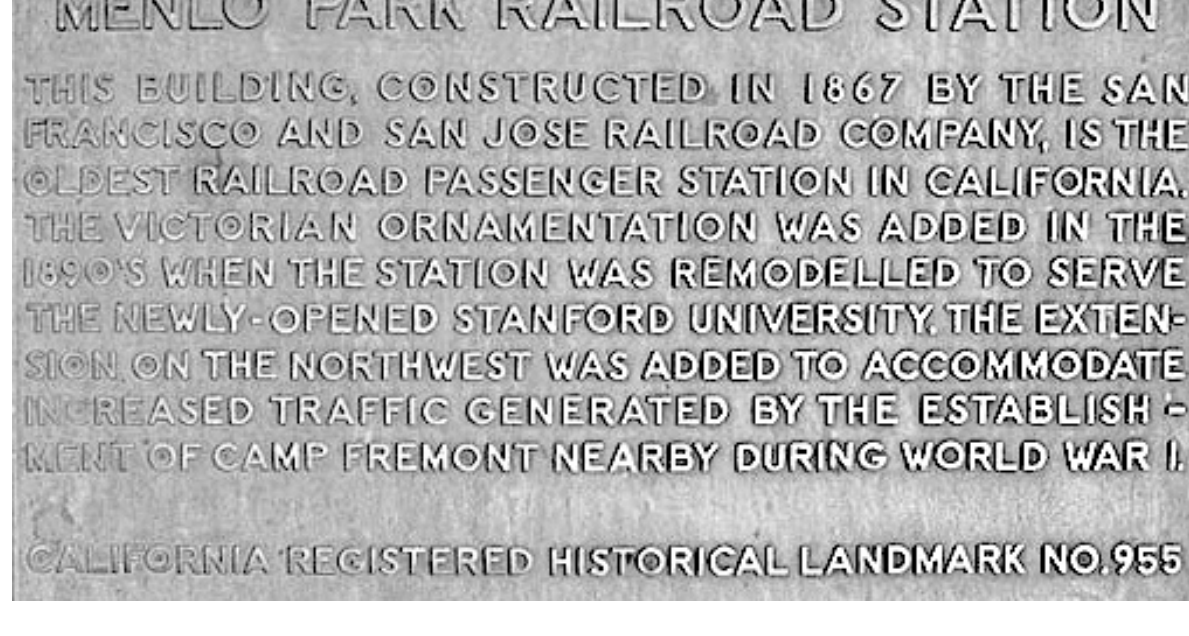


Stop 1

Railroad Station Depot

1100 Merrill Street

Look for this bronze plaque mounted to a stone at the south end of the station building:



Prior to the 1863 railroad line, it took four hours by stagecoach to travel between San Francisco and Redwood City. After the [railroad](#) was completed, a basic station depot office was built here in 1867. As the historical plaque explains, Victorian-era ornamentation was added to this utilitarian depot building in the 1890s when the station was remodeled to serve the newly opened [Stanford University](#) in 1891.

Some twenty years later, a building extension was added to accommodate increased traffic generated by the US Army's [Camp Fremont](#) during World War I. This is the oldest operating train station in San Mateo County and was registered as a California State Landmark #955 on July 4th, 1983.



Menlo Park Train Depot

Built in 1867

On this tour, you're going to see several historic buildings with similar highly ornamented styles of the Victorian era. Before we begin, let's identify some of these architectural features on the train station building as identified by letters in the photo above.

- A. barge rafters
- B. gables with carved decorations
- C. decorative pendants
- D. fish scale shingles
- E. window and door overhangs
- F. notched decorative trim
- G. curved elements
- H. bay windows with coffered trim
- I. corbels (supporting brackets)

We should also define some 19th century architecture and design styles:

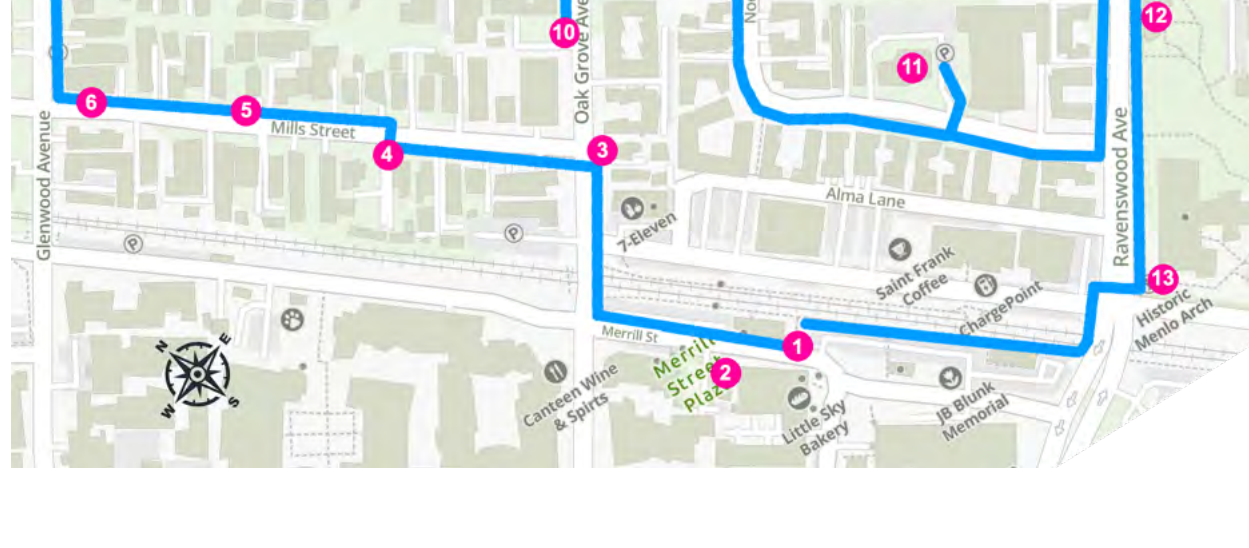
[Victorian](#) is a broad term that encompasses various styles during the reign of Britain's Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Victorian style often includes Middle Eastern, Asian or other European influences. It can also incorporate French, Italian, Tudor, Queen Anne and Eastlake style and details.

[Queen Anne](#) ruled Britain from 1702 to 1714. British architecture from this time was heavily baroque and richly detailed. However, it became much lighter when it reached America in the late 1880s. The Queen Anne style typically uses asymmetrical facades, curved elements, round or polygonal towers, classical columns and somewhat more restrained decorative detail.

[Eastlake](#) Style is named for architect Charles Eastlake (1836-1906), whose elaborate furniture designs were often incorporated into late Victorian era architecture. Eastlake adapted the Queen Anne style to simpler and more functional designs which were typically angular and notched, and rejected the use of curved shapes or elements.

Q: Is the station's interior just as ornate and rich in detail? Imagine [Jane](#) and [Leland Stanford](#) waiting here for the train, then take a look through the windows and see for yourself.

Continue walking north along Merrill St to the middle of the block and Stop 2.



Stop 2

McEvoy/Sullivan House

1145 Merrill St



McEvoy/Sullivan House

Built in 1905

Known as the McEvoy/Sullivan House, it was home to Patrick Henry McEvoy, San Mateo County Supervisor, whose family first occupied the house through 1920. Patrick Henry McEvoy and his wife retired to Oakland where both suffered fatal injuries in 1923 while walking across a street and being hit by an automobile.

John H. Sullivan, a local real estate agent, and family occupied the house as of 1940. His daughter Mary Alice had previously married Harry Morey, who was Menlo Park's Postmaster. Harry's two brothers managed Morey Brothers Concrete. Sullivan died at the house in 1944. Around the same time, his other daughter Agnes, known as "Pat," married Warren "Kip" Morey, Harry Morey's first cousin. The building, once a mortuary, later became Lisa's Tea Room. It is now occupied by a law firm and financial services company.

Morey Brothers Concrete constructed many of Menlo Park's sidewalks. Look for their stamp as you walk along the tour.

Notice the symmetry in features, which represents the Victorian era, though remodeling has taken place. Victorian features include the decorative brackets supporting the second story bay windows and half-Ionic columns across the front facade on the first floor. At one time there were full columns supporting the front half of the second story, creating an open porch, which still exists on the building's left-hand side, behind the glass. The front facade was likely filled in during office renovation. The second story windows have two different patterns in the upper half of the windows. Look closely at the 1920s photo below; it shows the building with unenclosed columns and a recessed porch.

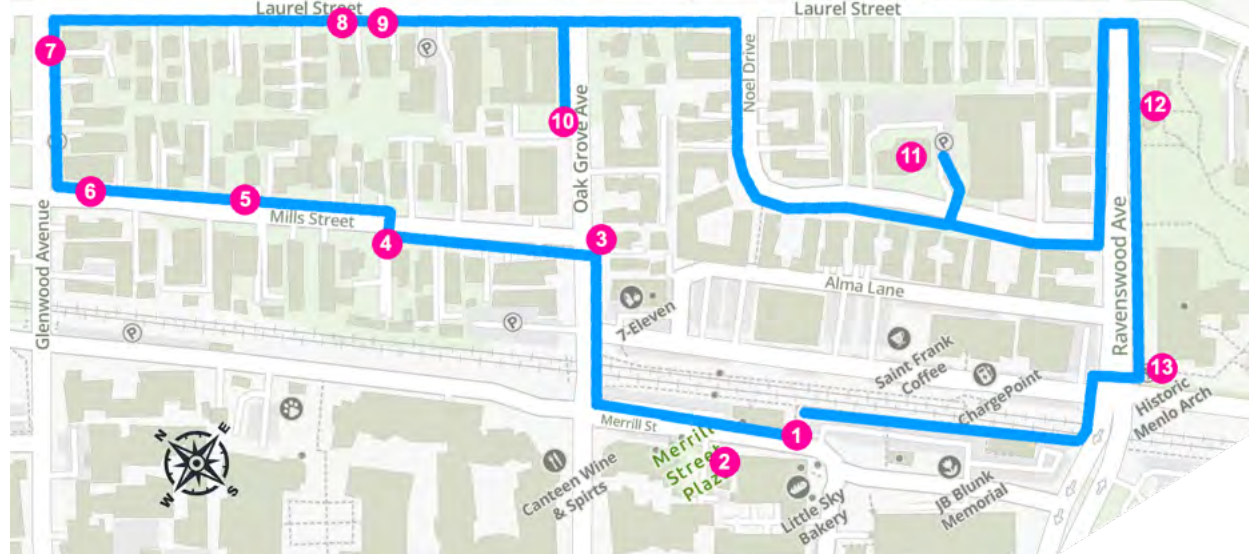
Q: What is the purpose of a house porch anyway? Most of the buildings of this era, before central heating and air conditioning, were designed with wide open porches in order to provide cooling shade and fresh air flow in the summer and shelter from the rain at the entrance in the winter.

As you walk north along Merrill St, look back toward the station and compare your view with this photo.



Looking down Merrill St. in the 1920s

Continue walking north along Merrill, turn right onto Oak Grove, safely cross the railroad tracks to Stop 3.



Stop 3

Feeley House

501 Oak Grove Ave



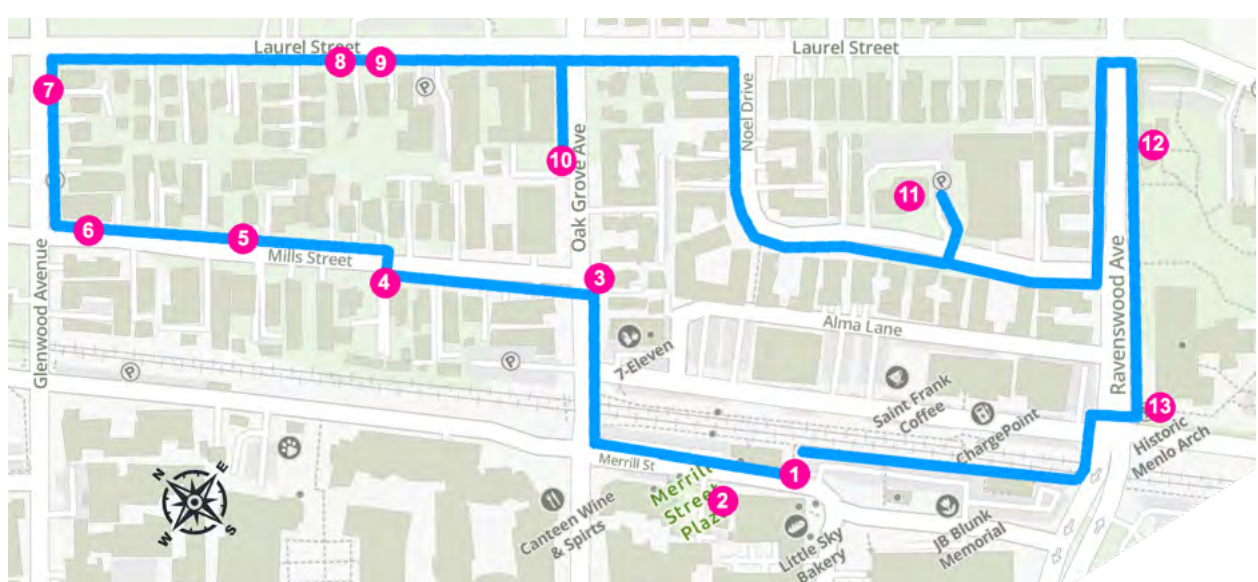
Feeley House
Built in 1902 by JL Taylor

Built entirely of redwood in 1902, “The Jewel” of Oak Grove was purchased by William Feeley in 1916. William worked as a coachman in the Felton Gables neighborhood and died in 1937, leaving this home to his wife Katherine and their 3 sons: Arthur a plumber, Francis a gardener at Stanford, and Jack a PG&E service worker. Arthur Feeley, the oldest son, died in 1986, outliving his siblings, a resident of the “Jewel” for 70 years. Five generations of Feeleys lived here before it was sold in 1989.

Prominent features include two-story bay windows, fish scale shingles and diagonal woodwork above the second floor window. Notice the extravagant details on the turned porch trim, the decorative brackets at the post tops and eaves, and the five decorative rosettes in the wide barge rafters forming the steep two sides of the pediment above the upper of two bay windows.

Q: There is speculation that the house was moved toward the street from its original lot location in 1989 to make room for a second house on this lot. How can we confirm? Look behind “The Jewel” to see what’s located behind it.

Cross Oak Grove at Mills, staying on the left side of Mills St to Stop 4.



Stop 4

MacBain Homes

1249 and 1257 Mills Street



1249 Mills St

Built in 1898 by John MacBain



This was the home of “Honest John” MacBain, born in Nova Scotia in 1851 and immigrated to the US in 1878. By 1880, he was 29, a carpenter in Menlo Park, and married to Elizabeth, aged 28.

Their daughter Edith was born in 1881. Elizabeth died in 1898 as this house was being completed. As of 1900, he married Margaret, born in Ontario to Irish immigrants. It was the second marriage for both of them. “Honest John” was a construction worker at [Linden Towers](#) , [James Flood](#)’s mansion. He served on the County Board of Supervisors in 1904 and was elected chairman in 1919. Margaret died in 1925. John died in this home in 1927 at the age of 77 after a weeklong illness.

This house lacks much ornamentation but has a large porch with turned posts, while the second story features an unusual tapered facade and wide eaves with large exposed brackets. Currently, this building is a multi-family, five-bedroom, four-bathroom home of 2272 square feet.

Q: Have you ever seen a Victorian building like this before? Is it attractive? Why do you think it was made this way?



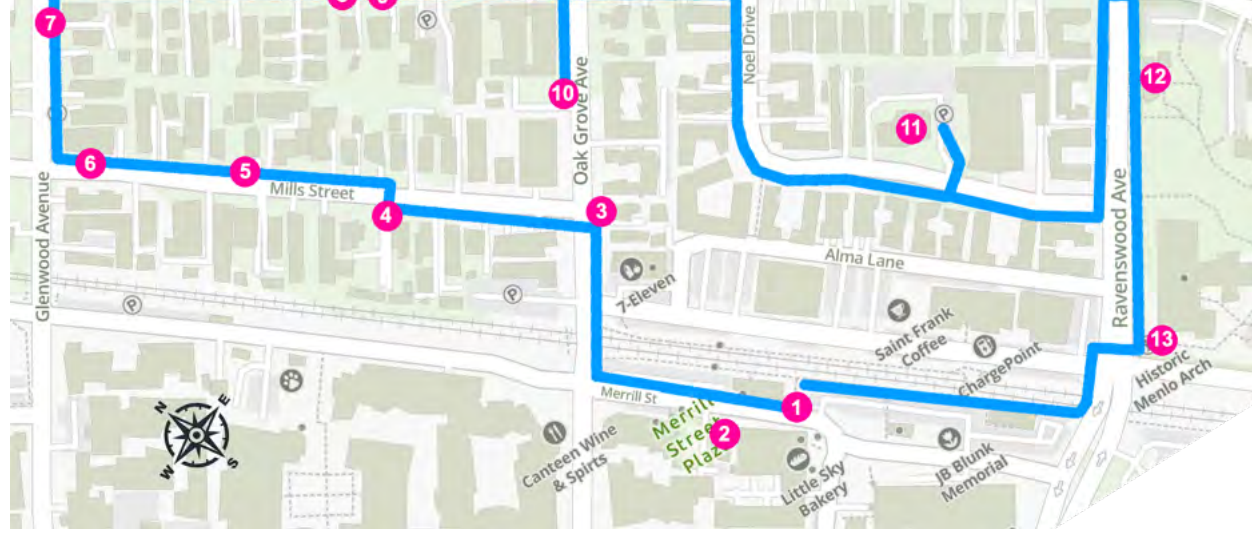
1257 Mills St

Built in 1896 by John MacBain

This large Victorian-style home originally had symmetric windows and a central stairway to the main entry. Today, the main entry is an enclosed porch, and the front facade is flanked by several stairways and separate entrances. Currently, this is a multi-family, nine-bedroom, seven-bathroom dwelling, measuring 5,310 square feet.

Q: Both of these homes were built by “Honest John” within a short time span. What differences do you notice between them? Which home design do you prefer and why?

Continue walking north along Mills St, crossing to the right side of the street to Stop 5.



Stop 5

McLoughlin House

1320 Mills Street



McLoughlin House
Built in 1904

This was the home of Edward McLoughlin, born in Ireland, immigrated in 1905. The 1920 census listed him as working in Benicia as a shoemaker. His wife Mary was born in Scotland, immigrated in 1907. They had 4 children born in Tonopah, Nevada and 2 born in California. The family was also here in the 1930 census, then with 7 children and Edward a business proprietor. He died in 1949 and is buried at Holy Cross cemetery with Mary (who died in 1975) and several of their children, including Margaret, the oldest, who died at age 87 in Menlo Park.

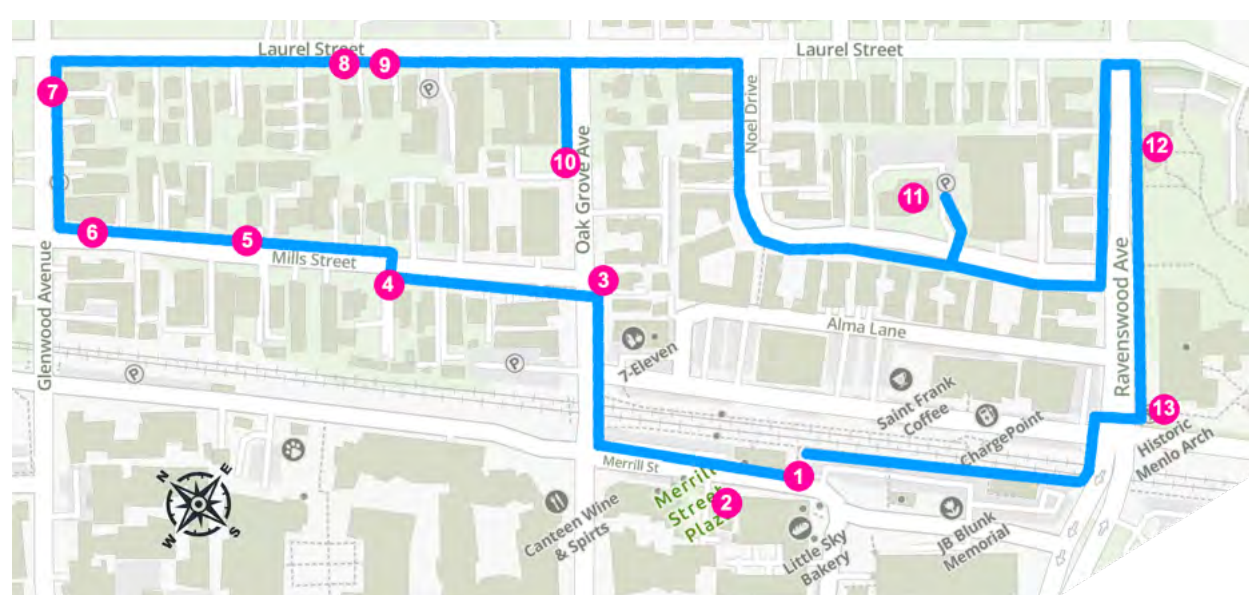
This is a three-bedroom, two-bath, 1680 square foot Victorian cottage with Eastlake decor. Queen Anne houses, part of the Victorian era, are known for asymmetry—this cottage is rather straightforward, but it has a dormer (and a shed) on the right side and is decorated with Eastlake features such as open horizontal lattice under the porch beam and the decorated barge rafters (using a multitude of rosettes) with the closing decorative woodwork, the deep porch, and the fish scale shingles on the gable.

The globe-like finial at the top of the gable had broken off soon after the house was built. The McLoughlin children remembered playing football with it until it disintegrated. Many decades later, friends of the McLoughlin family installed a similar globe finial to replace the lost original.

Q: These days, Victorian homes are often painted in pastel colors with white trim. What do you think the original paint colors may have been at this home?

There were a variety of house colors in use at that time. Some homes were simply painted all white to save on construction cost. Darker and highly saturated colors (olives, browns, greens, dark reds and maroon) were some of the most popular and most traditional with Victorian-style homes.

Continue walking north along Mills St to the corner of Glenwood Ave and Stop 6.



Stop 6

Joan Baez Home

1370 Mills Street



The apartment building on the corner of Mills and Glenwood streets is not architecturally significant, but it was where [Joan Baez](#) once lived. Her father taught at Stanford while she attended Palo Alto High School, graduating in 1958. In 1954 when Joan was 13, her aunt took her to a Pete Seeger concert—a Democratic Party fundraiser at Paly High—and she then decided to become a folk musician. When she graduated from Paly, her father became a professor at MIT in Boston. Joan enrolled at Boston University but dropped out in order to become a full-time folk singer, performing in the Newport Folk Festival in 1959. She became a folk music sensation in the 1960s and '70s for her songs of protest and social justice.



Joan Baez High School photo

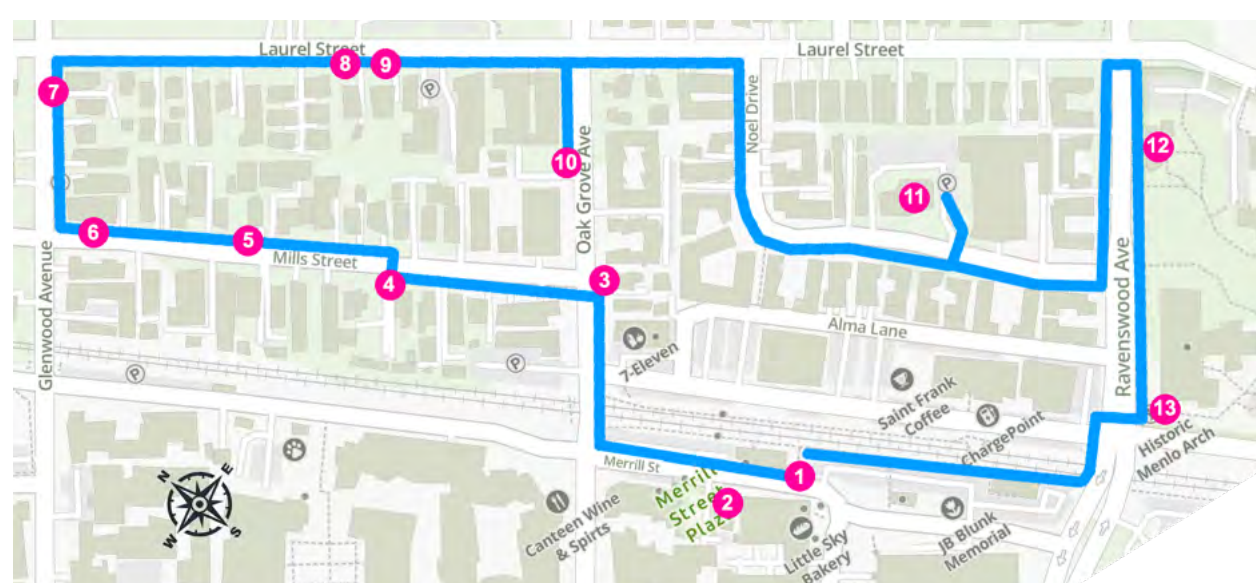


Anti war rally at Town & Country, Palo Alto

Q: Can you name a Joan Baez song?

Joan released more than 30 albums over her 60+ year career. Here is a 1965 BBC TV recording of her performing [500 Miles](#) .

From Mills St, turn right (east) onto Glenwood Ave and Stop 7.



Stop 7

Gale House

417 Glenwood Ave



Gale House

Built in 1892 by Aaron Gale

This is a Queen Anne style home with Eastlake features including the pediment (triangular facade) and horizontal trim under the roof beam. Notice the decorative corbels (brackets), ball-like post caps and the second story sunburst trim pattern under the roof peak.

This house was built by Aaron Gale, an Irish immigrant and master carpenter working on [Linden Towers](#) ([James Flood](#)'s mansion). Aaron married Jane Brophy, the daughter of pioneer settlers.



1922 photo



at Nativity Church



Sharon Heights

Their daughter, Susan Gale, born in 1888, was 4 years old when the house was finished. She attended the old Central School and Sequoia High School. Susan enrolled in Heald Business College, despite her father's disapproval. She was the bookkeeper at Duff & Doyle general store. Susan worked in banking for 33 years and eventually retired in 1952. She was one of the founding members of the [Menlo Park Historical Association](#) and was fondly called the "First Lady of Menlo Park History". Susan lived in this house until 1969, when she died at age 82. She is interred at Holy Cross, Menlo Park, with members of her family. Susan Gale Court, a street located in Sharon Heights, is named in her honor.

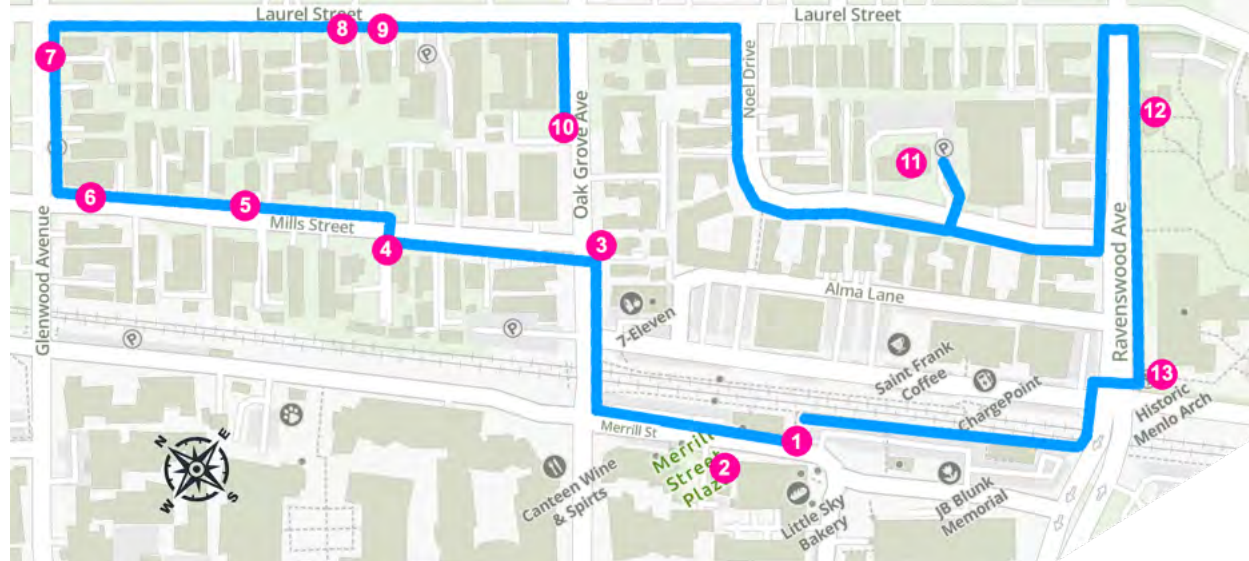
Q: Can you name any other streets in Menlo Park with a woman's name?

Well, there's Alice Lane, Florence Street and Evelyn Street near downtown, and of course May Brown Avenue off of Santa Cruz Ave.

The Menlo Park Historical Association maintains a list of interesting street names, [The Streets of Menlo Park: Origins of the Street Names](#). Here's an excerpt:

Middlefield Road: Before 1852, this road was part of the main San Francisco-San Jose highway, which was called the "Camino de en Medio" ("middle path"). In late 1851, a fence was built along the northeast side of the road. In 1852, the County Road (El Camino Real) was opened, resulting in the bay marsh being enclosed into one large tract and with the fence named the Middle Field fence. The road name was made official by an act of the State legislature in 1878.

Continue walking east on Glenwood Ave, turn right (south) onto Laurel Street to Stop 8.



Stop 8

Doughty House

1261 Laurel Street



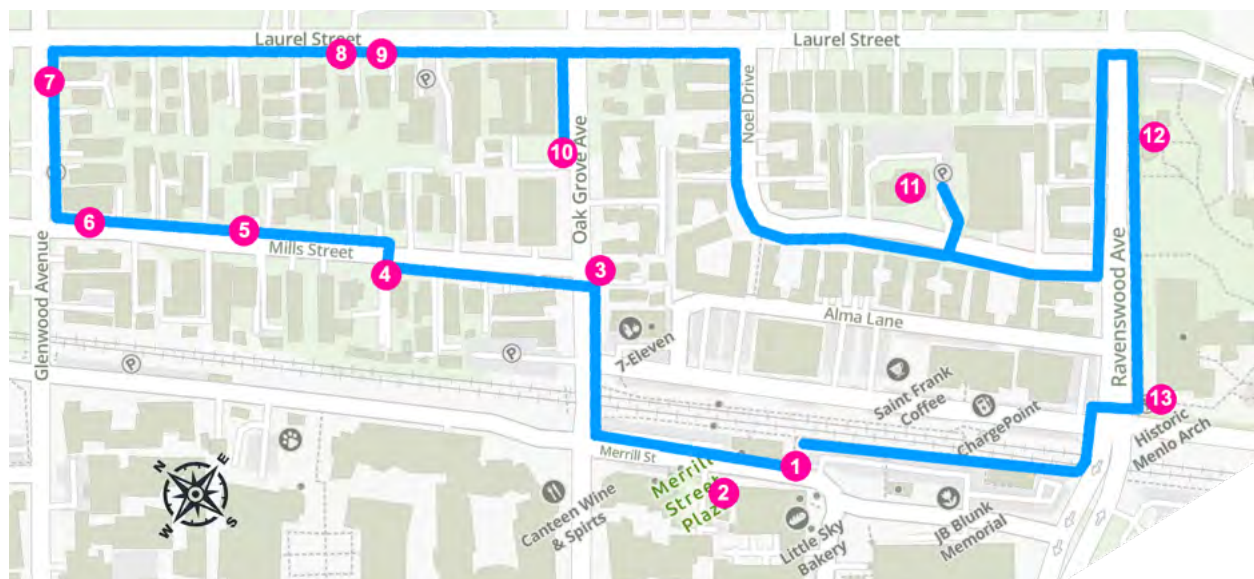
Doughty House
Built in 1905 by the Weeden Brothers

This home was built in 1905 by three brothers: Charles, James and Harry Weeden. It was purchased by Harry Doughty, a butcher who immigrated from England in 1915 and operated the Menlo Meat Market on El Camino Real for many years. Harry lived here with Margaret Gale (sister of Susan Gale) until Harry's death in 1950. Margaret died in 1975 at age 86. The house was occupied by Margaret's niece who died in 2017.

This is a Queen Anne style Craftsman Cottage with a classic Ionic column on the right of the entry stairs and a centered attic dormer. Notice the asymmetric window and entry features, and very limited use of decorative ornamentation.

Q: What was the cost of steak in Harry's meat market in the last year (1950) of his life? Steak was selling for about 75 cents a pound during the post-war Eisenhower era. Median US house home income was \$3300 per year. The average home sold for \$7500, and the average new car cost about \$2200.

Continue walking south along Laurel Street to the house next door, Stop 9.



Stop 9

Martens House

1257 Laurel Street

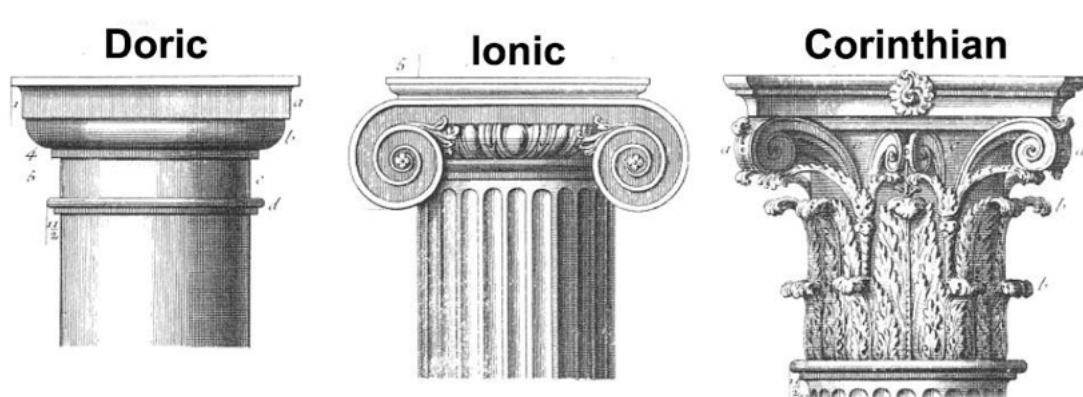


Martens House
Built in 1905

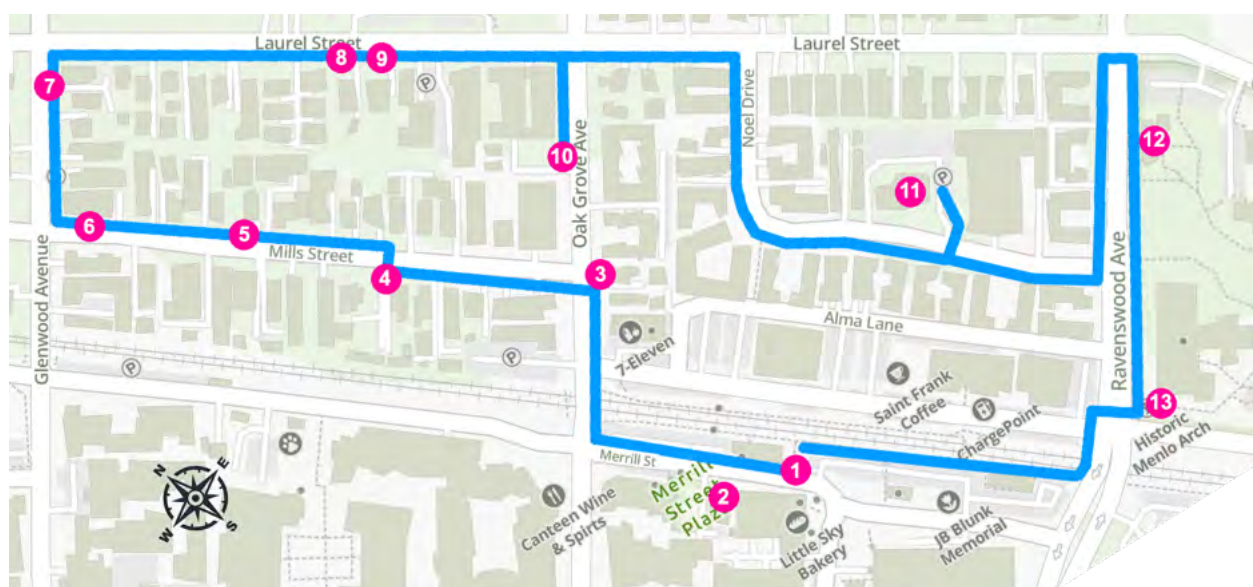
This house is named after native Californians, Ernest and Lulu Martens. In 1940, Ernest, then aged 59, worked as a salesman, wife Lulu was 50 years old, and their son Henry was 20 years old. Their home was valued at \$4000. Ernest, the manager of a tool and die company and Menlo Park resident for 33 years, died at home in 1959.

More than a Queen Anne cottage, seemingly a Craftsman with a square bay window lined with dentil trim, it features Ionic columns at the porch and half-columns on the right window. It also has a large column-supported dormer and a wide porch with french doors (which were likely added later).

Q: Ionic columns, with twin scrolls at the top are a Classic Greek Revival form. Do you know of any other column styles? The three [classical column styles](#) are illustrated below.



Continue walking south along Laurel Street, turn right (west) onto Oak Grove Ave to Stop 10.



Stop 10

Bruce/Fredrick House

424 Oak Grove Ave



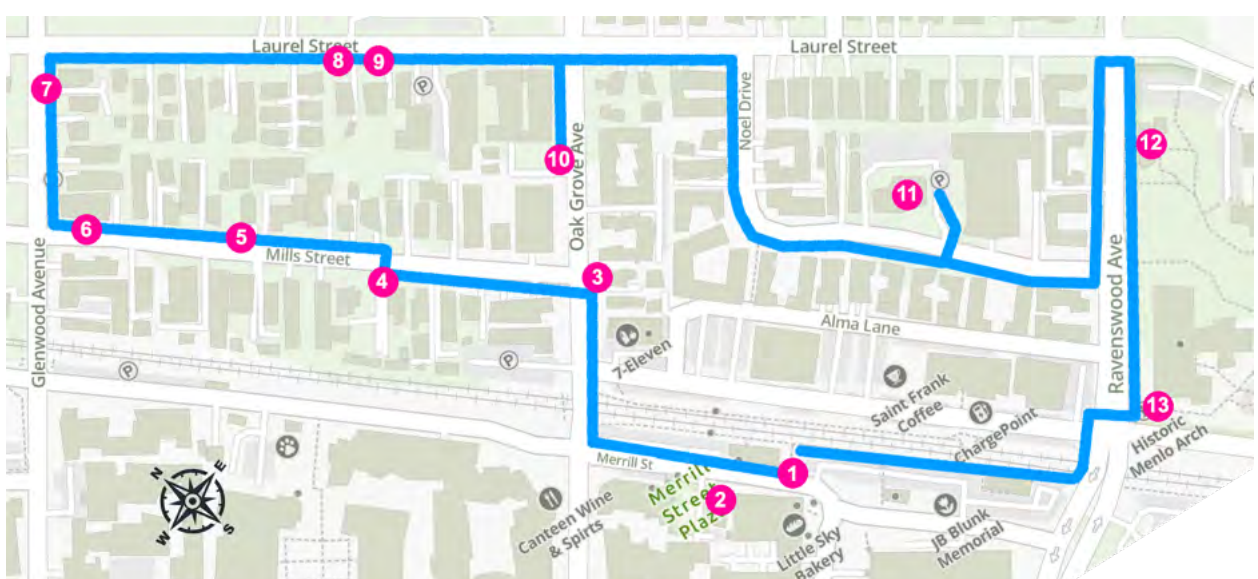
Bruce/Fredrick House
Built in 1895

This was the home of James and Elizabeth Bruce, who immigrated from Scotland in 1885. By 1900 James was working as a stonecutter at Stanford University. In 1920, Elizabeth, aged 60, was widowed and living with her son-in-law Martin Frederick, daughter Dorothy Bruce Frederick, and grandson Martin (born 1919 and died 1985).

Built as a modest Queen Anne cottage with a projected front room and pediment-type gable on the right, prominent barge rafters, fish scale shingles, matching pairs of windows, and a covered, elevated porch. The house was spared from redevelopment and is currently being used as a rental office for the apartment buildings located next door.

Q: Can you visually identify the gable, barge rafters and fish scale shingles described in the paragraph above?

Return back to Laurel St, turn right to cross Oak Grove Ave, turn right onto Noel Dr. Follow Noel Dr around to Stop 11.



Stop 11

Bright Eagle

1040 Noel Drive



Bright Eagle
Built in 1870

This imposing 21-room Italianate mansion was built for New York baron [T. Lemmen Meyer](#), master road builder and Director of the Santa Cruz & Menlo Park Turnpike Road Company. The building was sold to a German diplomat, Albert Gansel and was used as his personal residence and gambling establishment. In 1880, San Francisco banker [Edgar Mills](#) purchased the mansion for his retirement home and horse farm. Menlo Park resident Emma Noel owned the property from 1908-1946. From 1917-1918, it served as the U.S. Army Officers' Club for nearby [Camp Fremont](#).

Through the years, many tenants have enjoyed this historic building, including the Pacific Coast Military Academy until 1941, an exclusive private boys' school, a hotel in the 1930s, in 1947 the Marie Antoinette Restaurant, and in 1969 the Bright Eagle Antique Store. In 1970, the City of Menlo Park zoned the Bright Eagle as a historic landmark. It currently houses several professional offices.

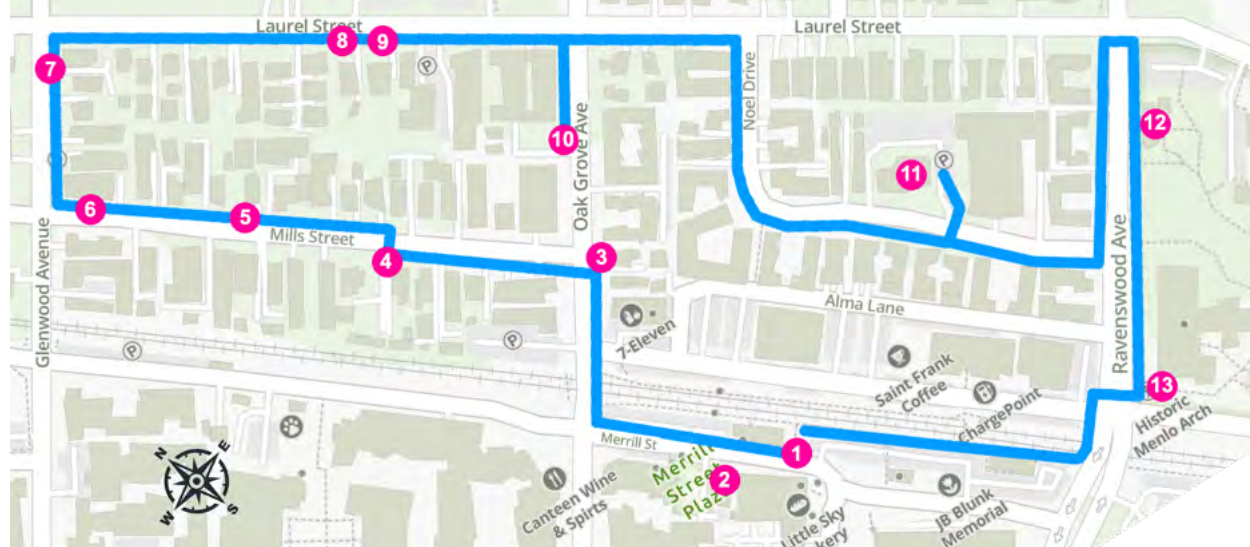


Emma Noel Marie Antoinette Inn, 1950s

The building is an impressive example of Victorian architecture, featuring a pitched roof with prominent corbels, decorative columns, wrap-around porches, bay and starburst windows. Walk alongside Bright Eagle to the front door on the right-hand (south) side. Inside, the building has 14-foot ceilings, a grand staircase with fine woodwork carved with the Bright Eagle insignia on the doors. The carved wood is Hawaiian mahogany, which was repurposed from The Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

Q: Do you believe in ghosts? In the late 1930s this was the Laurel Grove Hotel. It is known that a man shot and killed his wife in an upstairs bedroom. It's rumored that her spirit still haunts the mansion.

Continue south along Noel Dr to Ravenswood. Turn left onto Ravenswood Ave until you reach Laurel St. Cross Ravenswood here at the light, and turn right on Ravenswood heading toward Stop 12 and the Menlo Park Library.



Stop 12

The Gatehouse

555 Ravenswood Ave



Barron-Latham-Hopkins Gate Lodge,
Built in 1864

The Gatehouse is the sole surviving structure, just a single outbuilding located at the gate entrance to the original 380-acre estate, and 40-room mansion once owned in succession by Almaden quicksilver mine king [William Barron](#), US Senator [Milton Latham](#), Mrs. [Mary Hopkins](#), and finally her adopted son Timothy and wife Mary.



Thurlow Lodge/Sherwood Hall

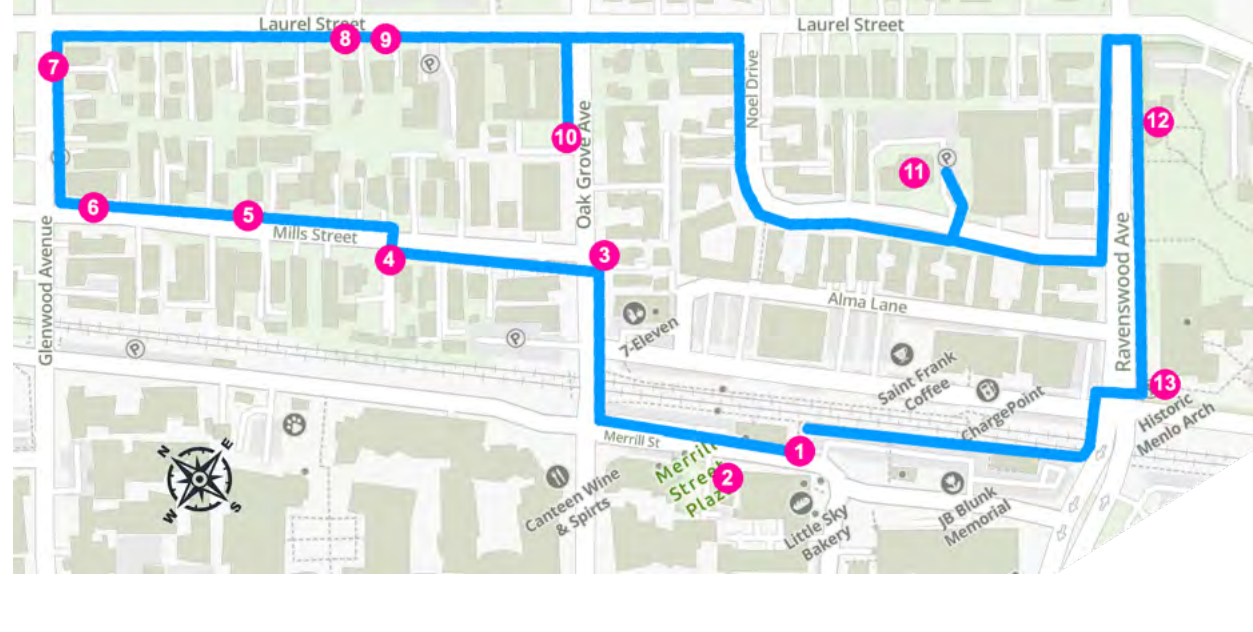
After the 1906 earthquake, the [Timothy Hopkins](#) family retained the Gate Lodge as their Menlo Park residence until Mary's death in 1941. At that time, most of the estate's buildings were razed, and the entire property was willed to Stanford University. The federal government acquired estate acreage during WWII on which to build Dibble General Hospital, now the VA Hospital. The hospital's commanding officer lived in the Gatehouse from 1943 to 1946.

The Gatehouse was leased as a residence until 1968 when it was purchased by the City of Menlo Park. In March of 1996, the Junior League of Palo Alto, along with the City of Menlo Park, completed a historic renovation of the building. This is the oldest home in Menlo Park and was placed on the National Historic Registry on August 28, 1986.

The most striking architectural features of The Gatehouse are the multi-sided mansard roof with prominent eaves, wide entry stairs and tall decorative dormers above the narrow windows. The mansard roof design provides for taller ceilings on the first floor, and for windows and light to reach rooms located on the second floor of the building. The decorative entry gate was used to provide a secure entrance to the estate and is still functional.

Q: True or false? When [Mark Hopkins'](#) widow, Mary purchased the estate, she renamed it Sherwood Hall and had all of the buildings painted from white to green with red trim. True. Apparently, she was inspired after seeing a similar green and red paint motif during a trip to Europe.

Continue west along Ravenswood Ave toward the Menlo Park Library to Alma St and Stop 13.



Stop 13

Our Town's Namesake

The Menlo Park Gate



Menlo Park Gate, Built in 1854

Let's conclude our tour with a brief, but broad, overview of Menlo Park's history at a replica of its iconic gate.

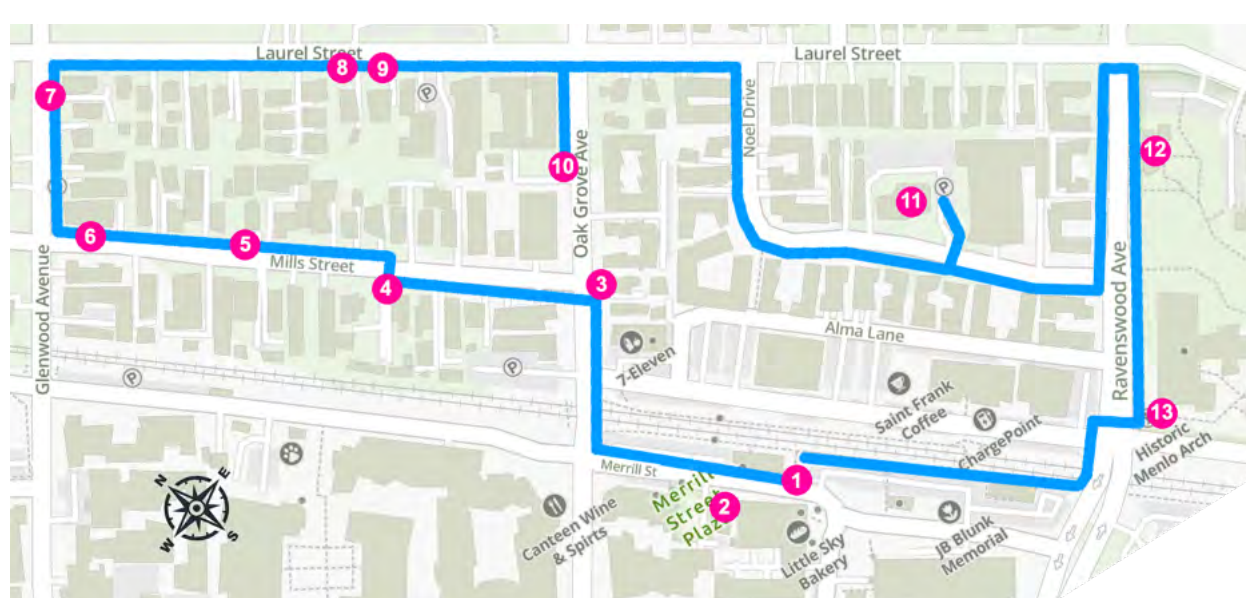
Menlo Park lies within an area once occupied by the Costanoan, or [Ohlone](#), group of Native Americans. The area was a Spanish colony from the time of the [Portola Expedition](#) in 1769 to 1821 when it became part of Mexico. During the Mexican Era (1822-1846), it was part of the enormous [Rancho de las Pulgas](#) (which became San Mateo County).

Around 1853, two wealthy Irish immigrants, [Denis J. Oliver](#) and Daniel C. McGlynn, purchased approximately 1700 acres from Soledad Arguello at the southern end of the ranch for cattle grazing. In 1854 they erected a large wooden entrance gate with the words MENLO PARK painted across the top, because the land reminded the new owners of [Menlough](#), a village located near Galway, Ireland. Nine years later, when the [San Francisco & San Jose Railroad](#) was built, the local station was given the name from the nearby gate. Eventually a town of the same name grew up around the rail station.

Easy railroad access and pleasant climate attracted wealthy San Franciscans to build their summer homes, estates and [universities](#) here. In 1917, in preparation for WWI, the US Army built [Camp Fremont](#), a large training facility nearby. The town's namesake, the original MENLO PARK gate, located on El Camino Real near Middle Ave, was demolished by a speeding motorist in 1922.

The town continued to expand in the post-World War II era with suburban home development, the Veterans Hospital, [Stanford Research Institute](#) and Sharon Heights. More recently, Menlo Park has grown, along with Silicon Valley, to become a hub for venture capital, private equity and companies focusing on technology. It is currently the home for Meta (formerly Facebook). This replica of the Menlo Park gate was erected here in 2019 with the help of the [Menlo Park Historical Association](#).

Cross Ravenswood, turn left to cross the RR tracks and return to Stop 1, the Train Station.



Thank you for taking this tour!

Please [rate and provide feedback.](#)



The Menlo Park Historical Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of Menlo Park and surrounding areas.

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www.mphistory.org

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