

Berkeley's PATHS

Vol. 14 No. 2

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association

Summer 2011

Eighth Annual Path-a-thon: Explore Park Hills and Help Dedicate Wildcat Path — Colleen Neff

Join us on Sunday July 17th to wander the paths, streets and trails high above Berkeley in the Park Hills neighborhood. The Berkeley Path Wanderers Association's eighth summer Path-a-Thon will offer three distinct walks that will vary in length, difficulty and pace. The three groups (led by BPWA Board members) will leave at staggered times from Crescent Park (located in the center of the semi-circular street called The Crescent off of Park Hills Road). The walks will all finish at the top of newly completed Wildcat Path at 11:45am (denoted as Path 80 on the current path map) for a brief dedication ceremony. We will then walk back to Crescent Park for a bring-your-own picnic. BPWA will provide carrot cake and lemonade.

Leaders with their routes and departure times are as follows: Jen English, who has walked every street and path in Berkeley, will leave Crescent Park at 9:45am on the most challenging route. She will show the group the best way to access Tilden Park via the Selby Trail from Park Hills as she guides her group down to Lake Anza. There will be plenty of trail hiking, beautiful Tilden scenery and lots of up and downhill on this 2-hour ramble (for our fit and adventurous walkers).

At 10:15, Elsa Trantor will lead a more moderate walk that will take in the unusual Muir Path before heading over to the Lutheran Seminary grounds to the very top of Marin Avenue and back via Creston Road. She will stop at another current BPWA project, Miller Path East, before continuing back to Park Hills for the Wildcat Path ceremony. This walk will be mostly city streets with some uphill and downhill sections but the pace will be moderate with stops if need be.

Jane Levy will depart Crescent Park at 10:45am for the easiest, shortest route. She will also take Muir Path and then head over to the architecturally



Newly installed steps of Wildcat Path give easy access to Wildcat Canyon

stunning new firehouse by the Park Hills entrance fountain on Shasta Road. Due to the natural terrain of the streets in the area, this walk will still have a few ups and downs but the pace will be conversational and easy. Jane will give some of the interesting history of the Park Hills neighborhood.

All walkers should arrive ten minutes ahead of schedule to allow for street parking and the short path walk into Crescent Park. The best route is to come into Park Hills at Park Gate, which is off of Grizzly Peak at Shasta Road, make a left onto Park Hills Road and a right onto The Crescent. There are three paths that will take you into Crescent Park from the sidewalk.

BPWA launched the summer Path-a-thon in 2004—the first were called Pick-a-Path Picnics—to bring more walkers onto the paths in a different neighborhood each year. Send questions about the 2011 event to: colleenneff@earthlink.net.

BPWA Walks

Walks take place rain or shine and last 2-3 hours unless otherwise noted. They are free and open to all. Walks are divided into four types:

- Theme Friendly
- Power Self Guided

Questions about the walks? Contact Keith Skinner: keithskinner.public@gmail.com 510 520 3876.

July 7, Thursday - Foraging Walk - 6 p.m.

Leader: Alan Siegel. Meeting Place: Trail head at Grizzly Peak Blvd and Kenyon Ave (don't take Beloit!) Transit: AC bus 67

Dr. Siegel, a hobbyist ethnobotanist since the '70s, will point out native and wild plants that are used for food, medicinal and cultural purposes. We'll encounter some difficult footing and uphill, so wear appropriate shoes and bring walking sticks, if you have them. Bring a notebook. **Well behaved dogs on leashes permitted.**

July 17, Sunday - Summer Path-A-Thon. Multiple leaders.

Meeting Place: Crescent Park (Enter Park Hills at the fountain, left onto Park Hills Rd and right onto Crescent Drive. Paths to the park will be marked.)

Transit: AC buses #65 and #67

For this year's annual multi-walk event, we'll feature the new Wildcat Path (Path 80 on our map). Three walks of varying levels of difficulty will have staggered departures. We will rendezvous for refreshments and socializing afterwards. See article to the left for full details. All walks begin at Crescent Park which is located in the center of the block formed by Crescent Street off Park Hills Road.

Walk 1, 9:45 a.m. A brisk walk for fit hikers will go into Tilden Park as far as Lake Anza.

Walk 2, 10:15 a.m. This moderate walk will visit path-in-progress Miller Path as well as Muir Path and the Lutheran Seminary grounds.

Walk 3, 10:45 a.m. This leisurely walk around Park Hills will focus on the history of the neighborhood.

All three walks, No dogs, please.

August 10, Wednesday - San Francisco Waterfalls and Other Treasures - 9:10 a.m.

Leader: Susan Schwartz.

Meeting Place: Platform, North Berkeley BART - We'll take the 9:23 train (please be on time) *Call 510-599-4709 if you take another train or miss us.

We'll take BART together to SF's Montgomery Station then embark on long but mainly level (some stairs) exploration of the unexpected walkways, waterfalls, roof gardens and whimsical art amid the office towers south of Market. **No dogs, please.**

(Walks are continued on page 2)

(Walks continued)

August 21, Sunday - Oakland Urban Paths - 10 a.m.

Leader: Paul Rosenbloom.

Meeting Place: Front of Montclair Library, 1687 Mountain Blvd. (near Thornhill Dr.)

Transit: AC bus #18

This walk will showcase some of the path restoration work either in progress or that has been completed by Oakland Urban Paths over the past year. Fast paced with hills, this will be a strenuous walk. **Well-behaved dogs on leashes permitted.**

September 10, Saturday - Historic Urns of Thousand Oaks - 1 p.m.

Leader: Keith Skinner.

Meeting Place: Great Stone Face Park.

Transit: AC buses #7, 18, 25

BPWA joins the Thousand Oaks Urn Project in celebrating the completion of the first two urns. We'll visit the two urns and discuss some of the other related history of the Thousand Oaks area. See story on page 3 for more about the urn project. **No dogs, please.**

September 19, Monday - Berkeley's Outdoor Art Galleries - 6 p.m.

Leader: Colleen Neff.

Meeting Place: Live Oak Park, entrance to the recreation center

Transit: AC buses #7, 18, 67

You probably won't spot a Moore or Brancusi but should have plenty of fun and more than a few surprises when we stalk the abundant yard art sprinkled throughout Berkeley's neighborhoods. **Well-behaved dogs on leashes permitted.**

Featured Self-Guided Walk: Poetry on the Paths

Bring a book of poems to read at one of the resting points and visit Margo Hackett's poetry wall. Leave a favorite poem there for others to read. Print out the walk directions from our web site:

<http://www.berkeleypaths.org/walk/handouts/110410Poetry%20on%20the%20Paths.pdf>

Clip 'n Save

At the suggestion of one of our devoted walkers, we have rearranged the walks listing with the two pages back to back. This will make it easy to clip and save the list of upcoming walks.

New Life for Kensington Paths— Glen Lindwall

Like neighboring communities, Kensington is blessed with a number of paths. Most paths were initially established to give residents easy access to shopping and street car lines at a time when automobiles were still rare. In Berkeley and other nearby cities the paths are publicly owned, but in Kensington, an unincorporated city in Contra Costa County, the paths belong to no one.

Bryce Nesbitt of the Kensington Improvement Club (KIC) explains that the original developers offered the paths to the county when development was first proposed. The county declined to accept them until construction proceeded, and somehow nothing more was ever done. The paths have remained in limbo ever since. One path even got bundled with a group of properties being auctioned for back taxes. That path was abandoned, seized and resold several times, though at this point it has essentially been dropped from the tax collection rolls.

In 1984 the KIC began trying to get the county to maintain, improve and light the paths. The county briefly took on maintenance in the early '90s. However, after a landslide happened elsewhere, the county decided they wanted to avoid any possible liability. Path maintenance was dropped. Problems do develop in these 100-year-old paths. There is, for instance, a broken 12" culvert that runs down Kenyon Path. The neighboring house foundations are being undermined but the residents cannot get a permit to fix the culvert since it is on no-man's-land.

Many path neighbors have proudly maintained nearby paths for decades. Still, a few people mistrust the paths, fearing that improving access might bring criminal activity or other problems. Bryce has researched problems related to paths, but they are few. The most serious regional path-related incidents in the past decade were in Oakland: a broken sewer and a window accidentally broken by a city work crew.

KIC has become more proactive in working to improve access to the paths. As Bryce says "There is no one to give permission, therefore no one to deny permission". Beginning last year KIC, with funding help from the Kensington Property Owners Association, has held work parties to clean up the paths,



This KIC work party cleared 800 pounds of plant debris from Stratford Path. All four immediate neighbors joined in

install steps in places where they are needed and open up impassable sections of paths.

One path section that runs between The Arlington and Amherst is blocked off and overgrown. A group of about thirty people bushwhacked their way through. But access to the path is opposed by a neighbor. Police were called. When they understood the situation, the police allowed the group to proceed. Bryce is convinced that the benefits of the paths far outweigh potential problems. He hopes that all paths can be opened to everyone.

The future looks promising: Contra Costa County recently issued paperwork for street signs marking path entrances, the Fire Department has endorsed the signs effort on public safety grounds (paths elsewhere have proven invaluable for fire-fighting), and Kensington's local parks district formed a study committee to examine taking ownership of the paths.

BPWA Board Meetings

The BPWA Board meets on the third Thursday of each month (except April, Oct, and Dec). Meetings have moved to Live Oak Community Center in Live Oak Park. Board meetings are open to all.

Path 80 Transformed: Making Wildcat Path

—Keith Skinner

Carl Williams, Maintenance Supervisor for the Park Hills Homes Association, has been interested in Path 80, now remade as Wildcat path, since he was hired in 2004. As Carl tells the story, "The path started out as a maintenance path through the Association's Hillview Lot. The Hillview Lot was shown as a park on the original Olmsted Brothers subdivision plan of 1939. When I started working for the Association, it was difficult to walk from the top to the bottom of the lot. All the accumulated debris from the eucalyptus trees made the walking experience something like walking down a slide with ball bearings underfoot. My first goal was to route a path that required no tree cutting or the addition of materials. I'm a hiker, and I actually like switchbacks, so naturally I thought of switchbacks as a way to deal with the steepest part of the lot. The next job was to thread the switchbacks through the lot's eucalyptus trees and provide access to three hazel bushes [our native hazelnut, *Corylus cornuta*] that were getting smothered by weeds. I've always loved native vegetation, especially old natives that the average person doesn't think of as old, like the three old hazels that are probably several decades old. It's the thought of saving these plants that gives me added incentive to go out and pull weeds."

In 2010, the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association (BPWA) got involved with further developing the path. BPWA Board member and path engineer Steve Glaeser teamed up with path maven

and Park Hills resident Charlie Bowen. They obtained Association approval to augment Carl Williams' earlier efforts with a more well-defined path and BPWA's signature railroad tie steps. The crew also hauled in several loads

of wood shavings to provide better footing and prevent erosion.

Read more (and see the photos) about the transformation of the undeveloped Path 80 into Wildcat Path at Keith's blog: <http://wp.me/pEYAK-dA>

The Thousand Oaks Urn Project — Colleen Neff

On September 10th, the Thousand Oaks Urn Project will hold a ceremony in Great Stoneface Park at the corner of Yosemite Rd. and San Fernando Ave.



The urn at the bottom of Indian Trail

to dedicate one of two large urns making an historic comeback to our city. These urns are exact copies of the original ones that dotted the prominent corners of Thousand Oaks when it was first developed. Only one original urn remains, at the bottom of Indian Trail on the Alameda. The Berkeley Path Wanderers will lead a walk of the Thousand Oaks neighborhood (including the one surviving urn and the second new urn), departing from Great Stoneface Park at 1pm. We will arrive back in time for the ceremony which begins at 3pm. Following the dedication, a reception in a private garden nearby will feature a display of historic photos.

Impromptu Walks: Join BPWA's Meetup Group

—Mary Lynch

Have you ever wanted to be more spontaneous in your group walks on Berkeley Paths? Generally, BPWA plans organized group walks 3 months in advance so that they can be publicized in our printed newsletter. Now you have an opportunity for impromptu walks. Several months ago, BPWA created a new meetup group to provide a more informal web-based way to participate in walking Berkeley's Paths.

Join the Berkeley Paths meetup group at <http://www.meetup.com/Berkeley-Path-Wanderers/> and you will be informed by email when a walk is announced. If you would like to lead a

walk, just contact one of the organizers (listed on the meetup site). It's very easy!

There seems to be a market for using the internet for organizing events locally. Meetup.com was started in 2001, as a way to help people with shared interests find each other locally. There are now almost 80,000 meetup groups world-wide with 7.2 million members.

Berkeley Paths meetup has had 10 events as of press time with 155 members signed up. Please join us in a walk or let us know if you would like to lead a walk.

Tax-deductible household memberships in the BPWA are \$5.00 and cover one calendar year. Benefits include a newsletter and other BPWA mailings and emails. If you can give more, please consider a donation. You can join or donate online at

www.berkeleypaths.org or by sending this form and a check, payable to our fiscal parent BPPF (Berkeley Partners for Parks)

BPWA
1442-A Walnut Street - #269
Berkeley, CA 94709

BPWA Membership/Donation Form

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Telephone Number (optional) _____

☐ I am enclosing \$5 for membership ☐ new ☐ renewal

☐ I am also enclosing a donation of _____

☐ I am interested in volunteering

Please make checks payable to our fiscal parent, Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF)

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association Summer 2011

Dedicated to the creation, preservation, and restoration of public paths, steps, and walkways in Berkeley for the use and enjoyment of all.

The Berkeley Path Wanderers Association, an affiliate of Berkeley Partners for Parks, is a volunteer group of community members who have come together to increase public awareness of the city of Berkeley's pathways. Our activities include guided path walks, the mapping of Berkeley's path network, the building of paths that are proposed, and the restoration of those that need maintenance.

This stack of wood ties was waiting to be installed as steps on Wildcat Path. See the photo on page 1 for how these steps look in place.



Photo by Colleen Neff

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